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THE RONA JAFFE FOUNDATION
CELEBRATES 19th ANNUAL WRITERS' AWARDS

*Six outstanding emerging women writers will receive
Grants of \$30,000 each, at New York City reception*

Acclaimed writer [Joan Wickersham](#) will be Guest Speaker

New York City (September 2013) – The Rona Jaffe Foundation will honor its annual Writers' Awards winners at a private ceremony on September 19th in New York City. Six emerging women writers have been singled out for excellence by the Foundation and will receive awards of \$30,000 each. The 2013 winners are **Tiffany Briere, Ashlee Crews, Kristin Dombek, Margaree Little, Kirstin Valdez Quade and Jill Sisson Quinn**. The program – the only national literary awards program of its kind devoted exclusively to women – was created by celebrated novelist Rona Jaffe to identify and support women writers of unusual talent and promise in the early stages of their writing careers. Ms. Jaffe passed away in 2005.

The Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Awards are given to writers of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Since the program began in 1995, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1.5 million to emergent women writers. Past recipients of the Writers' Awards, such as Rachel Aviv, Elif Batuman, Eula Biss, Sarah Braunstein, Lan Samantha Chang, Rivka Galchen, Aryn Kyle, Rebecca Lee, Dana Levin, ZZ Packer, Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts, and Tracy K. Smith have since received wider critical recognition, including the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the National Book Foundation's "5 Under 35" Award, and the Whiting Writer's Award.

On Friday, September 20 at 7 p.m. the winners will read in New York University's Creative Writing Program Reading Series at the Vernon Writers House (58 West 10th Street).

Biographies of the 2013 Award Winners:

Tiffany Briere (Fiction/Nonfiction) received a B.S. in biology from the University of Hartford and a Ph.D. in genetics from Yale, where she was a researcher and teaching assistant before she turned her attention to writing. She received her M.F.A. from Bennington College in 2011 and is now a part-time English instructor at Orange Coast College. Ms. Briere is currently working on a novel and a collection of essays. Her essays are about her work in genetics and how it informs the larger truths of life. She says, "Genetics, like writing, is a search for core truths, for what informs the human condition. At its best, it tells an artful and thoughtful story, a narrative meant to inspire and enrich our lives." She is also beginning work on a novel. "The vision for my novel arose from a number of conversations I've had with my mother, who is facing the end of her life. The novel is set in New York and is centered around a young Caribbean-American woman, a scientist at Yale, who upon returning home to Brooklyn, is faced with the unthinkable request: to assist in her ailing father's suicide." Ms. Briere plans to use her Writer's Award to take a year off from teaching and pay for child care. She lives in San Diego, California, with her husband, mother, and two-year-old daughter.

Ashlee Crews (Fiction) received her B.A. from the University of Georgia and her M.F.A. from Georgia College & State University. She is currently completing a short story collection entitled *Church Time* and a novel, *Mae and Iris*. Her stories have appeared in *McSweeney's*, *The Southern Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Shenandoah*, and she has attended Sewanee Writers Conference. Her story "Bird Feed" received a 2010 Pushcart Prize. She says, "All of my stories explore characters on a quest to define home." Ms. Crews has begun work on a new novel that questions the American ideals of self-reliance and independence. She writes, "In my new novel, there is a woman who lives far from the South and wrestles with a core sense of isolation. To combat this, she begins to build the illusion of "Southern-ness" all around her. And yet, that world for her, in reality, has been and is long gone, by choice, by circumstance, if it ever truly existed at all." Her nominator says, "Ashlee's voice is all her own. She has the eye and ear to zero in on the unrecognized and quirky bits of life but does so in a way that is fresh; her work bears no residue of what might easily be cast as southern stereotype—a great accomplishment." Ms. Crews will use her Writer's Award to pay for child care so she can complete these projects. She currently lives in Durham, North Carolina, with her husband and daughter.

Kristin Dombek (Nonfiction) teaches in the Princeton Writing Program. She has a B.A. from Calvin College and a Ph.D. in English from New York University. Her essays have appeared in *n + 1*, *The Paris Review*, *The Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Mercer Street*, and *The Daily*. Ms. Dombek is currently working on two books. *How to Quit* is described as a work of creative nonfiction and memoir. She says, "It is a different kind of addiction narrative—written from the perspective of an enabler, a lover of addicts and alcoholics—woven together with a history of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, a neighborhood haunted by stories of tragic addicts, and a former bohemia that has undergone a notorious, thorough, and rapid gentrification. It is a book about transformation." Her other work, an untitled collection of essays, "is about Christian belief in contemporary America—particularly as it surfaces in surprising and important ways in secular life." She writes, "My writing is informed by my experience growing up in a conservative religious faith, and leaving it: I'm always looking for the ways in which the worlds we shape for ourselves mirror other worlds, even as they try, often, to shut them out." Kristin plans to use her Writer's Award to take time off from work at Princeton to devote herself to these projects. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Margaree Little (Poetry) received her B.A. from Brown University in 2009 and her M.F.A. from Warren Wilson College in 2012. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Southern Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *New England Review*, *The Missouri Review*, and *American Poetry Review*. She was a Peter Taylor Fellow at *The Kenyon Review* Writers Workshop in 2013. She teaches writing at Pima Community College and tutors at Pima County Public Library in Tucson. In 2010, while working for a humanitarian aid organization on the U.S.-Mexico border, she found the

remains of an unidentified man; her first collection of poems, *Rest*, came out of this experience and attempts to explore it from a variety of perspectives. Her nominator writes, “Margaree’s insistence on honoring this one specific death speaks to her great soul, but so does the lyric intensity, deft craft, and encompassing reach with which she contemplates this lost life—the fact and unknowns of it, its presence and *what is missing*—as an emblem.” Ms. Little is also beginning work on a second collection. “I plan to write a series of poems exploring the relationship between two sisters and other aspects of childhood, as well as the landscape—the woods and coastline of southern Rhode Island—in which these experiences were shaped.” Her Writer’s Award will allow her to take a one-year leave from her work at the library to devote more time to her poems. She lives in Tucson, Arizona.

