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2010 Douglass Prize Finalists Announced

News release posted online August 4, 2010
by Gilder Lehrman Center

Yale University's Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition, sponsored by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, has announced the finalists for the Twelfth Annual Frederick Douglass Book Prize, one of the most coveted awards for the study of the African-American experience.



The finalists are: Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff for *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (University of California Press); Siddharth Kara for *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery* (Columbia University Press); and Robert E. McGlone for *John Brown's War Against Slavery* (Cambridge University Press).

The \$25,000 annual award for the year's best non-fiction book on slavery, resistance, and/or abolition is the most generous history prize in its field. The winner will be announced following the Douglass Prize Review Committee meeting in, and the award will be presented at a dinner at the Yale Club of New York on February 24, 2011.

This year's finalists were selected from a field of over eighty entries by a jury of scholars that included Edward Ball (Author and National Book Award Winner), Jeffrey Ferguson (Amherst College), and Martha Hodes (New York University).

The Frederick Douglass Prize was established in 1999 to stimulate scholarship in the field by honoring outstanding accomplishments. Previous winners are 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; Rebecca J. Scott, 2006; Christopher Leslie Brown, 2007; Stephanie Smallwood, 2008; and Annette Gordon-Reed, 2009.

The award is named for Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), the one-time slave who escaped bondage to emerge as one of the great American abolitionists, reformers, writers, and orators of the nineteenth century.

In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World, by Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff (University of California Press), tells the fascinating story of how enslaved Africans shaped and changed the landscape of the New World. With remarkable originality, the authors reveal how the men and women of the Middle Passage wielded their agricultural experience as part of the unending struggle to control their own lives. Interpreting archival evidence with both rigor and creativity, Carney and Rosomoff explore the provisioning of slave ships, the transfer and diffusion of African horticultural knowledge, the botanical gardens of slaves, and the gastronomic legacies of black slavery, among many other intriguing topics. Comprehensive and compelling, this is a work of truly global dimensions that narrates the ordeal of enslavement as a simultaneous story of food, memory, and survival.

Siddharth Kara's book *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery* (Columbia University Press) carefully and compassionately convinces us to understand the phenomenon of modern-day human sex trafficking as part of the history of slavery and abolition. As an investigative reporter, Kara posed as a customer across Asia, Europe, and the United States, entangling himself with perpetrators and speaking confidentially with victims. Sidestepping sensationalism and absent any delusion of casting himself as a rescuer, Kara relates wrenching stories in lucid prose, thereby shedding a strong and steady beam of light on a widespread and ongoing global crime. With an exemplary mixture of courage and humility, the author combines a gripping first-person narrative with trenchant economic analysis and clear-eyed proposals for change. In the end, this book prevents us from consigning slavery to the past.

John Brown's War Against Slavery, by Robert E. McGlone (Cambridge University Press), tells a new version of the story of John Brown by taking on the most perplexing question of all: Why did John Brown carry out the raid at Harper's Ferry? With a fine balance of narration and interpretation, McGlone offers a meticulous re-creation of Brown's life, returning to old questions and asking new ones. No quest for seamless analysis, McGlone's story embraces complexity as he charts transformations in Brown's family alongside the shifting political world of the antebellum United States. This absorbing and learned book ultimately portrays a keen, compassionate, and conflicted abolitionist who made a purposeful decision to go forward with a plot that was sure to fail, but only in the most literal sense.