

Poet Richard Blanco to Speak at Macalester Opening Convocation September 11

St. Paul, Minn. - Richard Blanco, inaugural poet for President Barack Obama and author of several acclaimed books, will speak at Macalester's opening convocation at 4:30 p.m., Wed., Sept. 11, in the Alexander G. Hill Ballroom, Kagin Commons. Blanco will also be awarded an honorary degree.

Blanco is the youngest, the first Latino, and the first openly gay person to serve as the Presidential inaugural poet. He was selected by President Obama to be the fifth inaugural poet in history, joining the ranks of such luminary poets as Robert Frost, Maya Angelou, Miller Williams and Elizabeth Alexander.

"Richard Blanco's life changed dramatically on January 21, 2013, when he read *One Today* at President Obama's second inaugural," said acting Macalester President Kathleen Murray. "We, at Macalester, like the nation, were enthralled and captivated by Richard and his poem and are very proud to have him as our opening convocation speaker."

Blanco's first book of poetry, *City of a Hundred Fires*, explored the yearnings and negotiation of cultural identity as a Cuban-American and received

the Agnes Starrett Poetry Prize from the University of Pittsburgh Press. His second book, *Directions to The Beach of the Dead* won the Beyond Margins Award from the PEN American Center for its continued exploration of the universal themes of cultural identity and homecoming. A third collection, *Looking for The Gulf Motel*, won the Patterson Poetry Prize, Maine Literary Poetry Award, and Thom Gunn Award from the Publishing Triangle. He recently published commemorative chapbooks of *One Today* and *Boston Strong* with University of Pittsburg Press. Blanco is recipient of two Florida Artist Fellowships, a Residency

Fellowship from the Virginia Center for Creative Arts, a John Ciardi Fellow of the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and is a Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow.

His poems have appeared in top literary journals including, *The Nation*, *the New Republic*, *Ploughshares*, and several anthologies including, *The Best American Poetry*, *Norton Anthology of Latino Literature*, *Great American Prose Poems*, *Breadloaf Anthology of New American Poets*, and *American Poetry: The Next Generation*.

He has been featured on CBS Sunday Morning; National Public Radio's All Things Considered, Fresh Air with Terry Gross, and various conferences and venues including the Miami Book Fair, The Southern Writers Conference, The Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, the Dodge Poetry Festival, and The Poetry Center at Smith



Portrait (C) Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

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College. Blanco has been interviewed on major media from the U.S. and around the world: CNN, Telemundo, AC360, BBC, Univision, PBS, and many others. He was Assistant Professor at Central Connecticut State University and has taught creative writing at Georgetown and American universities.

A builder of cities and poems, Blanco is also a professional civil engineer and currently lives in Bethel, Maine.

Macalester College, founded in 1874, is a national liberal arts college with a full-time enrollment of 2,035 students. Macalester is nationally recognized for its long-standing commitment to academic excellence, internationalism, multiculturalism, and civic engagement. Learn more at [macalester.edu](http://www.macalester.edu) (<http://www.macalester.edu/>).

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