



The Freedom to Write

A- A+

Select Language

DONATE NOW

ADVOCACY & ACTION

WRITERS & READERS

FESTIVAL & EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP

ABOUT

GIVE



search



DONATE NOW

Advocacy
& ActionWriters
& ReadersFestivals
& Events

[Home](#) > PEN America Announces 2021 Literary Awards Longlists

PEN AMERICA ANNOUNCES 2021 LITERARY AWARDS LONGLISTS

More than 125 writers and translators honored across 11 book awards, including four books nominated for multiple awards

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 22, 2020

(New York, NY) – PEN America today announced the **Longlists for its 2021 Literary Awards**, spanning 11 book awards and encompassing more than 125 writers and translators, representing the year’s most extraordinary literary talents. Over 80 judges have selected the Longlists, which are made up of categories including the novel, short story collection, translation, poetry, science writing, essay, biography, and more.

With such a dynamic slate of categories, this year multiple books are nominated in more than one category. For the first time ever, one book appears on three Longlists: Kawai Strong Washburn’s *Sharks in the Time of Saviors*, a debut novel, is on the Longlist for the prestigious **PEN/Jean Stein Book Award**, as well as the **PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Novel** and the **PEN Open Book Award**. Isabel Wilkerson’s *Caste* is Longlisted for two awards, as is Asako Serizawa’s *Inheritors* and Raven Leilani’s *Luster: A Novel*.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE ENTIRE LONGLIST

“This year’s Longlists speak to the extraordinary diversity of the global literary canon, and showcases an incredible wealth of stories and voices from a true cross-section of writers and authors,” said **Clarisse Rosaz Shariyf, senior director of literary programs at PEN America**. “It’s been an extraordinary year, and these books and their authors have reminded us of the power of literature, and that writers can be guides to a more equal, more just society. We’re delighted to recognize and uplift these extraordinary voices of our time.”

Half of the longlisted titles for 2021 come from independent or university presses, and of the 129 authors and translators included on this year’s Longlists, over 48 percent identify as writers of color, and nearly 60 percent as female. Dubbed “the Oscars, but for books” by **comedian Seth Myers**, the 2021 PEN America Literary Awards will confer some \$380,000 in prize money. Judges for this year’s program include Roxane Gay, Sandra Cisneros, Jhumpa Lahiri, Terrance Hayes, Tommy Orange, Kali Fajardo-Anstine, Thomas Page McBee, Alice Wong, Jeremy O. Harris, Toi Derricotte, Brandon Hobson, and Eric Schlosser, among others.

[Learn about the complete cohort of 2021 Literary Awards judges here.](#)

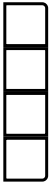
“Across our Longlists, we celebrate over 30 debut writers,” said [Jane Marchant, manager of the PEN America Literary Awards program](#). “Their placement on these lists counteracts the chaos this year’s cancelled book tours and in-person festivals brought, and comes during a deeply challenging time for publishing and authors as a whole, as the industry faces criticism for not always elevating debut authors, particularly from historically marginalized groups. Our Literary Awards play a key role in honoring both new and established voices, and at our core we uphold the value of inclusive literary excellence.”

The longlisted authors for the **PEN/Jean Stein Book Award**, a \$75,000 prize honoring a groundbreaking book of the year, includes Akwaeke Emezi, Anthony Cody, Isabel Wilkerson, Ross Gay, Raven Leilani, Catherine Lacey, Aimee Bender, Kawai Strong Washburn, Lauren Sandler, and Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore. The Longlist for the **PEN Open Book Award**, which honors the best book from an author of color, includes Leila Chatti, Souvannkham Thammavongsa, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, E.J. Koh, Maw Shein Win, S*an D. Henry-Smith, Asako Serizawa, Meng Jin, Kawai Strong Washburn, and Hafizah Geter.

The **PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry Collection** Longlist includes Danez Smith, Claire Meuschke, Destiny O. Birdsong, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, Dujie Tahat, Gerald Stern, John Murillo, Craig Santos Perez, Rae Armantrout, and Victoria Chang.

“These poets use historical documentation to tell and retell stories which are inescapably applicable to our current moment in time, as well as our collective future,” Marchant said. “With these collections, we witness poetry as an act, a testimony, a fight for resilience and against erasure. These collections ask for change. They ask us to collectively witness.”

Finalists in each category will be announced in February 2021, with a virtual awards ceremony and celebration for the winners in early spring. Publishers, agents, and independent authors submitted over 1,850 works for consideration, which were reviewed and judged by independent panels.



Tags: [2021 Literary Awards](#), [book awards](#), [Literary Awards](#), [literary programming](#), [Longlists](#) Genre: [Press Release](#) Topic: [2021 Literary Awards](#) Category: [Advocacy, News & Analysis](#) Country: [United States](#)

Join PEN America Today

Defend free expression, support persecuted writers, and promote literary culture.

Subscribe

Get updates on events, literary awards, free expression issues, and global news.

Email Address



What's New



Works of Justice Podcast: Criminal Justice Expert Dr. Bruce Western on Decarceration, Reentry, and Vaccination



Temperature Check, Vol. 11: Vaccination Behind Bars



The PEN Pod: On Political Ads, the Children's Canon, and Ongoing Crackdowns in Myanmar with Suzanne Nossel

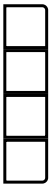


PEN America Condemns Myanmar Military Regime's Deadly Use of Force

ALERT US

Are you an artist at risk or know someone who is?

CONTACT ARC



PEN AMERICA ON

PEN America 3h

TODAY: Join [@AtRiskArtists](#), [@UNSRCulture](#), [@SimonCallow](#), [@IFACCA](#) and other prominent cultural experts at 11AM ET for a dynamic discussion on the impacts of the [#COVID19](#) pandemic on [#CulturalRights](#) around the globe. Register: <http://bit.ly/Mar9culture>.

4 4 Twitter

PEN America Retweeted

Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) 18h

On the [#IWD2021](#), ARC celebrates women artists Yulia Tsvetkova, [@Immigrantmove](#) Tania Bruguera, [@pussyrrriot](#) Masha Alekhina, [@wangnanfu](#), [@aslierdogn](#), [@bettytomkins](#), [@wanuri](#), & Kubra Kahdemi who shared their experiences to create the Safety Guide for Artists. <http://bit.ly/3sYoNq8>

3 12 Twitter

PEN America 17h

What free speech challenges are young people facing in the classroom, and how should they navigate them? Students can register to find out on 3/10 at 6PM ET in our latest Free Speech Live event with PEN America host [@NikoFreeSpeech](#) and guest [@jzfriedman](#): <https://bit.ly/300oets>.

3 3 Twitter

PEN AMERICA

588 BROADWAY, SUITE 303

NEW YORK, NY 10012

T (212) 334-1660 F (212) 334-2181

PEN AMERICA LOS ANGELES
PO BOX 1469
SANTA MONICA, CA 90406
T (323) 424-4939

PEN AMERICA WASHINGTON, D.C.
1015 15TH STREET, NW, SUITE 600
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005
T (202) 631-9475



[Donate Today](#)

Copyright © 2021 PEN America. All rights reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#)

