

Harper Lee Receives Medal of Freedom



Highlighted struggle for equality ... George Bush confers the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Harper Lee.

Photo: AFP

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Read White House ceremony [prepared remarks](#)

WASHINGTON: George Bush awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to eight people on Monday, including Harper Lee, 81, the author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The US President praised Lee's 1961 book as a "gift to the entire world". The citation accompanying the medal said: "At a critical moment in our history, *To Kill a Mockingbird* helped focus the nation on the turbulent struggle for equality."

Among those at the ceremony was Veronique Peck, the widow of the actor Gregory Peck, who portrayed Atticus Finch in the film adaptation of Lee's book.

The recipients were Brian Lamb from the political cable network C-SPAN; the former congressman Henry Hyde; the economist and Nobel laureate Gary Becker; the imprisoned Cuban dissident Oscar Elias Biscet; the Liberian President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; the scientist Francis Collins; and a former president of the National Association for the Advancement of

Coloured People, Benjamin Hooks.

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