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AT THE FRANKLIN HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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A Flower Traveled in My Blood: The Incredible True Story of the Grandmothers Who Fought to Find a Stolen Generation of Children by Haley Cohen Gilliland is the winner of the 2026 Juan E. Méndez Book Award for Human Rights in Latin America.

Gilliland will accept the award and talk about her work during the 2026 Spring semester on the Duke University campus. Please check our website for further information.

This is the seventeenth year of this prestigious award. The award is supported by the Duke Human Rights Center@the Franklin Humanities Institute, Duke's Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and the Human Rights Archive at the Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

In *A Flower Traveled in My Blood*, Gilliland documents how the Argentine Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo set out to find their grandchildren, abducted by the military junta in the 1970s and 80s. With determination and creativity, the *abuelas* marched, confronted the authorities, allied with local and international human rights groups, and pioneered the use of genetic testing to find their loved ones. This is despite the intense grief of losing their adult children, "disappeared" by the security forces.

Deborah Jakubs, a judge and University Librarian Emerita at Duke University and historian of Latin America, wrote that the book is "exceptional."

"Meticulously researched and beautifully written, Gilliland's book traces the rise of the Abuelas' activism by focusing on the life and death of one young woman, Patricia Roisinblit, the only child of Rosa and Benjamín... *A Flower Traveled in My Blood* reads like a mystery novel, as Patricia's story and those of other *desaparecidos* unfold against the backdrop of military repression and societal unrest. One of the book's many strengths is the author's careful attention to the complex ethical, legal, and emotional aspects of attempting to return lost children to families that are completely new to them."

Christine Folch, also a judge and the Bacca Foundation Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University, wrote, "Ultimately, 'who am I?' is the fundamental question of the book. I particularly appreciated that the author does not sugar coat or hide the dilemmas faced by adult grandchildren who now have to grapple with whether to accuse the only parents they have known."

The other judges included Prof. James Chappel, a member of the DHRC@FHI executive committee and the Gilhuly Family Associate Professor in the History Department at Duke;



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and Robin Kirk, a former co-director of the DHRC@FHI and Professor of the Practice in the Cultural Anthropology Department at Duke.

When notified of the award, Gilland stated, “I am deeply honored to receive the Juan E. Méndez prize, and to be associated with Professor Méndez and his enduring legacy of human rights advocacy. It is especially meaningful to receive this recognition from Duke, whose library holdings on human rights in Latin America are unparalleled, and which I frequently and gratefully consulted for this project. I would like to dedicate this award to the grandmothers and grandchildren who trusted me with their stories and who have remained relentless in their fight for truth, justice, and the preservation of memory.”

First awarded in 2008, the Méndez Human Rights Book Award honors the best current non-fiction book published in English on human rights, democracy, and social justice in contemporary Latin America. The books are evaluated by a panel of judges drawn from academia, journalism, human rights, and public policy circles.

For more information on the award, event, and previous winners, [visit our website](#).

For more information about *A Flower Traveled in My Blood*, see [Simon and Schuster](#).

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