

Scribes Announces 2026 Book Award Honorees

*Akhil Reed Amar wins for **Born Equal**;
Judith Resnik and Richard Primus
named runners-up*



REGISTER

Annual Awards Ceremony | Zoom
Friday, December 4, 2026 at 11:30 a.m. E.T. / 8:30 a.m. P.T.

Scribes—The American Society of Legal Writers—is pleased to announce that **Akhil Reed Amar** has received the 2026 Scribes Book Award for [*Born Equal: Remaking America's Constitution, 1840–1920*](#) (Basic Books/Hachette, 2025). **Judith Resnik** and **Richard Primus** were selected as runners-up for [*Impermissible Punishments: How Prison Became a Problem for Democracy*](#) (University of Chicago Press, 2025) and [*The Oldest Constitutional Question: Enumeration and Federal Power*](#) (Harvard University Press, 2025), respectively. The three honorees were selected from dozens of books submitted for consideration.

Since 1961, Scribes has presented its annual Book Award to recognize the best work of legal scholarship published during the preceding calendar year. The Book Award Committee gives primary consideration to the quality of the writing and also considers the depth of the research.

“Legal scholarship is most valuable when it combines serious research with writing that invites readers into the argument. These three books do exactly that. Each addresses a foundational question—equality, punishment, or the scope of federal power—with intellectual ambition and unusual clarity. We are delighted to recognize Professors Amar, Resnik, and Primus.

— Michele M. Jochner, President, Scribes

2026 Winner: Akhil Reed Amar

Akhil Reed Amar, the Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science at Yale University, traces in *Born Equal* the constitutional transformation of the United States from 1840 to 1920, focusing on the evolving promise of equality and the constitutional changes that ended slavery, secured citizenship, and expanded suffrage. The book brings constitutional analysis together with political and social history to examine how the nation's understanding of equality changed across eight consequential decades.

Amar is a returning Scribes Book Award honoree. In 1999, Scribes recognized his *The Bill of Rights* with an Honorable Mention.

2026 Runners-Up

Judith Resnik, the Arthur Liman Professor of Law at Yale Law School, offers a transatlantic legal history of punishment, the development of modern corrections systems, and the long-running debate over prisoners' rights and the limits of permissible punishment. Spanning three centuries, the book examines how legal norms and institutions have defined—and repeatedly redefined—what governments committed to equality

may do to people they detain. Resnik is also a returning Scribes honoree. She and Dennis Curtis received First Place in 2012 for *Representing Justice: Invention, Controversy, and Rights in City-States and Democratic Courtrooms*.

Richard Primus, Theodore J. St. Antoine Collegiate Professor of Law at the University of Michigan Law School, revisits one of American constitutional law's oldest assumptions: that Congress may act only through powers affirmatively enumerated in the Constitution. The book reexamines constitutional text, history, and federalism to challenge the conventional account of how enumeration structures national legislative power.

Annual Awards Ceremony and 2027 CLE

Scribes will honor Amir, Resnik, and Primus at its Annual Awards Ceremony, which will be held virtually on Zoom on Friday, December 4, 2026 at 11:30 a.m. E.T. / 10:30 a.m. C.T. / 8:30 a.m. P.T. Click [here](#) to register for this exciting and complimentary event.

Scribes also plans to present a separate one-hour CLE webinar with Amar in Spring 2027. The program will feature discussion of *Born Equal* and an opportunity for questions and conversation with a member of the Scribes Book Award Committee. The date and registration information will be announced on the Scribes website.

About the Scribes Book Award

The Scribes Book Award has recognized outstanding legal scholarship since 1961. Recent winners include Wes E. Henricksen, Dylan C. Penningroth, Frederick Schauer, and Erwin Chemerinsky. Earlier recipients include Cass R. Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, Noah Feldman, Lawrence M. Friedman, Bryan A. Garner, and Richard A. Posner.

About Scribes—The American Society of Legal Writers

Scribes is a national organization devoted to promoting excellence in legal writing and clear communication in the law. Scribes is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2026. For information about Scribes, its awards, membership, and programs, visit www.scribes.org.