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Opening Minds. Challenging Minds.®

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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70th Annual Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards® Winners Announced ***Playwright August Wilson Receives Lifetime Achievement Award***

CLEVELAND, Ohio (March 29, 2005) – The Cleveland Foundation today announced the winners of the 2005 Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards for outstanding works that contribute to society's understanding of racism or appreciation of the rich diversity of human cultures. This year's winners are:

- **Edwidge Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, Fiction**
- **A. Van Jordan, *M-A-C-N-O-L-I-A*, Fiction**
- **Geoffrey C. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*, Non-Fiction**
- **August Wilson, playwright, Lifetime Achievement Award**

The winners will be honored in Cleveland on September 14 at a ceremony hosted by The Cleveland Foundation. "These works reinforce the many layers and the complex nature of the issues of race and diversity in our history," says Jury Chair Henry Louis Gates Jr., the W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University. "They make important contributions in helping us gain a greater understanding of the need to respect both the humanity and individuality of others."

"As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, we are continually inspired by the variety of rich voices telling these poignant stories. The vision of the award's creator, Edith Anisfield Wolf, was to recognize books that explore racial prejudice and celebrate human diversity. This year's selections open our minds and challenge us to appreciate both our differences and the similarities that bind us together," says Ronald B. Richard, president and CEO, The Cleveland Foundation.

The Dew Breaker, Danticat's third novel and a National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist, explores the world of a "dew breaker" — a torturer — from Haiti and how his crimes lie hidden beneath his new life in America. The story moves seamlessly between 1960s Haiti and present-day New York City, taking us deep into the lives of those around him as he strives for redemption.

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Other Danticat works include *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Krik? Krak!*, a National Book Award finalist.

In *M-A-C-N-O-L-I-A*, Jordan tells the story of MacNolia Cox, who, at 13 was the first African-American student to reach the finals of the 1936 National Spelling Bee Competition. Widely supposed to have been prevented from winning because of her race, her short-lived celebrity forever changed her life. The poems explore how this traumatic event shattered her dreams forever. At her death, the girl who wanted to be a doctor was described as “a cleaning woman, a grandmother and ‘the best damn maid in town.’” Jordan’s previous work, *Rise*, won the PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Award.

Ward is the co-author of a number of recent bestsellers, including *Baseball*, *The Civil War* and *Jazz*, the latter two written with Ken Burns. *Unforgivable Blackness* tells the story of Jack Johnson, boxing’s first black heavyweight champion and a lightning rod for controversy. Ward, a historian, screenwriter and former editor of *American Heritage*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1989 for *A First-Class Temperament: The Emergence of Franklin Roosevelt*.

August Wilson has been a major force in American theatre since the mid-1980s. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Wilson felt his parents withheld the true hardships they had faced to spare their children. The indignities their generation suffered are the basis for his groundbreaking series of plays — *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running* and *Seven Guitars* — that shine a light on black issues in different decades in America. Wilson’s work has received Tony, Drama Desk Outstanding New Play and New York Drama Critics Circle Best Play Awards. He also won the Pulitzer Prize for both *Fences* (1987) and *The Piano Lesson* (1990).

Now in its 70th year, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards is the only juried American literary competition devoted to recognizing books that have made an important contribution to society’s understanding of racism and the diversity of cultures. Edith Anisfield Wolf was a published poet and civic activist who became passionately committed to social justice as a young girl. As a poet, she chose literature as a means to explore racial prejudice and celebrate human diversity. Her work and wishes continue to be carried out through the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, which are administered by The Cleveland Foundation.

For additional information, including a complete list of winners, visit www.anisfield-wolf.org.

The Cleveland Foundation, a public charity dedicated to improving the quality of life in Greater Cleveland, is the original and second largest community foundation in the nation. Its establishment in 1914 is cited as one of 10 events that most heavily influenced the development of the nonprofit sector in the 20th Century and it continues to be a leader in its field. The Foundation has assets of \$1.6 billion and last year awarded more than \$86 million in grants and low-cost loans to Cleveland area nonprofit organizations and received \$41 million in new gifts.

The Cleveland Foundation is made up of more than 800 funds created by individuals, families, organizations and corporations. It offers donors of all means the opportunity to have a lasting impact on their community while maximizing income, gift and estate tax benefits. For more information visit www.clevelandfoundation.org.