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For immediate release January 13, 2016

California author's debut short fiction collection wins 2016 Drue Heinz prize

PITTSBURGH—Melissa Yancy of Los Angeles, California, is the 2016 winner of the Drue Heinz Literature Prize, one of the nation's most prestigious awards for a book of short stories. Her manuscript *Dog Years* was selected by acclaimed author Richard Russo from a field of nearly 300 entries. *Dog Years* will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press later this year. The DHLP also includes a cash prize of \$15,000.

"The smart, intricate, carefully crafted stories in *Dog Years* reminded me of Lauren Groff's *Delicate, Edible Birds* for both their ambition and extraordinary beauty," remarked Russo.

Describing *Dog Years*, Yancy said, "Many of these richly-layered stories set the miracles of modern medicine against the inescapable life of the everyday: awkward first dates, the indignities of air travel, and overwhelming megastore cereal aisles." For example, in "Go Forth," an aging couple attends a kidney transplant reunion, where donors and recipients collide with unexpected results; in "Hounds," a woman who runs a facial reconstruction program for veterans nurses her dying dog while reckoning with the ways she has used sex as both a weapon and a salve; and in "Consider This Case," a lonely fetal surgeon caring for his aesthete father must reconsider sexuality and the lengths to which people will go to have children.

"Whether the men or women that populate these pages are contending with illness, death, parenthood, or some other reckoning, the real subject here is time, and our inability to slow its progression," Yancy explained.

The Phoenix, Arizona, native's short fiction has appeared in *One Story*, *Glimmer Train*, *Zyzyva*, among other publications. She is the recipient of a 2016 NEA Literature Fellowship. Stories in *Dog Years* have won the *Glimmer Train* Fiction Open, *The Missouri Review* Jeffrey E. Smith Editors' Prize, and received special mention in the Pushcart Prize. She lives in Los Angeles where she works as a fundraiser for healthcare causes. Yancy can be found online at www.melissayancy.com.

Recalling her reaction to winning the DHLP, the 37-year-old remarked, "I was six months pregnant and sitting in my doctor's office when I saw a Pennsylvania number on my phone. Just two weeks before, I had picked up the phone to learn I'd received an NEA Fellowship, so the possibility of good news again seemed so unlikely," she said.

"I'd been putting off having a child for a long time because of my work life and writing life, so my first reaction was that if I'd known I just needed to get pregnant for these incredible things to happen, I would have done it a lot sooner! The timing was overwhelming, but fortuitous in the long run. With my attention called to many other things, having this recognition now brings me back to my work. I've published short fiction for the last 13 years and the opportunity to present these stories in book form is a thrill."