Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize

Keep on travelin’ that muddy road to freedom,  
Follow the drinkin’ gourd….

Northwestern University’s Poetry and Poetics Colloquium, together with Northwestern University Press, is delighted to announce the seventh-annual **Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize, a first-book award for poets of color.**  
  
This is an annual award combining the efforts of Northwestern’s Poetry and Poetics Colloquium and Northwestern University Press in celebrating and publishing works of lasting cultural value and literary excellence. Seeking to showcase the work of emerging poets of color, volumes in the Drinking Gourd series are selected by a panel of distinguished minority poets and scholars and feature a short introduction by a senior minority writer. The publication of the prize-winning chapbook is celebrated each year with a reading and performance at The Poetry Foundation in Chicago.

Past Drinking Gourd Chapbook launch events at The Poetry Foundation have featured music and dance performances by diverse artists including the Tatsu Aoki Reduction Quartet, Jarochicanos Xicago, and Giordano Dance. Our celebrations have also featured companion readings by Chris Abani, Ed Roberson, and Juan Martinez.

This year’s launch will be held at The Poetry Foundation on **January 11th, 2018**, featuring Marcelo Hernandez Castillo, winner of last year’s prize.  
  
The submission deadline for next year’s prize is **December 31st, 2017**. The winner of the sixth annual Drinking Gourd Poetry Chapbook Prize will be notified by March 15th, 2018. The winning chapbook will be published in fall of 2018 by Northwestern University Press.

Please distribute this announcement on your website, through mailing lists and listservs, or through whatever other means of communication are available to you.

Further details about the prize and the Poetry and Poetics Colloquium can also be found at [our website](http://sites.weinberg.northwestern.edu/poetry/drinking-gourd-chapbook-contest/).

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**Drinking Gourd Chapbook Prize Guidelines:**

**Award**

Winner receives $350 prize money, publication by Northwestern University Press in Fall 2018, 15 copies of the book, and a featured reading at The Poetry Foundation.

**Judging**

Judging will be conducted by a panel of senior minority poets and scholars assembled by the Northwestern University Poetry and Poetics Colloquium.

**Eligibility**

Poets of color who have not previously published a book-length volume of poetry. Simultaneous submissions to other contests should be noted. Immediate notification upon winning another award is required. Winner must be available for a reading in Chicago in January of 2019.

**Deadline**

Reading period begins January 15, 2018. **Manuscripts must be submitted by December 31, 2017**. The winner will be announced on March 15, 2018.

**Submission**

* Complete submission form [see below] to be included with manuscript packet.
* **Email a PDF of one manuscript with a submission form attached separately.** One manuscript per poet.
* Author’s name should appear on the first page of the manuscript.
* Manuscript must be typed single-sided with a minimum font size of 11 and 25-35 pages in length.
* Manuscript must include a table of contents and list of acknowledgments of previously published poems.
* Do not include illustrations or images of any kind.
* Manuscripts not adhering to submission guidelines will be discarded without notice to sender.
* Post-submission revisions or corrections are not permitted.

**Email to:** [**poetrypoeticscolloquium@gmail.com**](mailto:poetrypoeticscolloquium@gmail.com)

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**Previous Drinking Gourd Winners:**

**Marcelo Hernandez Castillo,** *Dulce* (with an introduction by Matthew Shenoda)

Surreal and deeply imagistic, the poems in *Dulce* map a parallel between the landscape of the border and the landscape of sexuality. Marcelo Hernandez Castillo invites the reader to confront and challenge the distinctions of borders and categories, and in doing so, he obscures and negates such divisions. He allows for the possibility of an *and*in a world of *either/or.*These poems enact a prescient anxiety of what is to come, “I want to say all of this is true / but we both know it isn’t…we already know what’s at the other end of this.” *Dulce* is truly a lyrical force rife with the rich language of longing and regret that disturbs even the most serene quiet.

**Mayda Del Valle,** *The University of Hip-Hop* (with an introduction by Chris Abani)

*The University of Hip-Hop* is a love letter to the city of Chicago, more specifically a particular moment in Chicago—of growth and development, coming of age, of learning how to construct a new self from old-world customs and new-school traditions. It is a meditation on movement and migration that asks what it means to leave home, how to take home with you, and how to build a new home elsewhere.

**Jenny Xie,** *Nowhere to Arrive* (with an introduction by Chris Abani)

*Nowhere to Arrive* takes as its subjects the whiplash of travel, the shuttling between disparate places and climes, and an unremitting sense of dislocation. These poems court the tension between the familiar and the foreign, between the self as distinct and the self as illusory. They look plainly at the startling strangeness of varied landscapes and mindscapes, and interrogate a state of unrootedness—one thrown into relief by the speaker’s years abroad in Southeast Asia.

**Nicole Sealey,** *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named* (with an introduction by Chris Abani)

At turns humorous and heartbreaking, *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named* explores in both formal and free verse what it means to die, which is to say, also, what it means to live. In this collection, Sealey displays an exquisite sense of the lyric, as well as an acute political awareness. Never heavy-handed or dogmatic, the poems included in this volume excavate the shadows of both personal and collective memory and are, at all points, relentless. To quote the poet herself, here is a debut as luminous and unforgiving “as the unsparing light at tunnel’s end.”

**Willie Lin,** *Instructions for Folding* (with an introduction by Chris Abani)

The voice in these poems is sometimes fervid, sometimes wry, moved to speech by the specific desire to speak to someone. The poems often progress associatively, following a kind of lyric logic of involution, disruption, and juxtaposition. They rehearse the work of learning the heft and shape of memories. They reveal in failures and take pleasure in mourning. They bristle with narrative suggestiveness, weaving an austere music against a scrim of love, loneliness, secrets, and elation. *Instructions for Folding* is unflinching in accounting for the daily cruelties of our lives, the melancholy of it. The poems ask us to succumb to the grace of the fold, the redemption of paper, the mapping and charting of ink and joy.

**Rodney Gomez,** *Mouth Filled with Night* (with an introduction by Ed Roberson)

*Mouth Filled with Night* employs familiar emblems of Mexican American identity to repeatedly subvert expectations while intensifying the dilemmas of affiliation. The poems run beyond more conventional ideas of agency, identity, and experience, creating a newly invigorated imaginative space. As a collection, *Mouth Filled with Night* gains particular momentum—a pitched anxiety that slowly grows throughout the volume—to create a poetic experience unique to the chapbook form.

**Kristiana Rae Colón,** *promised instruments* (with an introduction by Ed Roberson)

Taking its cue from Toni Morrison’s declaration that “language alone protects us from the scariness of things with no names,” *promised instruments* stitches its own definitions for what is granted, what is surrendered, what is pilfered, and what is reclaimed. Her poems plumb the problem of women’s mental health, their sexuality and gender identity, and their ability to make choices about sexual activity. With piercing musicality and disarming vulnerability, *promised instruments* invites its readers to interrogate their own complicity in these issues and to share in the healing process.

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