

RICHARD BLANCO

b. February 15, 1968

INAUGURAL POET

“I don’t exclusively align myself with any one particular group — Latino, Cuban, gay or ‘white’ — but I embrace them all.”

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inaugural poet.**

Richard Blanco is the youngest, the first Latino and the first openly gay person to be named a U.S. inaugural poet. He read his poem “One Today,” written soon after the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, at President Barack Obama’s second inauguration. He describes the poem as “a unique snapshot of where we are as a country.”

Blanco was born in Madrid to Cuban exiles. Shortly thereafter, the family immigrated to New York and later settled in Miami, where Blanco was raised. He graduated from Florida International University with a degree in civil engineering and worked initially as a consulting civil engineer. His creative yearnings eventually sent him back to his alma mater, where he earned an MFA in creative writing.

His first book of poetry, “City of a Hundred Fires,” published in 1998, won the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize from the University of Pittsburgh. After the book’s success, Blanco accepted a creative writing professorship at Central Connecticut State University. Subsequently, he taught at Georgetown University, American University and at the Writer’s Center.

Blanco’s poetry explores his cultural heritage and sexuality, most notably in “Looking for the Gulf Motel,” published in 2012. “It’s trying to understand how I fit between negotiating the world, between being mainstream gay and being Cuban gay,” he says.

His work has been published in *The Nation*, *Ploughshares*, *New England Review*, *Americas Review* and many other poetry journals and publications. He received the PEN Open Book Award for “Directions to the Beach of the Dead” in 2006 and the Thom Gunn Award for Gay Poetry for “Looking for the Gulf Motel” in 2013. He wrote and read the poem, “Matters of the Sea,” for the reopening ceremony of the U.S. embassy in Havana, Cuba, in 2015.

Blanco has participated in many charitable causes, including Freedom to Marry and One Fund, an organization that benefits victims of the Boston Marathon bombing. He lives in Bethel, Maine, with his partner, Dr. Mark Neveu, a research scientist.



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