

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reinberger Children's Library Center, Kent State University School of Information

February 14, 2023

The Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction Selection Committee is excited to announce that *African Town* by Irene Latham and Charles Waters, published by G.P.Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Random House, LLC., is the 2023 winner of the award.

With vivid prose, the authors narrate voices inspired by the last survivors of the transatlantic slave trade and follow their lives as they settle in Alabama. While suffering the atrocities of slavery, they dream of returning home to Africa for a better life. Despite the odds against them, they channel their hope to find ways to love and live again and form their own community in Africantown.

Irene Latham and Charles Waters have collaborated on two other poetry books for younger readers, but this is their first book for teens. The two visited Africantown and met with descendants of the last slave ship, the *Clotilda*, and pulled inspiration from these interviews. Giving each character a voice in distinctive prose was no easy task and powerfully brings the characters to life. Upon hearing of their award, the authors stated, *"We are humbled and overjoyed that you found something to love in the story of the Clotilda survivors. We can't wait to share this news with descendants Joycelyn Davis, Delisha Marshall and Altevese Rosario, who will also be so grateful to know the story of their resilient, creative ancestors has reached more people."*

"Right from the touching introduction penned by Joycelyn M. Davis, the reader knows that this will be a genuine telling inspired by the lives of Black Africans who were illegally captured and forced through an unimaginable shift of leaving their beloved home, to becoming property in a strange new place. The selection committee appreciates the richness of the verse, the research supporting the story, the collaboration and talent of the authors that highlight the horrors of enslavement yet fill it with hope, as well as the rich information provided by the authors at the end of the book," said Chair, Mary Anne Nichols, Senior Lecturer, Kent State University School of Information.

Nichols would like to thank the hard-working 2023 committee members who are: East Baton Rouge (LA) School Librarian, Dr. Deleon M.W. Awill; Reinberger Children's Library Center Director, Michelle Baldini; Bloomington (IL) Public Library Children's Librarian, Alexandra Bell; Assistant Professor, Kent State University School of Information, Dr. Katie Campana; Oak Pointe Elementary (SC) School Librarian, Angela Durham; Washington DC Public Schools Librarian, Kevin Lee; Indian Land High School (SC) School Librarian, Helen A. Prince; New York Public Library's Senior Children's Librarian, Rachel Sweany; and Cuyahoga County (OH) Public Library's Family Engagement Specialist, Maria Trivisonno.

The Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction was established in 1982 by children's author Scott O'Dell in the hope that it would persuade authors to focus on writing historical fiction for young readers. With genuine devotion, the matriarch of the O'Dell family, Elizabeth Hall, continues her commitment to her late husband and his legacy by administering the award, which includes a prize of \$5000.00 to an author of a distinguished work of historical fiction published by a U.S. publisher and set in the Americas. For more information about Scott O'Dell and the Scott O'Dell Award please visit <https://scottodell.com/the-scott-odell-award>

About Kent State University School of Information's Reinberger Children's Library Center

The Reinberger Children's Library Center functions as a one-of-a-kind model children's library and collection of special collections. It serves as a platform for symposia, conferences, and community events relevant to educators, librarians, researchers, students, artists, designers, authors, illustrators, curators, and book enthusiasts and collectors from all over the world. It supports the iSchool youth faculty and their national and international research and teaching. The School of Information's youth faculty are regularly invited to speak around the world, contributing and participating in important conversations about early literacy, youth literature, informal learning environments, equity in education and the importance of outreach to underserved communities and diverse books for youth.

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