



**THE WRITERS'  
UNION OF CANADA**

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DATE: February 22, 2012  
For immediate release

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**THE WRITERS' UNION OF CANADA PRESENTS FREEDOM TO READ  
AWARD TO LAWRENCE HILL**

Toronto – The Writers' Union of Canada has just announced that the recipient of its 2012 Freedom to Read Award is the Canadian author Lawrence Hill.

"We are delighted that Lawrence Hill will be this year's recipient," said Greg Hollingshead, Chair of the Union. "We felt that he deserved this honour on the basis of his reasoned and eloquent response to the threat to burn his novel *The Book of Negroes*."

The title *The Book of Negroes* is drawn from that of a 1783 historical document, which lists the names of Black Loyalists who, having fought for the British during the American Revolutionary War, were to be transported to Nova Scotia. Roy Groenburg of The Netherlands, finding the use of the word "Negro" in the title of Mr. Hill's novel offensive, burned the cover and publicly threatened to burn the book.

In response, Mr. Hill offered to speak to Mr. Groenburg. He also wrote an op-ed piece in *The Toronto Star*, which said, in part, "Burning books is designed to intimidate people. It underestimates the intelligence of readers, stifles dialogue and insults those who cherish the freedom to read and write. The leaders of the Spanish Inquisition burned books, Nazis burned books."

To this, Hollingshead adds, "It is important that during Freedom to Read Week we recognize individuals such as Lawrence Hill who speak out against challenges to this freedom."

The recipient of the Union's 2011 Freedom to Read Award was John Ralston Saul, who in 2009 was elected to the presidency of International PEN for a three-year term. The 2011 award will be presented on the evening of February 28 at the Book and Periodical Council's Freedom to Read event at the Gladstone Hotel at 1214 Queen Street West in Toronto.

**ABOUT THE WRITERS' UNION OF CANADA**

The Writers' Union of Canada is our country's national organization representing professional authors of books. Founded in 1973, the Union is dedicated to fostering writing in Canada, and promoting the rights, freedoms, and economic well-being of all writers.