2015 CALA Best Book Award Winning and Nominated Books

2015 CALA Best Book Award Recipients
Non-fiction: The Good Immigrants: How Yellow Peril became the Model Minority, by Madeline Y. Hsu

Fiction: Special Recognition Award
万家灯火：虞谦海外短篇小说精选

Children’s Book: Mystery of the Giant Masks of Shanxingdui, by Icy Smith, illustrated by Gayle Garner Roski

Juvenile Book: Conviction, by Kelly Loy Gilbert

The Good Immigrants: How Yellow Peril became the Model Minority, by Madeline Y. Hsu (Princeton University Press)

“Conventionally, US immigration history has been understood through the lens of restriction and those who have been barred from getting in. In contrast, The Good Immigrants considers immigration from the perspective of Chinese elites—intellectuals, businessmen, and students—who gained entrance because of immigration exemptions. Exploring a century of Chinese migrations, Madeline Hsu looks at how the model minority characteristics of many Asian Americans resulted from US policies that screened for those with the highest credentials in the most employable fields, enhancing American economic competitiveness.

The earliest US immigration restrictions targeted Chinese people but exempted students as well as individuals who might extend America’s influence in China. Western-educated Chinese such as Madame Chiang Kai-shek became symbols of the US impact on China, even as they patriotically advocated for China’s modernization. World War II and the rise of communism transformed Chinese students abroad into refugees, and the Cold War magnified the importance of their talent and training. As a result, congress legislated piecemeal legal measures to enable Chinese of good standing with professional skills to become citizens. Pressures mounted to reform American discriminatory immigration laws, culminating with the 1965 Immigration Act.

Filled with narratives featuring such renowned Chinese immigrants as I. M. Pei, The Good Immigrants examines the shifts in immigration laws and perceptions of cultural traits that enabled Asians to remain in the United States as exemplary, productive Americans.”

Mystery of the Giant Masks of Shanxingdui, by Icy Smith, illustrated by Gayle Garner Roski (East West Discovery Press)

“The mysterious and ancient city of Shanxingdui is famous for its astonishing bronze-casting technology. Villagers come from faraway lands to admire the bronze masks and trade for the highly prized bronze wares. However, Shanxingdui faces danger when its people hear rumors of a foreign invasion. The chief’s daughter, Min, and her newly initiated warrior brother, Wei, lead the villagers to flee their homeland. Where do they go? And what do they do with their sacred bronze masks and statues?

This unprecedented children’s story reveals the people’s collective sacrifice for peace, and offers a glimpse into the lost civilization of Shanxingdui in China, over 3,000 years ago.

In 1986, the epic discovery of the monumental bronzes in Shanxingdui was acknowledged as the ‘ninth wonder of the ancient world.’ The artifacts unearthed are as old as the Pyramids of Egypt and reveal an advanced and civilized society in Shanxingdui.”
Conviction, by Kelly Loy Gilbert (Disney-Hyperion)

“Ten years ago, God gave Braden a sign, a promise that his family wouldn’t fall apart the way he feared. But Braden got it wrong: his older brother, Trey, has been estranged from the family for almost as long, and his father, the only parent Braden has ever known, has been accused of murder. The arrest of Braden’s father, a well-known Christian radio host has sparked national media attention. His fate lies in his son’s hands; Braden is the key witness in his father’s upcoming trial.

Braden has always measured himself through baseball. He is the star pitcher in his small town of Ornette, and his ninety-four mile per hour pitch already has minor league scouts buzzing in his junior year. Now the rules of the sport that has always been Braden’s saving grace are blurred in ways he never realized, and the prospect of playing against Alex Reyes, the nephew of the police officer his father is accused of killing, is haunting his every pitch.

Braden faces an impossible choice, one that will define him for the rest of his life, in this brutally honest debut novel about family, faith, and the ultimate test of conviction.”

The Price of China’s Economic Development: Power, Capital, and the Poverty of Rights, by Zhaohui Hong (University Press of Kentucky)

“This book explores the non-economic price of China’s economic development since 1978 by scrutinizing its political system, social structure, and cultural environment. The first part of the book focuses on the institutional price of the economic development with an emphasis on the emergence and development of the power-capital institution. Such an institution is a hybrid political culture that infuses political power and economic capital, evidenced in the formation of the power-capital economy, growth of the power-capital entrepreneurs, and the emergence of the power-capital culture. The second part of the book deals with another socio-cultural price of China’s economic growth, that is, the poverty of rights, as seen in the exclusion and deprivation of disadvantaged groups in the process of economic transition and development. The poverty of rights resulting from systematic inequality and injustice is the main cause for under-represented groups’ daunting socio-economic challenges, as reflected in the poverty of rights for the urban poor, the poverty of land rights for farmers, the rights deprivation for migrant laborers, and for Protestant house church members. Taking advantage of interdisciplinary research on economics, sociology, political science, and history, this book provides another analytical dimension of China’s development since 1978 by offering a study of the socio-cultural price and consequences of China’s economic development.”

