



PAT MORA wins Lifetime Achievement Award

From the TEXAS INSTITUTE of LETTERS

Author Pat Mora has been named the winner of the Texas Institute of Letters' prestigious Lon Tinkle Award for Lifetime Achievement. This is the highest honor given by the TIL, established in 1936 to recognize distinctive literary achievement. The award will be presented to Mora at the TIL's annual banquet, set for April 8, 2017 in El Paso.

"Pat Mora is one of the most beloved and acclaimed writers from Texas," TIL President Steve Davis said. "It was a joyful occasion when the TIL council voted unanimously to honor Pat with this award."

Mora was born in El Paso and grew up in a bilingual home where books were cherished. She is now the author of nearly fifty books, including thirty-six for children. Her books of poetry and nonfiction for adults include *Agua Santa/Holy Water*, *Aunt Carmen's Book of Practical Saints*, *Borders*, *Chants*, *House of Houses*, and *Neplanta: Essays from the Land in the Middle*.

Her writing is often shaped by her life growing up on the U.S.-Mexico border. "Family, Mexican American culture, and the desert are all important themes," she said. "The desert, mi madre, is my stern teacher...the Southwestern landscape has been my point of reference."

"Ms. Mora's poems are proudly bilingual, an eloquent answer to purists who refuse to see language as something that lives and changes," wrote *The New York Times* of Mora's poetry collection, *Agua Santa/Holy Water*.

"I take pride in being a Latina writer," Mora said. "I continue to write and work to deepen and be more inventive. I write, in part, because Latina perspectives need to be part of our literary heritage including literature for children and young



adults. From large and small publishing houses, all of our diverse children, need good, well-illustrated books that reflect their lives. Our young need and deserve to feel pride in home languages and cultures.”

In 1996, Mora founded the community-based, family literacy initiative, El día de los niños, El día de los libros/ Children’s Day, Book Day, now commonly known as [Día](#). In the years since, Día has grown in the United States to include all children, languages and cultures.

Mora has won over a dozen national literary awards during her career and received the “Texas Writer” Award from the Texas Book Festival in 2015. The American Library Association has named her an Honorary Member. Both North Carolina State University and SUNY-Buffalo have awarded her Honorary Doctorates and her alma mater, the University of Texas at El Paso, has named her a Distinguished Alumnus.

Mora, the mother of three children, and proud grandmother of an Austin granddaughter, is married to Vern Scarborough. She has been a teacher, university administrator and consultant. She is the recipient of a National Endowment of the Arts Poetry Fellowship, a Kellogg National Leadership Fellowship, and three Southwest Book Awards. She speaks about creativity, creative writing, leadership and advocacy at conferences, schools, and universities. She enjoys encouraging audiences to view their cultures, homes, and landscapes as catalysts for writing and for creativity.

“Pat Mora represents the highest principles of writing, both in her work and in her life,” said TIL President Davis. “She was a groundbreaking literary voice early in her career as a poet and essayist, and her subsequent efforts to spread joy through books and reading has benefitted so many children and families around the country. She is an inspiration to so many of us.”

Davis notes that it’s especially appropriate that the TIL will be recognizing Mora when the Institute gathers for its annual meeting in her hometown. “El Paso has arguably the richest literary heritage of any city in Texas, and Pat Mora is one of the great writers from El Paso. Honoring her at our banquet in El Paso will put a big exclamation point on the meeting.”

The [Texas Institute of Letters](#) is a non-profit established in 1936 to promote interest in Texas literature and to recognize literary achievement. The TIL’s elected membership consists of the state’s most recognized and serious writers of fiction, poetry, journalism, and scholarship. The membership includes winners of the Pulitzer Prizes in drama, fiction, and nonfiction, as well as prizes awarded by PEN and dozens of other regional and national award and grant-giving institutions.

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