

2020 Sonia Sanchez-Langston Hughes Poetry Contest (Formerly Split This Rock Annual Contest)

JUDGED BY RICHARD BLANCO

DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 1, 2019

ACCESSIBLE GUIDELINES AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

Each year, Split This Rock sponsors a national poetry contest which serves to raise the visibility and prestige of poetry of provocation and witness. Formerly known as Split This Rock Annual Poetry Contest, the contest was renamed in 2017 as the Sonia Sanchez-Langston Hughes Poetry Contest. The new name honors two poets significant to Split This Rock: Langston Hughes, who penned the poem "Big Buddy" from which Split This Rock takes its name, and Sonia Sanchez, who opened the very first Split This Rock Poetry Festival in 2008 and served as guest judge for the 2018 contest.

PRIZES

First place \$500; 2nd and 3rd place, \$250 each. Winning poems will be published on Split This Rock's website within *The Quarry: A Social Justice Poetry Database*. All prize winners will receive free registration to Split This Rock Poetry Festival 2020 and are eligible to apply for need-based travel scholarships. The 1st place recipient will be invited to read the winning poem on the main stage at the festival. All submitted poems may also receive consideration for Split This Rock's Poem of the Week Series.

READING FEE

\$20, all proceeds support Split This Rock Poetry Festival 2020.

ABOUT THE JUDGE: RICHARD BLANCO

Richard Blanco is the fifth presidential inaugural poet in U.S. history—the youngest, first Latino, immigrant, and gay person to serve in such a role. Born in Madrid to Cuban exile parents and raised in Miami, the negotiation of cultural identity and place characterize his body of work. He is the author of the poetry collections *Looking for the Gulf Motel*, *Directions to the Beach of the Dead*, and *City of a Hundred Fires*; the poetry chapbooks *Matters of the Sea*, *One Today*, and *Boston Strong*; a children's book of his inaugural poem, "One Today," illustrated by Dav Pilkey; and *Boundaries*, a collaboration with photographer Jacob Hessler. His latest book of poems, *How to Love a Country* (Beacon Press, 2019), both interrogates the American narrative, past and present, and celebrates the still unkept promise of its ideals. He has also authored the memoirs *The Prince of Los Cocuyos: A Miami Childhood* and *For All of Us, One Today: An Inaugural Poet's Journey*.

Blanco's many honors include the Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize from the University of Pittsburgh Press, the PEN/Beyond Margins Award, the Paterson Poetry Prize, a Lambda Literary Award, and two Maine Literary Awards. He has been a Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow and received honorary doctorates from Macalester College, Colby College, and the University of Rhode Island. He has been featured on *CBS Sunday Morning* and NPR's *Fresh Air*. The Academy of American Poets named him its first Education Ambassador in 2015. Blanco has continued to write occasional poems for organizations and events such as the re-opening of the U.S. embassy in Havana. He lives with his partner in Bethel, ME.

Richard Blanco has travelled many paths with Split This Rock over the years. He has been a featured poet at Sunday Kind of Love Reading & Open Mic, at Split This Rock's 5th Anniversary Celebration, and twice in our Poem of the Week Series. After the 2016 election, he offered his poem "Declaration of Inter-Dependence" to Split This Rock as part of a series of counter-inaugural poems published on January 20, 2017. His poem was the most viewed poem in *The Quarry* that year. The poem can be read at [Split This Rock's website](#).

Blanco will serve as the final judge for the contest, selecting the winning poems from up to 20 top poems chosen by first readers. At the judge's discretion, he may also select additional poems to receive honorable mentions.

POETRY CONTEST THEMES

Submissions should be in the spirit of Split This Rock's work: socially engaged poems, poems that reach beyond the self to connect with the larger community or world; poems of provocation and witness. This theme can be interpreted broadly and may include but is not limited to work addressing politics, economics, government, war, leadership, issues of identity (gender, sexuality, race, indigeneity, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic class, body image, immigration, heritage, etc.), community, civic engagement, education, activism, and poems about history or cultural icons.

We welcome poetry on a wide range of social justice themes and in a wide range of poetic styles.

Visit [Split This Rock's website](#) to read past winning poems.

HOW TO SUBMIT

By Submittable: Unless it is not accessible to you, please visit Split This Rock's Submittable page to enter the contest. The full submission guidelines are available there as well as at Split This Rock's website.

