

Opening Minds. Challenging Minds.®

72<sup>nd</sup>

ANNUAL ANISFIELD-WOLF BOOK AWARDS

September 6, 2007

Bolton Theatre

The Cleveland Play House

# 72<sup>nd</sup>

## ANNUAL ANISFIELD-WOLF BOOK AWARDS

Welcome to the 2007 Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards ceremony. For more than 70 years, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards has recognized writers whose works contribute to our understanding and appreciation of the rich diversity of human cultures.

**Chimamanda  
Ngozi Adichie**  
*Half of a Yellow Sun*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in Nigeria and grew up in the house formerly occupied by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. Her father was the University of Nigeria's first professor of statistics and her mother, its first female registrar. Adichie completed her secondary education at the university's school, receiving several academic prizes. She went on to study medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria for a year and a half, where she edited *The Compass*.

At the age of 19 Adichie came to the United States. She studied communications and political science at Eastern Connecticut State University, graduating summa cum laude. She received a master's degree in creative writing from Johns Hopkins University.

Adichie started working on her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, during her senior year at Eastern Connecticut. The book received wide critical acclaim, was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction and was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book (2005). *Half of a Yellow Sun* received the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction.

Adichie currently divides her time between Nigeria and the United States and has pursued graduate work in the African Studies program at Yale University.



Photo by Okey Adichie



**Martha Collins**  
*Blue Front*

Martha Collins is the recently retired Pauline Delaney Professor of Creative Writing at Oberlin College and one of the editors of *FIELD* magazine and an editor of Oberlin College Press. She established the creative writing

Photo by Doug Macomber

program at the University of Massachusetts-Boston and taught at Oberlin from 1997 to 2007.

*Blue Front*, the book-length poem based on a lynching her father witnessed when he was five years old in Cairo, Illinois, was also chosen as one of "25 Books to Remember from 2006" by the New York Public Library and won an Ohioana Book Award. A selection of poems from *Blue Front* received the Laurence Goldstein Poetry Prize in 2005. The author of four previous poetry collections, including *Some Things Words Can Do*, Collins has also published two books of co-translations of Vietnamese poetry.

Her previous honors include fellowships from the National Endowment of the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Bunting Institute, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, and the Witter Bynner Foundation for translation, as well as three Pushcart Prizes, the Alice Fay Di Castagnola Award and a Lannan Foundation Residency Grant.

A native of Omaha, Nebraska, Collins earned a B.A. at Stanford University and holds an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. She currently resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**Scott Reynolds Nelson**

*Steel Drivin' Man: The Untold Story of an American Legend*

Scott Reynolds Nelson is the Leslie and Naomi Legum Professor of History at the College of William and Mary.

*Steel Drivin' Man*, which explores the real life and legend of railway hero John Henry, received the Merle Curti Prize for best book in U.S. social and cultural history from the Organization of American Historians and the National Award for Arts Writing. The book received widespread coverage in publications as diverse as *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune* and *Entertainment Weekly*. His research was featured on the cover of the Chronicle of Higher Education and has been given prominence on the History Channel.

Nelson is the author of the 1999 work *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* and is the co-author of the recently published *A People At War: Civilians and Soldiers in America's Civil War*. He is currently working on a children's book, *Ain't Nothing But a Man: My Quest to Find the Real John Henry*, with co-author Marc Aronson.

He received his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in history from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He resides in Williamsburg, Virginia.



**Taylor Branch**

Born in Atlanta, Taylor Branch is an American author and historian best known for his award-winning trilogy chronicling the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the history of the American civil rights movement.

The first volume, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63*, published in 1988, received the Pulitzer Prize for History, National Book Critics Circle Award for general nonfiction and the 1989 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for non-fiction. The second volume, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-65*, followed in 1998. Among its recognitions were the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award and the Sidney Hillman Book Award. He completed the trilogy in 2006 with the publication of *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68*.

Branch attended the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill on a Morehouse Scholarship. He graduated in 1968 and went on to earn an M.P.A from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. He received a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" in 1991 and the National Humanities Medal in 1999.

In 1972 Branch helped run George McGovern's Texas presidential campaign. One of his co-leaders in that effort was Bill Clinton, who would later become President of the United States. Branch is currently working on *Wrestling History: The Bill Clinton Tapes*, based on hours of late night conversations with the former president in the private residence at the White House.

Branch lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

**Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards  
72nd Annual Celebration**

- Welcome** **Ronald B. Richard**  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
The Cleveland Foundation
- Introduction of  
2007 Winners** **Henry Louis Gates Jr.**  
Chairperson, Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards Jury  
Alphonse Fletcher University Professor  
Harvard University
- Acceptance** **Martha Collins**  
*Blue Front*
- Scott Reynolds Nelson**  
*Steel Drivin' Man: The Untold Story  
of an American Legend*
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**  
*Half of a Yellow Sun*
- Taylor Branch**  
Lifetime Achievement Award

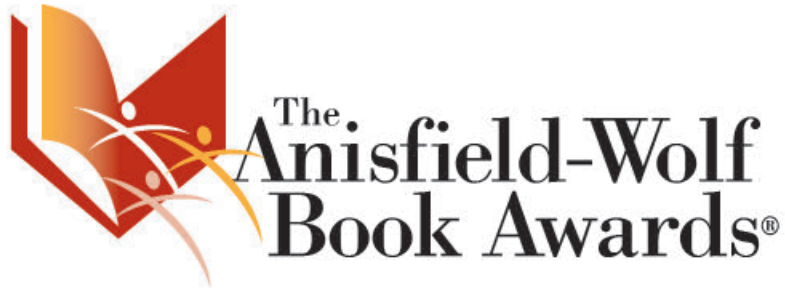
**2007 Anisfield-Wolf Awards Jury**

- Henry Louis Gates Jr.**, Chairperson  
Alphonse Fletcher University Professor, Harvard University
- Rita Dove**, Commonwealth Professor of English, University of Virginia
- Joyce Carol Oates**, Roger S. Berlind '52 Professor in the Humanities,  
Princeton University
- Steven Pinker**, Johnstone Family Professor of Psychology,  
Harvard University
- Simon Schama**, University Professor of History and Art History,  
Columbia University

**Thank You**

The Cleveland Foundation wishes to thank the Cleveland Public Library and A Cultural Exchange for their continued support.

The Cleveland Foundation administers  
the Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards.



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