

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Randall Kenan Selects Nancy Werking Poling Winner of the 2018 Alex Albright Creative Nonfiction Prize**

Nancy Werking Poling of Black Mountain is the winner of the 2018 Alex Albright Creative Nonfiction Prize competition for "Leander's Lies." Poling will receive \$1000 from the *North Carolina Literary Review*, thanks to a generous *NCLR* reader's donation that allowed this year's honorarium to increase (from the previous award of \$250). Her winning essay will be published in the *North Carolina Literary Review (NCLR)* in 2019.

Editor Margaret Bauer reports that submissions for the competition doubled from previous years. A total of 15 finalists out of 63 submissions were sent to this year's final judge, Randall Kenan. Kenan is the author of several books, including the nonfiction *Walking on Water: Black American Lives at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*, and will be inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in October. Kenan selected Poling's story for the 2018 Albright Prize, saying, "It was love at first read to me, and stands out in originality and in tone."

After years of living in many parts of the country, Nancy Werking Poling reports that she is "now happily settled in Black Mountain, NC, an area where nature and history are honored." Historical influences are woven into her 2017 nonfiction book, *Before It was Legal: A Black-White Marriage (1945-1987)*. Poling is also the author of *Had Eve Come First and Jonah Been a Woman* (2010), a short story collection, and *Out of the Pumpkin Shell* (2009), a novel. She has recently completed another novel, currently titled "Wrap Me Tight in Earthen Cloak," which is set in North Carolina and inspired by the question: During this period of environmental crisis, how do I make my voice and life count?

Kenan selected Jennifer Harding's essay "Looking for Charles" for second place, saying, "I like this piece a lot. Very complicated. Very unexpected." The Charles whom Harding seeks is the African American writer Charles Chesnut, who set many of his works in North Carolina, and Harding's essay will be published in the 2019 issue's special feature section on African American writers of North Carolina. Harding is an Associate Professor of English at Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, PA. She has published numerous articles on Chesnut's short stories, including a recent chapter in the MLA volume *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Charles W. Chesnut*. Harding also lectured on Chesnut's stories as a Fulbright scholar in the Czech Republic in 2017. She will receive \$300, thanks to a grant *NCLR* received from the North Carolina Arts Council.

This grant also provides \$100 each to the two authors whose stories Kenan picked for Honorable Mention: Angela Belcher Epps, for “Sandhill: A Symphony of Souls,” and Joel Thomas, for “Whimsyton, NC.” Kenan noted, “These two struck me as distinguished and having something refreshing to say and a refreshing way of telling it.” Epps’s and Thomas’s essays will be published in *NCLR Online*, which will be released early in 2019.

Angela Belcher Epps currently lives in Raleigh and is an active member of the Carolina African American Writers Collective. Her stories and creative nonfiction have appeared in several journals and magazines, including *Essence* and *Pembroke Magazine*. She is also the author of a novella, *Salt in the Sugar Bowl*. Joel Thomas is a student at the Virginia Military Institute. He grew up in Cambridge, England; Memphis, TN; and Lincolnton, NC (which is now his permanent residence). His honorable mention essay is his first acceptance for publication.

The other finalists in this year’s competition are “Story About Moving – Change, Herons, and Calls from My Mom” by Trissy Atwater, “Winking Weekends: Reflections on Consent” by Nathan Dixon, “In Search of a Discarded Treasure” by Amelia Gaither, “Who will believe thee?” by Cynthia Lewis, “Exposure” by Faith Kressner, “Separate Flocks” by Joy Moses-Hall, “The Children’s Hour: A Memoir” by Patricia Poteat, “Meteor Showers” by Barbara Presnell, “Restless in Reno” by Angela Spires, “Tireless Mill-Stones of History” by Lazarus Trubman, and “The Secret to Everything” by Robert Wallace.

The Alex Albright Creative Nonfiction Prize was created in 2015 to honor the founding editor of the *North Carolina Literary Review*. The first Albright Prize winner was published in the 25<sup>th</sup> issue of *NCLR* in 2016. The competition requires no submission fee, but writers must subscribe to *NCLR* to submit. Either the writer or the subject matter of the submission must have some North Carolina connection. For submission and subscription information, go to <http://www.nclr.ecu.edu>.

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