

# SIUE's Clark Named Finalist for Prestigious Tufts Poetry Award

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EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Department of English Language and Literature Assistant Professor Tiana Clark has been named one of five finalists in the prestigious 2020 Kate Tufts Discovery Award for her poetry book, “I Can’t Talk About the Trees Without the Blood.”

The Kate Tufts Discovery Award is bestowed annually by Claremont Graduate University (CGU) to honor a first book by a poet of promise. It is awarded in conjunction with the Kingsley Tufts Award, which is one of the world’s leading annual poetry awards for mid-career poets.

“I am beyond honored to be a finalist for the Kate Tufts Discovery Award,” said Clark. “I bawled when I received the email. It’s an amazing and validating feeling to be recognized for trusting my imagination.”

This year’s five finalists for the Kate Tufts Discovery Award were selected by a panel of fellow poets from a pool of several hundred nominations submitted by individuals and publishers. The recipient of the award and its \$10,000 prize will be announced in late February.

Clark wrote “I Can’t Talk About the Trees Without the Blood,” because to her, “Trees will never be just trees. They will also and always be a row of gallows from which Black bodies once swung. This is an image that I cannot escape, but one that I have learned to lean into as I delve into personal and public histories, explicating memories and muses around race, elegy, family, and faith by making and breaking forms, as well as probing mythology, literary history, my own ancestry and, yes, even Rihanna.”

Clark hopes this book and her next poetry collection investigating long poems with lyric swagger will provide inspiration to her SIUE students.

“I hope my work gives my students encouragement to be themselves on the page, to take creative risks and experiment with poetic form,” said Clark.

Central to SIUE’s exceptional and comprehensive education, the College of Arts and Sciences offers degree programs in the natural sciences, humanities, arts, social sciences and communications. The College touches the lives of all SIUE students helping them explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region's workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.