If Submittable is not accessible to you: Using the guidelines in this document, send a cover sheet and your poem(s) as two separate documents via email to poetrycontest@splitthisrock.org. You may send up to 3 poems, no more than 6 pages total, with no more than 1 poem appearing on each page. Do not include your name or any identifying information on any of the 6 pages of poems. However, please DO title the two documents with your name. On the cover sheet, include your name, mailing address, email address, a bio of no more than 150 words, and the titles of your poems. Send in the reading fee of \$20 so it arrives by November 1 via Paypal at [Paypal.Me/SplitThisRock](https://www.paypal.com/paytogether/splitthisrock) (please add a note that this payment is for the Poetry Contest) or by mail to Split This Rock Poetry Contest, 1301 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036. Please note that both your submission and reading fee should be sent early enough to arrive by November 1, 2019. Late entries will not be accepted.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Contact us at info@splitthisrock.org or (202) 787-5210

SUBMISSION PROCESS & GUIDELINES

- Submissions must be received by November 1, 2019. We encourage you to submit before the deadline so that we can assist you if you encounter problems.
- Submit up to 3 unpublished poems, no more than 6 pages total, with no more than 1 poem appearing on each page. Poems may be in any style, but must be in the spirit of Split This Rock's work (see above). Entries longer than 6 pages will not be read.

- What we mean by “unpublished”: We accept only poems that have not yet been included in a publication with an ISBN number or online via a juried journal or website. If your poem is selected and is posted online or on social media, we ask that you take it down prior to our publishing contest results.
- We read entries anonymously. Please do not put your name or contact information on any of the pages that include your poems. When entering the contest via Submittable, please do not put your name or contact information on the document you upload to Submittable or within its title or your poems will be in jeopardy of being disqualified.
- Simultaneous submissions are OK, but please notify us immediately if the poem is accepted elsewhere.
- Close friends, relatives, students, and former students of the judge are excluded from the contest. Likewise, the current Board of Directors, staff, Teaching Artists, and DC Youth Slam Team of Split This Rock are excluded, as are members of their immediate families. (For more detail, visit the Code of Ethics page on our [website](#).)
- Mailed and Emailed Submissions: Except in special circumstances with advance approval or in the cases of people for whom Submittable is inaccessible, including accommodation needs for people in the disability community, we do not accept mailed or emailed submissions.
- We encourage you to submit well before the November 1 deadline so that we can assist you if you encounter problems.
- Late entries will not be accepted.
- Once decisions have been made, you will receive an email notifying you of the status of your submission. We do not send hard copy notifications or accept self addressed stamped envelopes. Please visit [Split This Rock’s website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for updates on the contest.

ETHICS

Split This Rock subscribes to the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses Contest Code of Ethics. Read it online at our website: <http://www.splitthisrock.org>

DETAILS REGARDING WHAT TO SUBMIT

To enter the contest via Submittable, the following items are needed:

- **Submission Title:** Name your entry with title(s) of your poem(s). DO NOT include your name or any identifying information.
- **One Document of Up to 3 Poem(s):** Submit ONE document with up to three poems, no more than 6 pages with no more than one poem appearing on each page. DO NOT include your name or any identifying information within the uploaded document or its title.
- **Bio and Contact Information:** Please submit contact information and a biography of no more than 150 words. Contest readers and judge will not have access to this information. This information will only be used if one of your poems is selected as a winning poem or honorable mention.

If Submittable is not accessible to you, submit the following items:

- **Cover Sheet:** As a one page attachment, email us your name, mailing address, email address, a bio of no more than a 150 words, and the titles of your poems. Include your name in the title of this document. The cover sheet will help us to track your documents internally but none of this information will be shared with contest readers and judges.
- **One Document of Up to 3 Poem(s):** By email, submit ONE document with up to three poems, no more than 6 pages with no more than one poem appearing on each page. DO NOT include

your name or any identifying information within the uploaded document. However, please DO include your name in the title the document. This will help Split This Rock staff to track your documents internally, but your poems will be shared with contest readers and judges anonymously.

- **Reading Fee:** Send in the reading fee of \$20 so it arrives by November 1 via Paypal at [Paypal.Me/SplitThisRock](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?url=https://www.splitthisrock.org) (please add a note stating that this payment is for the Poetry Contest) or by mail to Split This Rock Poetry Contest, 1301 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036. Please note that your submission and reading fee should be sent early enough to arrive by November 1, 2019. Receiving your submission or reading fee after November 1, 2019 will put your entry in jeopardy of being disqualified.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUBMISSION!

If you have any questions, contact us at info@splitthisrock.org or 202-787-5210. For questions specifically regarding accessibility, feel free to contact us at the number above or at access@splitthisrock.org.