

HAGE AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED



Sweatshop Literacy Movement is delighted to announce the winners of The Hage Award for First Nations Writers: acclaimed Murrawarri hip hop artist, DOBBY, and Wiradjuri writer, Luca Sawyer. Funded by internationally renowned anthropologist, Professor Ghassan Hage, the prize includes \$5000.00 in financial support for each recipient, as well as a year-long mentorship with acclaimed First Nations authors, Tony Birch and Melissa Lucashenko.

Due to the strong number of applications received, a Highly Commended category was also added to the award, which has been proudly funded by Diversity Arts Australia. Warrimay, Birribi poet, Nicole Smede, and Gumbaynggirr, Barunggam, Birri Gubba writer, Waverley Stanley

Jnr. have taken out the Highly Commended prize, which includes \$1000.00 each in financial support, as well as a residency to continue developing their work with Sweatshop.

In 2023, Sweatshop Literacy Movement was pleased to release the critically acclaimed work of non-fiction, *The Racial Politics of Australian Multiculturalism*. This timely and necessary collection brought together Professor Ghassan Hage's most iconic texts, including *White Nation* and *Against Paranoid Nationalism*. As part of the agreement, Professor Hage donated his advance, as well as his subsequent royalties, to establish an award which would support a new generation of First Nations authors.

Professor Hage said that the decision was guided by his vision to create a "reparative mode of existence" in Australia: "It should go without saying today that to dwell in a colonised space means that all of us non-Indigenous people are complicit in the reproduction of a structurally toxic relation that we are benefiting from. To exist ethically in such a space, one has to try to engage whenever and wherever one can, and from each according to their capacities, in reparative practices of de-toxification. That is what I am trying to do with this award. I'd rather not be thanked. As a beneficiary of that major stolen good that is Australia, every giving to Indigenous people is always a minor giving back."

DOBBY and Luca both expressed the honour they felt to have received this transformative accolade. Already an iconic hip hop artist, DOBBY will be using the opportunity to develop a debut manuscript of poetry and song lyrics under the guidance of award-winning author, Professor Tony Birch. DOBBY said: "I am deeply honoured and thrilled to receive The Hage Award. As a long-time supporter of Ghassan Hage's work, his writing has profoundly shaped my journey, both during my Honours year in Indigenous Studies at UNSW and throughout my career as a proud Murrawarri and Filipino hip hop artist. This recognition feels like a powerful full-circle moment. I'm incredibly excited to work alongside Professor Tony Birch to further develop my writing and continue growing in my career."

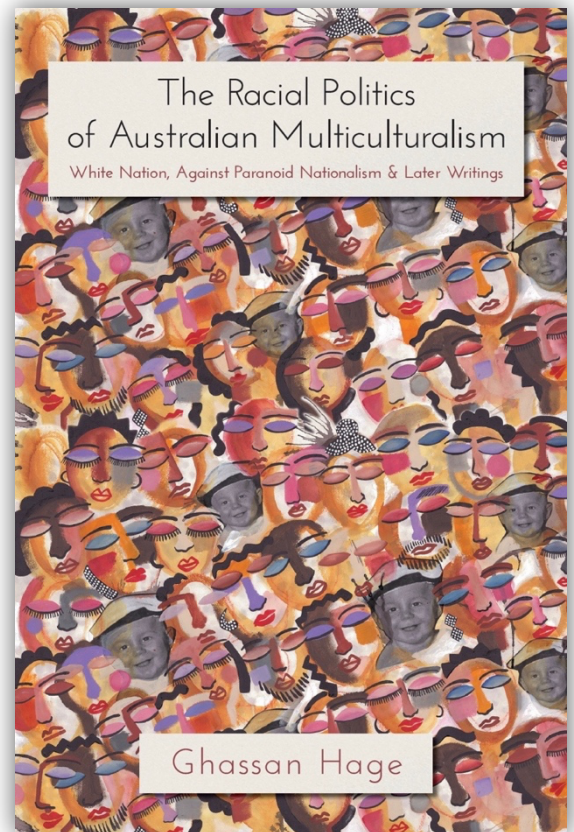
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At only 24 years old, Luca Sawyer will be mentored by award-winning author, Melissa Lucashenko, to develop the first complete draft of her debut novel. Sawyer said: "I am incredibly excited and thankful for the chance to be selected for this amazing opportunity and to be mentored by the deadly Melissa Lucashenko. I've been writing stories since I was a kid, and this is an extraordinary opportunity to receive industry support and guidance in a culturally safe environment."

The judges for the inaugural Hage Award were led by Kuku Djungan, Muluridji, Wakaman, Tagalaka, Kunjen, Warrgamay and Yindinji writer, editor and performer, Phoebe Grainer. Grainer praised the strong list of candidates from all across Australia who applied for the fellowship, sharing the following words with the winners and applicants: "I'm excited for these strong First Nations stories and voices, I'm so proud for our mob and the continuation of our storytelling. My brothers and sisters, keep shining."

In addition to the winning and highly commended recipients, the judges praised Luana Sanders, Willem Brussen, Rémy Cohen, Sheila Rose and Luisa Mitchell for their inspiring proposals and impressive storytelling abilities. All five of these emerging writers have been invited to contribute to an exciting new Sweatshop anthology, which will be released in 2025.

The Hage Award for First Nations Writers is proudly administered by an official steering committee, which includes Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt, Professor Tony Birch, Associate Professor Jumana Bayeh, Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, Dr Caroline Alcorso, Lena Nahlous and Winnie Dunn.



Founded by Dr Michael Mohammed Ahmad in 2013, Sweatshop Literacy Movement is a nationally-renowned literary incubator, which is devoted to empowering diverse communities through reading, writing and critical thinking. Over the past year, the movement has been primarily active in aiding the international solidarity struggles for First Nations people, including communities in Australia, Palestine, Lebanon and Sudan. Please visit the Sweatshop website for further information: www.sweatshop.ws