

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEADLINE: The William Meredith Foundation presents the 2014 William Meredith Award for Poetry to US Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey

BODY:

The William Meredith Foundation invites writers, reporters, and press advocates to celebrate the 2014 William Meredith Award for Poetry presented to Natasha Trethewey in recognition of her talent as a poet and her work to promote poetry as an art form to American audiences. The award has no application process, but comes to the author unsolicited in the spirit of generosity that informed William's interactions with the world of poetry when he judged competitions and supported new talent. It carries a modest cash award along with the publication of a chap book by Ms. Trethewey, Congregation, scheduled for publication during National Poetry Month in April, 2014.

When Natasha Trethewey was selected as the US Poet Laureate for a second term in 2014, Librarian of Congress James Billington writes in his citation "Her poems dig beneath the surface of history—personal or communal, from childhood or from a century ago—to explore the human struggles that we all face." She is, as Robert Casper has said, a poet of "reclamation and reckoning."

The Meredith Award to Ms. Trethewey recognizes in a personal way - as from one poet laureate to another - Meredith's belief that poetry's challenge is to be useful in the culture and that it reflect "the language of the tribe." "Morale is what I think about all the time now, what hopeful men and women can say and do," Meredith writes, and despite the darkness she often reports, it is the felt observation, "the exploration of the "human struggles we all face" that is the good news of Natasha Trethewey's poetry. Publishers Weekly describes Beyond Katrina, as a "hauntingly beautiful book, looking at "the vast devastation with sober and poetic eyes." Meredith's own assessment of Robert Lowell's poetry seems fitting as the foundation recognizes "one of our most indispensable poets."

The message you brought back again and again
from the dark brink had the glitter of truth.
From the beginning, you told it as memoir:
even though you didn't cause it,
the memoirs said of the trouble they recounted,
it was always your familiar when it came.

Born in Gulfport, Miss., in 1966, Trethewey earned a B.A. in English from the University of Georgia, an M.A. in poetry from Hollins University, and an M.F.A. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has had a distinguished teaching career and is presently the Robert W. Woodruff Professor of English and Creative Writing at Emory University.

She is the author of Thrall (2012), Native Guard (Houghton Mifflin), Bellocq's Ophelia (Graywolf, 2002), and Domestic Work (Graywolf, 2000). She is also the author of Beyond Kartina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast (University of Georgia Press). Her honors include the Pulitzer Prize and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2012, she was appointed the State Poet Laureate of Mississippi. Throughout 2013, she has joined Jeffrey Brown in a series of on-location broadcast reports for the NewsHour exploring issues that matter to Americans through the framework of poetry.