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Skyhorse to Speak at President's Convocation

Aug. 20, 2014

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Author Brando Skyhorse, winner of the PEN/Hemingway Award for debut fiction, will speak at the President's Convocation Sept. 3 at Illinois Wesleyan University. Skyhorse will discuss his novel *The Madonnas of Echo Park*, which was selected for the University's Summer Reading Program.

Skyhorse also received the 2011 Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters for *Madonnas*.

The book provides a multifaceted portrait of Echo Park, a Mexican-American neighborhood in Los Angeles. Constructed in a series of interwoven stories, the book follows Felicia, a housekeeper, and her daughter Aurora as they move in and out of each other's lives, struggling to find a common ground on which to relate. Each character in the book portrays a different perspective and voice as they encounter problems with gang violence, deportation, discrimination, social class, cultural identity and loss of home and land.



Brando Skyhorse

In a review in *Publisher's Weekly*, Skyhorse was praised for "building a vibrant community and presenting several perspectives on what it means to be Mexican in America, from those who wonder 'how can you lose something that never belonged to you?' to those who miraculously find it."

Skyhorse was born and raised in Echo Park, and is a graduate of Stanford University and the MFA Writers' Workshop program at the University of California, Irvine. He was the 2014 Jenny McKean Moore Writer-in-Washington at The George Washington University.

In June Skyhorse released his second book, *Take this Man: A Memoir*. In it, Skyhorse delves into lifelong struggles relating to cultural identity, a common theme in both of his books. After being told by his mother throughout his childhood that he was Native American, Skyhorse later discovered that he is actually Mexican. In *Take this Man*, Skyhorse recounts the stories his mother fabricated about his Native-American history, the hardships of being raised without a stable father and his journey to discovering his true past and culture.

The President's Convocation, which begins at 11 a.m. in Presser Hall's Westbrook Auditorium (1210 N. Park St., Bloomington), opens the academic year at Illinois Wesleyan with a prominent speaker. Skyhorse's presentation is free and open to the public.