

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, September 8, 2011

### Showcasing the Toronto Book Awards Shortlist at The Word On The Street

**Who:** The Word On The Street partners with the City of Toronto and the Toronto Public Library to present the 37<sup>th</sup> Toronto Book Awards shortlisted authors

**When:** Festival day is Sunday, Sept. 25, 2011 from 11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

**Where:** Toronto Book Awards Tent at Queen's Park in Downtown Toronto

**Details:** Hear presentations by the shortlisted authors plus five Diaspora Dialogues writers

This year's Toronto Book Awards theme is "Get a new read on Toronto" – giving the community an opportunity to discover Toronto's diversity through the eyes of authors. Be sure to check out the Toronto Book Awards Tent, and get a new view of Toronto through its literature.

#### Programming Schedule:

##### 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **Rabindranath Maharaj** presents his nominated book *The Amazing Absorbing Boy*, published by Knopf Canada

Samuel is just 17 when his mother dies and he is called to live with the father he has only heard of. He leaves his village in Trinidad and flies to Toronto, where he finds his father living in a place called Regent Park. Samuel is lonely in this "big mall of a country," but he has his memories of superheroes, his mentors, to guide him, including the memory of an unusual friend who was two superheroes in one, as he sets out to explore what Toronto has to offer. **Rabindranath Maharaj** is the author of five novels and three short story collections. His books have been nominated for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (twice), The Rogers Fiction Prize, The Chapters/Books in Canada First Novel Award, and the Bocas Literature Award. His most recent novel won the 201 Trillium English Language Fiction Prize.

##### 12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **James King** presents *Étienne's Alphabet*, published by Cormorant Books

Étienne Morneau is a man of few friends and even fewer words. A recluse, the only way he can make sense of the world is to compile lists and stick to a routine. Yet in spite of Étienne's unique perspective, or perhaps because of it, he is secretly a creative genius. His art is infused with a strange beauty, and his journals – organized in the form of a dictionary – reveal an innocent soul yearning to take part in life and all its small glories. **James King**, Distinguished University Professor in the Faculty of Humanities at McMaster University, has been a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He is the author of four previous novels: *Faking* (1999), *Blue Moon* (2000), *Transformations* (2003), and *Pure Inventions* (2006). He is also the author of eight works of biography.

##### 12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Toronto poet **Ricardo Sternberg** will present *Fauna* on behalf of 2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **Alissa York**. *Fauna* is published by Random House of Canada.

One day federal wildlife officer Edal Jones is able to handle humans smuggling rare creatures and killing most of them in the process; the next day she cannot. After watching a girl rescuing migratory birds that have knocked themselves out on the city's glass towers, Edal follows her to an auto-wrecker's yard in a wide ravine, and discovers a most unlikely sanctuary. Here, waifs and strays both human and animal find comfort and healing under the wing of the handsome proprietor, Guy Howell. But Guy's sanctuary is under attack from a different kind of lost soul, one on a mission to destroy the creatures that call the valley home. **Alissa York's** fiction has won the Journey Prize and the Bronwen Wallace Award, and has been published in Canada, the U.S., France, Holland and Italy. Her most recent novel, *Effigy*, was shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and longlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

**1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **Nicholas Ruddock** presents *The Parabolist*, published by Doubleday Canada

Part comedy, part mystery, *The Parabolist* is a searingly smart and funny novel about murder, sex, medical school, poetry and vigilante justice on the streets of Toronto in 1975. Told through interlacing narratives, the story funnels toward the eye of an unsolved crime: on a rainy summer night, a woman is raped and very nearly murdered, but for the intervention of two drunken vigilantes who kill her attacker before fleeing the scene. The only clue the police have about their identities: a smear of Crisco shortening found on the victim. This is a satirical, whimsical, dangerous and tender story of earnest youth and their ardent desire for love, acceptance and fulfillment. **Nicholas Ruddock's** writing has been published in *The Dalhousie Review*, *The Antigonish Review*, *Fiddlehead*, *Prism International*, *Grain*, *sub-Terrain*, *Event*, and *Exile*. His short story "How Eunice Got Her Baby" was published in the Journey Prize Anthology in 2007, and a short film adaptation, narrated by Gordon Pinsent, has been made by the Canadian Film Centre.

