

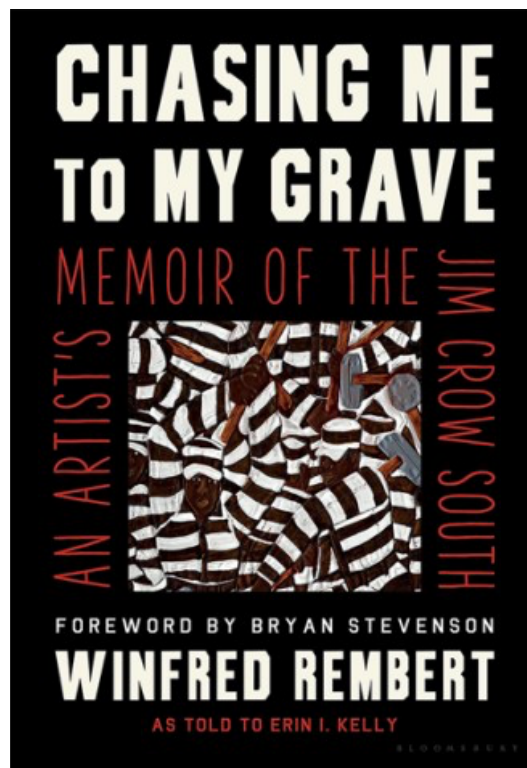
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The 2022 Pulitzer Prizes

Erin Kelly, co-author of Winfred Rembert's memoir, and Salamishah Tillet for "searing" and "stylish: writing in biography and criticism

By Lydialyle Gibson – May 9, 2022



Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South

For her as-told-to biography of the late artist Winfred Rembert, *Chasing Me to My Grave: An Artist's Memoir of the Jim Crow South*, Erin D. Kelly, Ph.D. '95, was honored with a Pulitzer Prize on Monday (Rembert, who died in 2021, was named posthumously as co-winner of the prize). Writer and scholar Salamishah Tillet, Ph.D. '07, won for her work as a critic at large for the *New York Times*.

The Pulitzer committee described *Chasing Me to My Grave*—as “a searing first person illustrated account of an artist’s life during the 1950s and 1960s, in an unreconstructed corner of the Deep South.” Excerpted in *Harvard Magazine* last fall, it tells the real-life story of Rembert, a self-taught painter born to Georgia

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field laborers who joined the civil rights movement as a teenager. Kelly, a philosophy professor at Tufts University, first met and interviewed Rembert while working on her 2018 book, *The Limits of Blame: Rethinking Punishment and Responsibility*. The result of Kelly and Rembert's subsequent collaboration, the Pulitzer committee said, is "an account of abuse, endurance, imagination, and aesthetic transformation."

Tillet is the Henry Rutgers professor of African American studies and creative writing at Rutgers University and founding director of New Arts Justice, an initiative for feminist approaches to public art in Newark. She has been contributing to the *New York Times* since 2015, where she writes about popular culture, politics, gender, sexuality, and race, which she often examines through the lenses of theater, television, and fashion. Her Pulitzer Prize was awarded "for learned and stylish writing about black stories in art and popular culture," which the committee lauded for bridging the gap between "academic and non-academic cultural discourse."