

**Contact:**

Patrick Kowalczyk, [patrick@pkpr.com](mailto:patrick@pkpr.com)

Jenny Chang, [jenny@pkpr.com](mailto:jenny@pkpr.com)

PKPR, 212.627.8098

Download hi-res image:

**DAYTON LITERARY PEACE PRIZE TO HONOR COLM TÓIBÍN WITH**

**RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

*Irish novelist, journalist, and essayist, whose novels explore themes of exile, will be honored at gala Dayton ceremony on November 5th*

**Dayton, OH (Embargoed for July 12, 2017)** – Irish novelist, journalist, and essayist Colm Tóibín, whose fiction and nonfiction captures in heartbreaking detail the impact of exile and political conflict on individual lives, will receive the 2017 [Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award](#), organizers of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize announced today.

Named in honor of the celebrated U.S. diplomat who played an instrumental role in negotiating the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords that ended the war in Bosnia, the award will be presented to Tóibín at the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Gala on November 5th. Founded in 2005, The Dayton Literary Peace Prize is the only international literary peace prize awarded in the United States. It honors writers whose work uses the power of literature to foster peace, social justice, and global understanding. The Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award recognizes authors for their complete body of work.

Born in Ireland in 1955, Colm Tóibín is widely recognized as one of today's greatest living writers. His experiences as a gay man, an expatriate, and an international journalist have shaped his novels, which often explore themes of exile, homecoming, and reconciliation.

Tóibín spent his early twenties as an expatriate in Spain, where he witnessed the country's return to democracy after decades of dictatorship and found the inspiration for his 1990 debut novel, [The South](#). As a journalist he traveled to South America in the 1980s, which he later captured in his 1996 novel [The Story of the Night](#), the story of a gay man coming of age in Argentina during the Falklands War. Three of his novels – [The Blackwater Lightship](#) (1999), about three generations of estranged Irish women coming together to care for a son who is dying of AIDS, [The Master](#) (2004), which explored the later life of Henry James, including his feelings of guilt and regret over his homosexuality, and [The Testament of Mary](#) (2012) – were short-listed for the Man Booker Prize. Other notable works include the novels [Brooklyn](#) (2009), which was adapted into a 2015 film nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture, and [House of Names](#) (2017), which explores how violence begets further acts of violence through a reimagining of the story of Clytemnestra. Tóibín is also the author of several nonfiction works, including 1987's [Bad Blood](#), which documents Tóibín's summer-long walk along the violence-

plagued border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the 2002 essay collection [Love in a Dark Time: Gay Lives from Wilde to Almodovar](#).

"Colm Tóibín's work invites readers to contemplate the deep sadness of exile – from mother or brother, from nation, from oneself – to understand how accidents of geography and family shape identity, and how quirks of circumstance can harden or soften hearts," said Sharon Rab, founder and co-chair of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation. "The surprising turns in his fiction and nonfiction that illustrate the longings and complexity of his characters, even those whose actions we may deplore, remind us of our shared humanity and offer the possibility of reconciliation or simply of understanding, which are the first steps to making peace."

Tóibín shared the following statement on winning the Holbrooke Prize:

"Our task as writers is to work on our sentences, pay close attention to the rhythm, texture and tone of prose. Mostly, our books will be read silently, as they are written silently. Our aim is to reach the reader's imagination, have an effect on the nervous systems of other people. In ways that are both powerful and mysterious a book or a story can deepen the complexity of who we are in the world, how we feel, offering no easy resolutions, no simple images. Through fiction, we learn to see others. The page is not a mirror. It is blank when I start to write, but it contains a version of the world when I finish. It is there for others to be inspired by. Slowly then, a sentence or set of sentences that have their own integrity, their own sense of balance, their own striving towards worth, can become a sonorous metaphor for much else, including for how we might live in the world, how we might see others, what we might do. Good writing thus has elements and undercurrents that are moral as much as aesthetic. Good sentences offer us a way to imagine life in all its strangeness and ambiguity and possibility, alert us to the power of the imagination to transform and transcend our nature, offer us a blueprint not only for who we are but for who we might be, who we might become."

Tóibín will join the ranks of past winners of the Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award, formerly called the Lifetime Achievement Award, including Studs Terkel (2006), Elie Wiesel (2007), Taylor Branch (2008), Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (2009), Geraldine Brooks (2010), Barbara Kingsolver (2011), Tim O'Brien (2012), Wendell Berry (2013), Louise Erdrich (2014), Gloria Steinem (2015), and Marilynne Robinson (2016) .

Finalists for the 2017 Dayton Literary Peace Prize will be announced on September 13, 2017.

### ***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 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. Additionally, the Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award is bestowed upon a writer whose body of work reflects the Prize's mission; previous honorees include Wendell Berry, Taylor Branch, Geraldine Brooks, Louise Erdrich, Barbara Kingsolver, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Tim O'Brien, Marilynne Robinson, Gloria Steinem, Studs Terkel, and Elie Wiesel. For more information visit the Dayton Literary Peace Prize media center at <http://daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/press.htm>.

###