**1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **James FitzGerald** presents *What Disturbs Our Blood*, published by Random House of Canada

James FitzGerald is born into the gothic house of Dr. Gerald FitzGerald, his long dead grandfather, a brilliant yet tormented pathologist of Irish blood and epic accomplishment, whose vaccines saved untold lives but whose memory has been mysteriously erased from public consciousness. As the boy watches his own father, Jack – also an eminent doctor, plunge into a suicidal psychosis, he intuits, as the psychiatrists do not, some unspeakable secret buried like a tumour deep in the multi-generational layers of the family unconscious. Growing into manhood, he knows in his bones that he must stalk an ancient curse before it stalks him. To set himself free, he must break the silence and put words to the page. **James FitzGerald** is a journalist and author whose first book, *Old Boys: The Powerful Legacy of Upper Canada College*, was a controversial inside look at the attitudes and mores of Canada's ruling class. The article that sparked *What Disturbs Our Blood* won a National Magazine Award.

**2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Diaspora Dialogues Hour** – Featuring readings from the following authors: **Margaret Christakos**, author of *Welling*, **Jo SiMalaya Alcampo**, **Jennifer Marston** and **Sheila Murray**, authors of *TOK: Writing the New Toronto, Book 6*, and Ibi Kaslik, author of *The Angel Riots*. **Diaspora Dialogues** supports the creation and presentation of new fiction, poetry and drama that reflect the complexity of the city through the eyes of its richly diverse writers. Publishing and mentoring activities, as well as a monthly multidisciplinary performance festival, help encourage the creation of a literature that is vibrant and inclusive, while bringing these works to a wide audience.

**3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **Rabindranath Maharaj** presents his nominated book *The Amazing Absorbing Boy*, published by Knopf Canada – As above.

**3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **James King** presents *Étienne's Alphabet*, published by Cormorant Books James King – As above.

**4:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

Toronto poet **Ricardo Sternberg** will present **Fauna** on behalf of 2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **Alissa York**. **Fauna** is published by Random House of Canada – As above.

**4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **Nicholas Ruddock** presents **The Parabolist**, published by Doubleday Canada – As above.

**5:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.**

2011 Toronto Book Awards finalist **James FitzGerald** presents **What Disturbs Our Blood**, published by Random House of Canada – As above.

**About the Toronto Book Awards**

Established by Toronto City Council in 1974, The Toronto Book Awards honour authors of books of literary or artistic merit that are evocative of Toronto. The annual awards offer \$15,000 in prize money. Each finalist receives \$1,000 and the winning author receives the remaining prize money. The 2010 winner was Mark Sinnett for his novel [The Carnivore](#) published by ECW Press. Previous winners include Austin Clarke, Margaret Atwood, Kevin Bazzana, David Bezmozgis, Dionne Brand, Sarah Dearing, Robertson Davies, Glen Downie, Timothy Findley, Joe Fiorito, Camilla Gibb, Katherine Govier, A.B. McKillop, Anne Michaels, Michael Ondaatje, Michael Redhill and Kate Taylor.

**About Diaspora Dialogues**

Diaspora Dialogues supports the creation and presentation of new fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry and drama that reflect the complexity of the city, as seen through the eyes of its richly diverse writers. We use art and ideas to explore questions of our connected humanity, and our programs and events help encourage the creation of a literature – and audience – that is vibrant and inclusive. Toronto – the world within one city – has tremendous stories to tell. Diaspora Dialogues is committed to bringing these stories to both the domestic and international stage.

**About The Word On The Street:**

Every year on the last Sunday in September, in the cities of Vancouver, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, Kitchener, Toronto, and Halifax, The Word On The Street festivals unite the country in a national celebration of literacy and the written word. Annually attracting over 200,000 visitors to its Queen's Park location, The Word On The Street Toronto is the largest book and magazine festival in Canada.

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Please visit the festival's official website at [www.thewordonthestreet.ca](http://www.thewordonthestreet.ca). Read our blog, become a fan on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.