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MARGARET WILKERSON SEXTON WINS \$5000 CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE

Chapel Hill, NC, January 8, 2019—Margaret Wilkerson Sexton's *A Kind of Freedom*, published by Counterpoint Press, is the winner of the sixth annual Crook's Corner Book Prize for best debut novel set in the American South. This year's judge was award-winning author Tayari Jones, who described the book as "an eye-opener, page-turner, and heart-breaker."

*A Kind of Freedom* follows the downward spiral of an African-American family in New Orleans, from the 1940s through Hurricane Katrina. The family, anchored by a respected physician and his Creole wife, had occupied the upper echelons of black society in the city. But as each generation journeys through the 1980s and finally to the post-Katrina world, family members – despite never-extinguished hope – succumb to drugs and seemingly implacable futility.

Sexton, whose African-American grandfather and six of his children graduated from college, wanted to know why the following generations struggled even as it became possible for a black man to become President. "I wondered what systems took the place of Jim Crow in my generation," she says. "I wanted to demonstrate the extent to which the current laws surrounding housing, drugs, and sentencing were as powerful as laws enforcing racial segregation in the 1940s."

The *New York Times* review of the book declared, "For a debut novelist to take up such charged material is daring; to succeed in lending free-standing life to her

characters without yielding an inch to sentimentality . . . announces her as a writer of uncommon nerve and talent."

Born and raised in New Orleans, Sexton received a B.A. in creative writing from Dartmouth College and a J.D. from UC Berkeley School of Law. Longlisted for the 2017 National Book Award, *A Kind of Freedom* was named as a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2017 and a *New York Times Book Review* Editor's Choice. Sexton's work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and has appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, *Lenny Letter*, *The Massachusetts Review*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, on Oprah.com, and in other publications. As a recipient of the Lombard Fellowship from Dartmouth, Sexton spent a year in the Dominican Republic for a civil rights organization.

This year's judge was Tayari Jones, whose most recent novel, *An American Marriage*, was a 2018 Oprah's Book Club Selection and was longlisted for the 2018 National Book Award for Fiction, among many other honors. About the winning book, Jones says, "I can't wait to see what Sexton writes next."

The Crook's Prize, established as a collaboration between the iconic Southern restaurant, Crook's Corner Bar & Café in Chapel Hill, NC, and the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation, was inspired by the prestigious book awards long given by famous "literary cafés" in Paris. Submissions are open for next year's Prize. For details, visit [www.crookscornerbookprize.com](http://www.crookscornerbookprize.com).

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