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SISTERS IN CRIME ANNOUNCES WINNER OF 2017 ELEANOR TAYLOR BLAND CRIME FICTION WRITERS OF COLOR AWARD

The award benefits an emerging writer of color in the crime fiction genre

8/1/17 – **Sisters in Crime (SinC)** announced today that the 2017 winner of the annual **Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award** is Jessica Ellis Laine, whose novel-in-progress won the 2016 Mystery Writers of America-Midwest Hugh Holton Award.

"We received numerous exceptional submissions from a diverse group of emerging mystery writers," said Naomi Hirahara, a member of the judging panel. "We had a difficult time deliberating, but in the end, it was Jessica Ellis Laine's humor and authentic characterization of her Latina protagonist that won us over. We are excited to see mysteries written by Laine and other applicants fulfill our genre's potential to reflect the wide range of human experiences."

The award, which honors the memory of pioneering African-American crime fiction author Eleanor Taylor Bland with a \$1,500 grant to an emerging writer of color, male or female, who has not yet published a full-length work, was created in 2014 with a bequest from Bland's estate to support Sisters in Crime's vision statement that the organization should serve as the voice for excellence and diversity in crime writing. The grant is intended to support the recipient in activities such as workshops, seminars, conferences and retreats, online courses, and research activities required for completion of their debut crime fiction novel or story collection. Past recipients include Maria Kelson (2014), Vera H-C Chan (2015), and Stephane Dunn (2016).

"I am so incredibly honored to receive the 2017 Eleanor Taylor Bland award from Sisters in Crime," said Laine. "I give thanks to the crime writers who have come before me including the amazingly talented Eleanor Taylor Bland. I have been fortunate to have many mentors in my life including Erin Hart, Ellen Hart, Kristi Belcamino, Pat Dennis, Michael Allan Mallory, and Rhonda Gilliland among others. I will try and repay this debt by writing to the best of my ability and by supporting future generations of crime writers. Mil gracias. Many thanks."

Eleanor Taylor Bland (1944-2010) paved the way for fresh voices in crime fiction by showcasing complex characters that had previously been peripheral to or simply missing from the genre. *Dead Time* (1992), the first in her series of mystery novels, introduced African-American police detective Marti MacAlister, an enduring and beloved heroine who overturned stereotypes that had been perpetuated in much of American popular culture. Bland also published several works of short crime fiction and edited the 2004 collection, *Shades of Black: Crime and Mystery Stories by African-American Authors*.

Sisters in Crime (SinC) was founded in 1986 to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers. Today, the organization boasts 3,600 members and 50 chapters worldwide and its initiatives also include other scholarships, grants for academic research into the roles of women and underserved voices in crime fiction; cash awards to libraries and bookstores; and surveys and monitoring projects which determine visibility and representation of women and diverse voices in the genre and across the marketplace.