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PRESS RELEASE
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A riveting book on tap dancing, a history of LGBT revolution, a Jazz Age Chicago novel, and poems to pierce heaven are subjects of the 81st annual Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards

CLEVELAND, Ohio (April 6, 2016) – The Cleveland Foundation today announced the winners of its 81st Annual [Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards](#). The 2016 recipients of the only national juried prize for literature that confronts racism and examines diversity are:

- **Lillian Faderman**, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*, Nonfiction
- **Mary Morris**, *The Jazz Palace*, Fiction
- **Orlando Patterson**, Lifetime Achievement
- **Rowan Ricardo Phillips**, *Heaven*, Poetry
- **Brian Seibert**, *What the Eye Hears: A History of Tap Dancing*, Nonfiction

“The new Anisfield-Wolf winners broaden our insights on race and diversity,” said Henry Louis Gates Jr., who chairs the jury. “This year, we honor an essential new history of gay America, a novel rich in the melodies of Jazz Age Chicago, a fluid, mesmerizing account of tap dancing and poetry with an intoxicating eye on heaven. All is capped by the lifetime achievement of Orlando Patterson, an unparalleled sociologist of race and class and place.”

Gates directs the Hutchins Center for African and African-American Research at Harvard University, where he is also the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor. Joining him in selecting the winners each year are poet Rita Dove, novelist Joyce Carol Oates, psychologist Steven Pinker and historian Simon Schama.

Cleveland Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer Ronn Richard called the sharp, unpredictable books gratifying, reflecting founder and donor Edith Anisfield Wolf’s belief in the power of the written word to elevate and enlighten.

“These books give voice to stories and people who have often gone unheard,” Richard said. “The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards rose from the philanthropic vision of one prescient individual who realized that literature could heighten our thinking about our shared humanity. We are proud to showcase beautifully written books that elevate and strengthen us during a critical time in our history.”

Past winners include three writers who went on to win Nobel prizes — Nadine Gordimer, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Toni Morrison.

About the 2016 Winners

In vivid prose, and through the voices of 150 interview subjects, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* chronicles a journey out of the closet, onto the streets and into the beginnings of legal protections for millions of Americans. Lillian Faderman crafts a meticulous history — 128 pages of footnotes, included — that documents the women and men who sacrificed and persevered to make a place in this nation for their dignity, decency and humanity. Juror Steven Pinker praised it as “a real milestone.” Faderman grew up in New York City and Los Angeles, became a leading historian of lesbian and LGBT narratives, and is now a retired professor from the California State University, Fresno.

The Jazz Palace is the 15th book of Mary Morris, one she spent almost 20 years writing. It features three central characters: a black trumpeter, a Jewish pianist and a saloon owner in Prohibition-era Chicago. The story is drenched in a remarkable period of experimentation when music got faster, skirts got shorter and the appetite for pleasure surged. Jurist Rita Dove writes as a reader, “Here I was, drenched in the soot and stink and noise of early 20th-century Chicago, walking along the docks, threading through the alleys, listening to a trumpet wail from a corner saloon.” Born in Chicago, Morris is a professor of creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College.

Rowan Ricardo Phillips’ second book of poetry, *Heaven*, brims with 38 poems that ask “Who the hell’s Heaven is this?” and then splinters the answers into a night sky’s worth of possibilities. The poet insists on the strangeness of difference. “Lyric steeped in beauty, in exhilaration; when Phillips writes about jazz or the Wu-Tang Clan, the quotidian is lifted onto a plain as mythical and fateful as the battlefields of Troy,” says jurist Rita Dove. While the classics reverberate here, so do references to roosters in Ohio, Led Zeppelin riffs in the basement and bears in Colorado. Phillips, who lives in New York and Barcelona, also writes about basketball and soccer for the *Paris Review* and *The New Yorker*.

What the Eye Hears: A History of Tap Dancing is a revelatory and racially complex chronicle of a uniquely American art form, with roots that predate the nation in West Africa and Ireland. Brian Seibert, a dance critic for *The New York Times*, took 10 years to write his first book, praised by jurist Simon Schama as “a brilliant read from beginning to end — recovering a whole universe of dance, race, rhythm — and doing it in such a winning style. It just made me want to dance immediately every time I finished a chapter.” With nuance, sophistication, suavity and wit, this history profiles dance geniuses in what has often been an outsider art. Seibert, born and raised in Los Angeles, is himself a dancer. He lives in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Orlando Patterson is a preeminent American sociologist, whose landmark books have influenced the course of global scholarship: *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (1991), *The Ordeal of Integration* (1997), and *The Cultural Matrix: Understanding Black Youth* (2015). Praised as a Renaissance scholar by his peers, Patterson served eight years as advisor for social policy and development to Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley. He helped found Cultural Survival, one of the leading advocacy groups for the rights of indigenous peoples and is an expert on the sociology of sports, particularly cricket. Called the “Caribbean Zola” by London’s *Daily Telegraph*, Patterson is a professor at Harvard University.

The Anisfield-Wolf winners will be honored Sept. 15 at the Ohio Theatre in Cleveland, hosted by the Cleveland Foundation and emceed by Jury Chair Gates. For additional information, and a complete list of the recipients since 1935, visit www.Anisfield-Wolf.org.

About the Cleveland Foundation

Established in 1914, the Cleveland Foundation is the world’s first community foundation and one of the largest today, with assets of \$2.1 billion and 2015 grants of \$95 million. For more information, visit ClevelandFoundation.org and follow us at Facebook.com/ClevelandFoundation or on Twitter [@CleveFoundation](https://Twitter.com/CleveFoundation) and Instagram [@CleveFoundation](https://Instagram.com/CleveFoundation).

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