Secret Coders, by Gene Luen Yang, illustrated by Mike Holmes (First Second/Macmillan)

“Welcome to Stately Academy, a school which is just crawling with mysteries to be solved! The founder of the school left many clues and puzzles to challenge his enterprising students. Using their wits and their growing prowess with coding, Hopper and her friend Eni are going to solve the mystery of Stately Academy no matter what it takes!”
Middle of the Night, by HC Hsu (Deerbrook Editions)

"Night. When serotonin levels in the brain are pulled to their highest, aching peak. When the soul ventures away from its cage. When a woman exchanged a story for her life; when men, drunk, spoke to each other of love. Night is when ‘ghosts and demons are most powerful,’ and when men turn into wolves. Night is for dreamers. Night is for insomniacs. Night is death. Night is rest. Night is wandering. Night is waiting.

Taking Tang poet Bai Juyi’s poem ‘Come in the middle of the night/Gone at the break of dawn/Come as a fleeting dream of spring/Gone as a morning cloud vanishing without a trace’ as inspiration, Middle of the Night is The Best American Essays nominee HC Hsu’s collection of award-winning personal essays from 2009-2014. Arranged by time written rather than date, these circadianly adrift essays explore love and sex, history and identity, hopes, nightmares, and other nocturnal joys and quotidian tyrannies haunting our sunlit existence.

From a ghost-hunting chronicle in a famed Buddhist temple in rural Japan, to childhood memories of night markets, ancestor worship and martial law in metropolitan Taipei; from praising Elfriede Jelinek’s pitch-black contempt, to lambasting Christ’s ideal of compassion; from a vignette on crying at night and other habits after dark, to a sustained somnambulant philosophical meditation on the ontological virtues of chicharrónes—a synchronicity emerges in these essays in the way they reveal the shadowy memories and experiences of a young ‘Easterner’ living in the ‘West,’ as well as of all those who consider themselves migrants, in the broadest sense, in the first light of a new dawn of globalization and diaspora.

Middle of the Night will appeal to fans of such contemporary essay works as Phillip Lopate’s Against Joie de Vivre, Richard Rodriguez’s Hunger of Memory and Ha Jin’s Writer as Migrant. This tightly themed collection filtering the kaleidoscope of Asian migrational and transmigrational phenomena—from WW2 to MAG—through a 1001 Nights-like parable introduces a new and exciting literary voice and will appeal widely to Asian and Asian American audiences, as well as anyone interested in what makes the lives of these people, here and now, unique and universal."

Chinese Fairy Tale Feasts: A Literary Cookbook, by Paul Yee, illustrated by Shaoli Wang (Crocodile Books)

"In this enchanting collection of fairy tales, a glorious procession of characters—peasants, ghosts, merchants, monks, demons, monsters, villagers, and kings—makes an appearance. The stories presented here, whether humorous, haunting, or magical, all feature food prominently; and each tale is followed by a recipe for a classic Chinese dish relevant to the story. Paul Yee also provides scholarly anecdotes on Chinese culture and culinary history.

Most of the thirteen fairy tales included in the book have been adapted and retold from original sources; a few are original to this text, but remain true to the spirit of the collection. They are accompanied by an introduction by series creator Jane Yolen, one our most celebrated folklorists and children’s authors. The dazzling illustrations by Shaoli Wang, evoking Chinese folk art tradition, offer a wealth of cultural detail. All of these ingredients combine to make Chinese Fairy Tale Feasts: A Literary Cookbook a unique treasure that will delight readers and cooks across the generations."
Buddhist and Christian Responses to the Kowtow Problem in China, by Eric Reinders (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC)

"The most common Buddhist practice in Asia is bowing, yet Buddhist and Christian Responses to the Kowtow Problem is the first study of Buddhist obeisance in China. In Confucian ritual, everyone is supposed to kowtow, or bow, to the Chinese emperor. But Buddhists claimed exemption from bowing to any lay person, even to their own parents or the emperor. This tension erupted in an imperial debate in 662.

This study first asks how and why Buddhists should bow (to the Buddha, and to monks), and then explores the arguments over their refusing to bow to the emperor. These arguments take us into the core ideas of Buddhism and imperial power: How can one achieve nirvana by bowing? What is a Buddha image? Who is it that bows? Is there any ritual that can exempt a subject of the emperor? What are the limits of the state's power over human bodies? Centuries later, Christians had a new set of problems with bowing in China, to the emperor and to ‘idols.’ Buddhist and Christian Responses to the kowtow problem compares these cases of refusing to bow, discusses modern theories of obeisance, and finally moves to examine some contemporary analogies such as refusing to salute the American flag.

Contributing greatly to the study of the body and power, ritual, religion and material culture, this volume is of interest to scholars and students of religious studies, Buddhism, Chinese history and material culture."

Archival Resources of Republican China in North America, by Chengzhi Wang & Su Chen (Columbia University Press)

"North America has the largest collection of archival materials of the Chinese Republican Era outside China and, due to political and ideological reasons on the part of the Chinese government, some of the only material accessible to general public and researchers. Further, these valuable materials are generally unique; instead of duplicating the archival collections held in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other places, they complement those archives. This volume provides an essential organizational tool to enable research in North American archives through a selected multi-institutional catalog, in both English and Chinese, of collections of personal papers, correspondences, memoirs, diaries, photographs, and other documents relating to the period of Republican China (1912-1949), held at various academic and research institutions in the United States. Each catalog entry is organized and presented to provide descriptions about these archives, including information about the title of the each archival collection; the person or organization responsible for creation of the content of the archive; physical descriptions and the size of the collection; location or Internet links to the finding aids (if any); basic information about the creator of the archives; original language of the archival materials; origin of the materials; holding institution; general summary of the archive; and a note to include cross-reference to other related archives that are mostly listed in this book."