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Frederick Douglass Prize Awarded

Yale University's Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition


New York, NY (October 3, 2007) -- Christopher Leslie Brown, Visiting Professor of History at Columbia University, has been selected as the winner of the Frederick Douglass Book Prize, awarded for the best book on slavery or abolition. Brown won for his book, Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press). The book examines the origins of abolitionism in Great Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries. The prize is awarded by Yale University's Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition, sponsored by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

In addition to Brown, the other two finalists for the prize were Matt D. Childs for The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery (University of North Carolina Press); and Cassandra Pybus for Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Freedom (Beacon Press). The $25,000 annual award is the most generous history prize in the field. The prize will be presented to Brown at a dinner in New York City in February 2008.

This year's finalists were selected from a field of over seventy entries by a jury of scholars that included Laurent Dubois (Duke University), Leslie Harris (Emory University), and Stephanie McCurry (University of Pennsylvania). The winner was selected by a review committee of representatives from the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and Yale University.

"Christopher Brown's Moral Capital resets the terrain for understanding the origins and effectiveness of British efforts to end slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries," says McCurry, the Merriam Associate Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. "Moral Capital not only provides an important new argument about British anti-slavery, but also highlights the nature of the relationship between moral sensibility and political activism at any time."

The Frederick Douglass Book Prize was established in 1999 to stimulate scholarship in the field of slavery and abolition by honoring outstanding books. Previous winners were Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan in 1999; David Eltis, 2000; David Blight, 2001; Robert Harms and John Stauffer, 2002; James F. Brooks and Seymour Drescher, 2003; Jean Fagan Yellin, 2004; Laurent Dubois, 2005; and Rebecca J. Scott, 2006.
The award is named for Frederick Douglass (1818\textendash}1895), the slave who escaped bondage to emerge as one of the great American abolitionists, reformers, writers, and orators of the 19th century.

The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, a part of The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University, was launched in November 1998 through a generous donation by philanthropists Richard Gilder and Lewis Lehrman and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Its mission is to promote the study of all aspects of slavery, especially the chattel slave system and its destruction. The Center seeks to foster an improved understanding of the role of slavery, slave resistance, and abolition in the founding of the modern world by promoting interaction and exchange between scholars, teachers, and public historians through publications, educational outreach, and other programs and events.