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Nicole Sealey, St. Thomas Native, Shines in 2024 OCM Bocas Prize Shortlist

Her transformative work, 'The Ferguson Report: An Erasure,' captures the poetry category's top honor

Art / **Published On April 08, 2024 06:12 AM /**

Janeke Simon **April 08, 2024**

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Nicole Sealey. By. ELIZA GRIFFITHS

Judges for the 2024 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature have shortlisted three works by Caribbean writers, marking them winners of their respective category submissions.

The Ferguson Report: An Erasure by Nicole Sealey was selected as the winner of the Poetry genre. In The Ferguson Report, the St. Thomas-born Sealey uses the technique in which the poet takes an existing document and carves new meaning out of it by chiseling away – erasing – surrounding text. In this case, Ms. Sealey takes the report published in 2015 after the shooting

death of high-school senior Michael Brown in Ferguson Missouri the year prior, and transforms it into “a meditation on our times...illuminating what it means to live in this frightening age, and what it means to bear witness,” according to the book’s description.

Raised in Apopka, Florida, Ms. Sealey holds a MLA in Africana studies from the University of South Florida and an MFA in creative writing from New York University. She spent the last six years whittling away at the text of the Ferguson report in order to re-imagine its bleak words – its very letters – into a new form.

“There was something very satisfying about ‘reconsidering’ The Ferguson Report—striking through whole sections of it,” Ms. Sealey told Erik Gleibermann in an [interview](#) for Poets & Writers last year. It was as though erasure of the report’s words could go some way towards “undoing the harm that had been done,” she mused.

Chosen as a New Yorker Best Book of the Year, *The Ferguson Report: An Erasure* joins previous works from Ms. Sealey in garnering critical acclaim. She counts awards from Princeton University, the American Academy in Rome, and the National Endowment of the Arts among her honors for publications including *Ordinary Beast* and *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named*.

The other shortlisted authors are this year’s fiction winner Kevin Jared Hosein from Trinidad & Tobago, for *Hungry Ghosts*. Jamaica’s Safiya Sinclair won the non-fiction prize for *How to Say Babylon*. The overall winner of the 2024 Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature will be announced on April 27.