Kirstin Valdez Quade (Fiction) received her B.A. from Stanford University and her M.F.A. from the University of Oregon. She was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford, where she now teaches fiction and creative nonfiction as a Jones Lecturer and Nancy Packer Lecturer in Creative Writing. Ms. Quade has received fellowships and grants from The MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, and the Elizabeth George Foundation. Her stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Narrative Magazine*, *Guernica*, *The Northwest Review*, and *Colorado Review*. Her story “**Nemecia**” will appear in *The Best American Short Stories 2013*. Ms. Quade is completing a short story collection and working on her first novel. She writes, “Like most of my fiction, the novel is concerned with the landscape and history of New Mexico, where I am from. New Mexico has a history of conquest and re-conquest; cultures clash and merge, often violently, as do the past and present, and I’m interested in how this history and violence play out in families. Set in a fictional small town in contemporary northern New Mexico, the novel centers on a fractured family that must navigate the complexities of love, faith, and obligation.” Her Writer’s Award will cover the costs of essential research trips to New Mexico and allow her to reduce her teaching responsibilities so she can complete her novel. She lives in Palo Alto, California.

Jill Sisson Quinn (Nonfiction) (<http://www.jillsissonquinn.com>) received her B.A. in English from the University of Maryland, her M.A. in Environmental Studies from Montclair State University, and her M.F.A. in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College. She is a high school English teacher in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Her first book, *Deranged: Finding a Sense of Place in the Landscape and in the Lifespan*, was published by Apprentice House in 2010. She has received the John Burroughs Award for Outstanding Published Nature Essay and the Annie Dillard Award in Creative Nonfiction. Ms. Quinn is working on a new collection of essays tentatively titled *The Doctrine of Signatures*. Part memoir, part natural history, part scholarly research, her essays explore landscapes both internal and external. She writes, “Through the lens of evolutionary psychology this book investigates universal questions about relationships, religion, and sense of place, explaining not just why we feel certain things but how our hearts might deal with them.” Her essays have appeared in *Orion*, *Ecotone*, and *OnEarth Magazine*, among others. Her essay “*Sign Here if You Exist*” appeared in *Best American Science and Nature Writing 2011*. Ms. Quinn plans to use her Writer’s Award to reduce her teaching load to complete a draft of her book. She lives with her husband in Scandinavia, Wisconsin.

The six women will gather at the September 19th Writers’ Awards ceremony in Manhattan.

Acclaimed writer **Joan Wickersham** (<http://www.joanwickersham.com>) will speak at the celebration. Ms. Wickersham’s most recent book, *The News from Spain: 7 Variations on a Love Story*, was named one of 2012’s best fiction picks by National Public Radio, *Kirkus Reviews* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Her memoir, *The Suicide Index: Putting My Father’s Death in Order*, was a 2008 National Book Award Finalist. She is also the author of a novel, *The Paper Anniversary*. Her short fiction has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories*, *The Best American Nonrequired*

Reading, Agni, The Hudson Review, Story, Ploughshares, and Glimmer Train. She has been awarded fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts, Yaddo, and The MacDowell Colony. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her husband and two sons.

The awards celebration provides the Foundation with an ideal opportunity to introduce its honorees to friends and colleagues in the publishing industry. Some recipients have been introduced to their future agents and editors through the awards. “Although our award winners cannot be easily summed up, as they set out on their unique creative paths, the importance of ‘place’ does figure prominently in all their work. Whether it’s the deep roots of family and home, the natural world and landscape and what it can tell us about ourselves, or the dissolution and reconstitution of a neighborhood, all of these writers are grappling with the questions of one’s place in the world and belonging,” says Beth McCabe, director of the program. “Most of our award winners are working to complete their first books and for many this will be the first opportunity in their careers to free themselves temporarily from financial worries to focus on their writing for an extended period. Now celebrating our nineteenth year, we are seeing the impact of Rona Jaffe’s vision and generosity. Through her Foundation we have been able to encourage over 100 women to pursue their literary ambitions by offering encouragement and financial support at a critical time.”

ABOUT THE AWARDS PROGRAM: The Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Awards program identifies emergent women writers of exceptional promise. The Foundation recognizes that women writers make special contributions to our culture and, through the Writers' Awards program, tries to address the difficulties that some of the most talented among them have in finding time to write and gaining recognition. Women who write fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry are considered for the program's grants of \$30,000. Awards are given to those in the early stages of their writing careers whose published or unpublished work reveals accomplishment and demonstrates a commitment to writing. Nominations of candidates are solicited from writers, editors, critics, and other literary professionals who are likely to encounter women writers of unusual talent. (*Direct applications and unsolicited nominations are not accepted by the Foundation.*) A selection committee is appointed each year to recommend awards from among the nominees. Nominators and selectors serve anonymously. Beth McCabe directs the Writers' Awards program. To learn more, visit www.ronajaffefoundation.org.

ABOUT RONA JAFFE: Rona Jaffe (1931-2005) established The Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Awards program in 1995. It is the only national literary awards program of its kind dedicated to supporting women writers exclusively. Since the program began, the Foundation has awarded grants to over 100 women. Ms. Jaffe was the author of sixteen books, including *Class Reunion, Family Secrets, The Road Taken, and The Room-Mating Season* (2003). Her 1958 best-selling first novel, *The Best of Everything*, was reissued by Penguin in 2005.

NOTE: Photographs of the recipients of the 2013 Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Awards are available upon request.