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THE VEINS OF THE OCEAN BY PATRICIA ENGEL

AND WHAT HAVE WE DONE BY DAVID WOOD

NAMED WINNERS OF 2017 DAYTON LITERARY PEACE PRIZE

***Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi and *City of Thorns* by Ben Rawlence named runners-up**

Dayton, OH (October 3, 2017) – *The Veins of the Ocean* by Patricia Engel and *What Have We Done* by David Wood, two books exploring how the warped morality of political conflict trickles down to impact individual lives, today were named the winners of the 2017 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for fiction and nonfiction, respectively.

Homegoing, Yaa Gyasi's debut novel following the descendants of two Ghanaian sisters across three centuries, was named runner-up for fiction, while *City of Thorns*, Ben Rawlence's portrait of life in the world's largest refugee camp, was named the nonfiction runner-up.

Inspired by the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords that ended the war in Bosnia, The Dayton Literary Peace Prize is the only international literary peace prize awarded in the United States. The Prize celebrates the power of literature to promote peace, social justice, and global understanding. This year's winners will be honored at a gala ceremony hosted by Pulitzer Prize winner Gilbert King in Dayton on November 5th. Winners receive a \$10,000 honorarium and runners-up receive \$2,500.

"War and political turmoil come about when leaders lose their sense of right and wrong, but they can, in turn, impair the moral compasses of the individuals who, willingly or not, get caught up in such clashes," said Sharon Rab, founder and co-chair of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation. "Starting from two very different perspectives, Patricia Engel and David Wood remind us that to break the cycle of conflict on the global level, we must support and promote the healing process on a personal level."

The 2017 Dayton Literary Peace in Fiction:

[*The Veins of the Ocean*](#) (Grove Atlantic), by award-winning author Patricia Engel, follows the riveting story of a Cuban-American woman's devotion to her brother on death row and the journey she takes toward a freer future. Set along the vibrant coasts of Miami, Havana, and Cartagena, this novel explores the beauty of the natural world and the solace it brings to even the most fractured lives.

On receiving the prize, Engel said: "Literature can show us what is best in mankind and cast an unforgiving light on the ways we fail ourselves and one another. That an award should recognize the power of the written word to foster human understanding and eradicate imposed and imagined borders in the world community is remarkably brave, and reminds us that as artists we are called through our work, above all things, to the pursuit of peace. I am deeply grateful and honored that my novel has been recognized in this way."

The 2017 Dayton Literary Peace Prize in Nonfiction:

In [*What Have We Done*](#) (Little, Brown & Company), Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Wood offers a groundbreaking examination of a pervasive yet poorly understood experience among the soldiers fighting America's 21st-century wars: moral injury, the violation of fundamental values of right and wrong that so often occurs in the impossible moral dilemmas of modern conflict. Impeccably researched and deeply personal, the book is a call to acknowledge our newest generation of veterans and, as new wars approach, ponder the human costs of putting American boots on the ground.

On winning the prize for nonfiction, Wood said: "News of this award awakened in me powerful memories of the time I spent in Bosnia reporting on the atrocities of that war and on the incredible strength and perseverance of the families who endured those terrible years. And later, as I accompanied U.S. peacekeeping troops into Bosnia, documenting how the Dayton Peace Agreement

was gradually transforming a fragile cease-fire into a structure enabling Bosnians and Serbs and Croats to begin the hard work of recovering their common humanity. That effort goes on, in Bosnia and globally, and I am immensely proud and grateful to be a small part of the peace-building work that the Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors."

The 2017 Dayton Literary Peace Prize Runner Up in Fiction:

[Homegoing](#) (Alfred A. Knopf), Yaa Gyasi's epic debut novel, is a riveting, kaleidoscopic story of race, history, ancestry, love, and time that follows two Ghanaian half-sisters – one who marries an Englishman, another who is sold into slavery in the U.S. – and each of their descendants across three hundred years in Africa and America, revealing how racism is often rooted in tribalism, greed, and the lust for power.

Gyasi said: "Literature shows us the world as it truly is, but it also shows us the world as it could be—peaceful, empathetic, and humane. It is literature that we so often turn to when we want to better understand each other, and I'm encouraged by the fact that people keep seeking this understanding. These days we are constantly confronted with our differences and we are urged to protect ourselves from "the other," but one of the great powers of literature is not that it erases these differences, but rather that it highlights them in order to show us how complex we all are, how rich our world is because of this complexity. I am so honored to be recognized by the Dayton Literary Peace Prize."

The 2017 Dayton Literary Peace Prize Runner Up in Nonfiction:

In [City of Thorns](#), Ben Rawlence interweaves the stories of nine individuals to show what life is like in Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp, sketching the wider political forces that keep the refugees trapped. Lucid, vivid, and illuminating the book tells an urgent human story with deep international repercussions, brought to life through the people who call Dadaab home.

Rawlence said: "Empathy is the beginning of peace between people. Stories that can show us the world through eyes not our own are the way that we learn empathy. In my view, all literature serves this goal of deepening our shared humanity. To be recognized by a prize for spreading peace is the highest honor a book can achieve."

Organizers previously announced that Irish novelist, journalist, and essayist Colm Tóibín (*Brooklyn*, *House of Names*), whose fiction and nonfiction captures the impact of exile and political conflict on individual lives, will receive the 2017 [Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award](#), named in honor of the noted U.S. diplomat who helped negotiate the Dayton Peace Accords.

To be eligible for the 2017 awards, English-language books must have been published or translated into English in 2016 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 [judging panel](#) of prominent writers selected the winners and runners up, including Gish Jen (*Typical American*, *The Girl at the Baggage Claim: Explaining the East-West Culture Gap*), Robin Hemley (*Nola: A Memoir of Faith, Art, and Madness*, *Reply All: Stories*), Alan Taylor (*William Cooper's Town*, *The Internal Enemy*), and Helen Thorpe (*Just Like Us: The True Story Of Four Mexican Girls Coming Of Age In America*, *Soldier Girls: The Battles Of Three Women At Home And At War*)

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>.