



The Loft Literary Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**The Loft Literary Center Announces 2017 McKnight
Artist Fellowships for Writers**

**Four Minnesota Creative Prose and One Children's Author
Receive \$25,000 Each**

The Loft Literary Center is pleased to announce the winners of the 2017 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Awards in Creative Prose and Loft Award in Children's Literature (Older Children). The fellowships are judged by prominent American authors and editors, and the winners, all from Minnesota, are awarded \$25,000 each. The judges this year were Kiese Laymon and Kate Messner, and the Loft received 124 qualified Creative Prose applications and 37 qualified Children's Literature applications.

This year's recipients are creative prose writers Erin Kate Ryan, Susan Follett, Heid E. Erdrich, and Taiyon J. Coleman. The recipient in Children's Literature is Brian Farrey.

The honorable mentions in creative prose are Rebecca Kanner, Lori Saroya, Tami Mohamed Brown, and Juliet Patterson. The honorable mentions in children's literature are Elizabeth Karre, Alison Behnke, Megan Atwood, and Jane O'Reilly.

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Awards in Creative Prose: 2017 Recipients

Erin Kate Ryan's fiction as appeared in or is forthcoming from such journals as *Glimmer Train*, *Conjunctions*, *The Normal School*, *Booth*, and *Hayden's Ferry Review*. She's a 2017 Minnesota Emerging Writer grantee and a 2016 Minnesota State Arts Board Artist's Initiative grantee; both awards support her novel in progress, *Quantum Girl Theory*. She holds an MFA from Bennington Writing Seminars and a JD from Boston University.

Susan Follett is an advocate for using stories to increase understanding of history and to dismantle the stereotypes that divide us. Having grown up in the shadow and silence of Jim Crow—unaware of the March from Selma scarcely 100 miles from her hometown Meridian, Mississippi, where three civil rights workers disappeared during Freedom Summer—she set out to examine and reimagine the times. *The Fog Machine*, her first novel, is the result of that research and reflection. It was published in 2014 in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer. As author and public speaker, Susan shares Civil Rights Movement history and her journey of discovery. Her “Stories from Civil Rights History, Then and Now” events help classrooms and communities connect history to today. Her work explores prejudice and what enables change. Susan lives in Rosemount, MN.

Heid E. Erdrich is the author of the memoir-in-recipes *Original Local*, which tells indigenous foods stories from her family and from tribes in the Upper Midwest. Heid is Ojibwe enrolled at Turtle Mountain. An interdisciplinary artist, she regularly publishes nonfiction essays and collaborates to create performances and poem films as well as prose on visual artists. Heid has authored five collections of poetry, most recently *Curator of Ephemera at the New Museum for Archaic Media*, and has edited two anthologies of Native American writing. Heid is working on a book of short prose and cross-genre writing on race, art, and Native Nations. She teaches in the MFA low-residency program of Augsburg College.

Taiyon J Coleman is a poet, essayist, and fiction writer. Taiyon is a Cave Canem fellow, and her writing has appeared in *Bum Rush the Page: A Def Poetry Jam*, *Riding*

Shotgun: Women Writing about Their Mothers, *The Ringing Ear: Black Poets Lean South* edited by Nikky Finney; *Blues Vision: African American Writing from Minnesota*, and her critical essay, "Disparate Impacts: Living Just Enough for the City," appears in the 2016 anthology, *A Good Time for the Truth*, edited by Sun Yung Shin. Taiyon is an Assistant Professor of English with a focus in American Multicultural Literature at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota, and she is completing her first novel, *Chicago@Fifteen* and lives in the Twin-Cities area.

McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Children's Literature/Children Older Than Eight: The 2017 Recipient

Brian Farrey's debut novel, *With or Without You*, was named a Stonewall honor book by the American Library Association and was the 2012 Minnesota Book Award winner for Young People's literature. The first book in his critically acclaimed middle grade fantasy trilogy, *The Vengekeep Prophecies*, was named a Junior Library Guild selection and appeared on the Winter 2012–2013 Kids' Indie Next List. His most recent novel, *The Secret of Dreadwillow Carse*, was named one of Kirkus Reviews "Best Children's Books of 2016." He lives in the Twin Cities with his husband.

Creative Prose Judge

Kiese Laymon is author of *Long Division*, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*, the forthcoming memoir, *Heavy*, and the forthcoming novel, *And So On*. He is a Professor of English and Creative Writing at University of Mississippi. Kiese Laymon will read at the Loft on Saturday, April 29 at 7 p.m.

Children's Literature Judge

Kate Messner is the author of more than two dozen books for young readers, including picture books like *Over and Under the Snow*, *Over and Under the Pond*, and *How to Read a Story* with Chronicle, the popular *Ranger in Time* series series with Scholastic, and middle grade novels like *The Seventh Wish* and E.B. White Read Aloud Award Winner *The Brilliant Fall of Gianna Z.* with Bloomsbury. Kate is also a former middle school English teacher and frequent conference presenter. She lives on Lake Champlain with her family and loves spending time in the Adirondack Mountains.

About the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers

Now in its 36th year, the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers provide Minnesota writers of demonstrated ability with an opportunity to work on their writing for a concentrated period of time. Five \$25,000 fellowships are awarded. One Award in Children's Literature alternates annually between writers for children under the age of eight and writers for older readers. Four fellowships alternate annually between writers of poetry/spoken word poetry and writers of creative prose. Writers must have either published a book in the genre in which they are applying, or have a significant number of publications in literary magazines. The Loft McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers are supported by the McKnight Foundation.

Previous McKnight recipients are too numerous to list, but they include Robert Bly, Patricia Hampl, Margaret Hasse, Jim Moore, Louis Jenkins, Cary Waterman, Sandra Benitez, Deborah Keenan, Jack El-Hai, Leslie Adrienne Miller, Patricia Weaver Francisco, Barrie Jean Borich, Lorna Landvik, Kate DiCamillo, Molly Beth Griffin, Danez Smith, William Kent Krueger, Ray Gonzalez, Dobby Gibson, Ed Bok Lee, Heather Bouwman, Anders Carlson-Wee, David Mura, Shannon Gibney, Anne Ursu, and John Jodzio.

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Incorporated in 1975, The Loft Literary Center is one of the nation's leading independent literary centers. The Loft advances the artistic development of writers, fosters a thriving literary community, and inspires a passion for literature.