

Contact:

Patrick Kowalczyk, patrick@pkpr.com

Jenny Chang, jenny@pkpr.com

PKPR, 212.627.8098

**JUNOT DIAZ, EDWIDGE DANTICAT NAMED WINNERS OF
2008 DAYTON LITERARY PEACE PRIZE**

***Diaz Receives Fiction Prize for The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao;
Danticat's Brother, I'm Dying Receives Non-Fiction Prize***

www.daytonliterarypeaceprize.org

Dayton, OH (EMBARGOED FOR September 4, 2008) – *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz and *Brother, I'm Dying* by Edwidge Danticat today were named winners of the 2008 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for fiction and non-fiction, respectively.

Celebrating the power of literature to promote peace and non-violent conflict resolution, The Dayton Literary Peace Prize is the only international literary peace prize awarded in the United States. It was founded in 2006 as an outgrowth of the Dayton Peace Prize, which commemorates the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords ending the war in Bosnia.

The Dayton Literary Peace Prize Committee also announced this year's runners-up: *Lost City Radio* by Daniel Alarcon (Fiction) and *Are We Rome?* by Cullen Murphy (Non-Fiction).

Winners receive a \$10,000 honorarium and runners-up receive \$1,000. They will be honored at a gala ceremony hosted by award-winning journalist Nick Clooney in Dayton on Sunday, September 28th. Civil Rights Movement historian Taylor Branch (*America in the King Years* trilogy) will also be presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Past Lifetime Achievement honorees include Elie Wiesel (2007) and Studs Terkel (2006)

The contemporary American immigrant experience and the struggle to overcome the scars of political and physical violence are the centerpiece of both Diaz's and Danticat's critically-acclaimed books. Both of the authors immigrated to the United States when they were children from the island of Hispaniola – Diaz from Dominican Republic and Danticat from Haiti.

In *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Penguin Group), Diaz mixes pop culture and political criticism to tell the story of an obese sci-fi fan growing up in New Jersey and his Dominican family during the Rafael Trujillo dictatorship. The book has won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Diaz is the author of the celebrated story collection *Drown*, as well as stories published in *The New Yorker* and *The Paris Review*.

Brother, I'm Dying (Knopf Publishing Group) is Danticat's moving memoir of her Haitian immigrant family's struggle to stay connected in spite of living apart. Earlier this year, the book won the National Book Critics Circle Award for autobiography. She is the author of numerous books, including *Krik? Krak!*, a National Book Award finalist; *The Farming of Bones*, an American Book Award winner; and *The Dew Breaker*, a PEN/Faulkner Award finalist.

"This year's winners explore both the devastating impact of violence and the power of the human spirit to overcome great pain and adversity in order to move communities and society forward," said Sharon Rab, chair of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. "We are proud to honor artists whose creativity and unique perspectives remind us that lasting peace comes from our recognizing a shared humanity."

"Those of us who have lived without peace know of its elemental importance and yet how few cultures and institutions and organizations honor or recognize or promote this essential and elusive human practice," said Diaz. "On many levels this award honors what is best in us as a people and is a testament to the forward-looking humanity of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. It is a tremendous honor for me and the communities that made me possible."

"I am honored and humbled to have been awarded The Dayton Literary Peace Prize in nonfiction for my memoir, *Brother, I'm Dying*, a book which deals with not only my own family history, but with the devastating consequences of xenophobia and anti-immigrant acts," said Danticat. "Many of us have turned to literature in difficult times and have found comfort and greater understanding there. I hope my work and that of my fellow finalists and winners will continue to help contribute to that conversation."

The 2008 runners-up are:

- Fiction: *Lost City Radio* by Daniel Alarcon (HarperCollins Publishers): Taking place in a nameless South American country, this powerful story illustrates war's devastating impact on a society transformed by violence.
- Non-fiction: *Are We Rome?* by Cullen Murphy (Houghton Mifflin Company): Comparing the politics and culture of Ancient Rome with that of the contemporary United States, Murphy, a former editor at *The Atlantic Monthly*, reveals lessons on how America can avoid Rome's demise.

To be eligible for the 2008 awards, English-language books must be published or translated into English in 2007 and address the theme of peace on a variety of levels, such as between individuals, among families and communities, or among nations, religions, or ethnic groups.

A panel of prominent writers including Gerald Early, Amy Hempel, Jane McCafferty and Katherine Vaz reviewed the 2008 finalists and selected this year's winners and runners-up. A full list of the 2008 finalists can be found at: <http://www.daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/2008-finalists.htm>

About the Dayton Literary Peace Prize

The Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors writers whose work uses the power of literature to foster peace, social justice, and global understanding. Launched in 2006, it has already established itself as one of the world's most prestigious literary honors, and is the only literary peace prize awarded in the United States. As an offshoot of the Dayton Peace Prize, the Dayton Literary Peace Prize awards a \$10,000 cash prize each year to one fiction and one nonfiction author whose work advances peace as a solution to conflict, and leads readers to a better understanding of other cultures, peoples, religions, and political points of view. An annual lifetime achievement award is also bestowed upon a writer whose body of work reflects the Prize's mission; previous honorees included Studs Terkel and Elie Wiesel.