



DISTINGUISHED WRITERS TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS 2021

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TEXAS INSTITUTE OF LETTERS ANNOUNCES FOURTEEN DISTINGUISHED WRITERS TO BE INDUCTED

For the 85th year, members of the Texas Institute of Letters (TIL) have decided on the induction of new members to join the ranks of the distinguished honor society founded in 1936 to celebrate Texas literature and to recognize distinctive literary achievement.

The TIL's membership consists of the state's most respected writers – including winners of the Pulitzer Prize, National Book Award, PEN/Faulkner Award, Academy Award, Americas Award, International Latino Book Award, Lambda Literary Award, MacArthur Fellowship, and Guggenheim Fellowship. Membership is based on ongoing and exceptional literary accomplishment. Members of the Texas Institute of Letters have overwhelmingly approved fourteen writers to join the ranks of the TIL.

The 2021 honorees include fiction and nonfiction writers **Cristina Rivera Garza**, **George Saunders**, **Bryan Washington**, **David Samuel Levinson**, and **Preston Lewis**; award-winning poets **Allison Hedge Coke**, **Kevin Prufer**, and **Scott Wiggerman**; children's and YA authors **Crystal Allen** and **Chris Barton**; journalist **Gail Caldwell**; literary activist **Tony Diaz**; award-winning songwriter **Michael Martin Murphey**; and historian **Raymond Caballero**.

Sergio Troncoso, President of the Texas Institute of Letters states, “The Texas Institute of Letters continues to identify and honor outstanding writers from all literary genres: from novelists bent on experimentation and innovation in the form, to poets crafting beautiful yet technically difficult stanzas. Our newest members have also been expanding literary audiences to include diverse voices and readers, and opening minds with books that reconsider history and scholarship. We are extremely proud of the outstanding work that these writers represent: expertly crafted song lyrics, children's stories full of empathy and humor, journalism that aims to focus on the margin's of society, and prose exemplifying the excellence of literary creativity. These fourteen masters of the word include short-story writers, poets, songwriters, novelists, publishers, children's authors, and scholars.”

New members will be inducted at the upcoming virtual TIL annual meeting on April 17, 2021, which will also include the Annual TIL Literary Awards. For more information and details, please visit the TIL website: www.texasinstituteofletters.org or email Sergio Troncoso, president@texasinstituteofletters.org.

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New 2021 Inductees into the Texas Institute of Letters

Crystal Allen is the author of three books under *The Magnificent Mya Tibbs* series—*Mya in the Middle*, *The Wall of Fame Game*, and *Spirit Week Showdown*—*The Laura Line*, and *How Lamar's Bad Prank Won a Bubba-Sized Trophy*. Winner of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Sid Fleischman Award for Humor, she lives in Sugar Land, Texas. Her work has also been listed on the Texas Bluebonnet Award Master list, Best Books of the Year by *Kirkus Reviews*, and the Chicago Public Library list for Best Books of the Year.



Chris Barton is the author of *What Do You Do with a Voice Like That? The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan*, *Dazzle Ships: World War I and the Art of Confusion*, *Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions*, *All of a Sudden and Forever: Help and Healing After the Oklahoma City Bombing*, among many other books for children. His books have received the Best Children's Picture Book Award from the Texas Institute of Letters, the Orbis Pictus Honor Book Award, Bank Street College of Education's Cook Prize, and the Carter G. Woodson Book Award, among many other prizes. He lives in Austin, Texas.



Born and raised in El Paso, Texas, **Raymond Caballero** is the author of *Orozco: The Life and Death of a Mexican Revolutionary* and *McCarthyism vs. Clinton Jencks*. Lonn Taylor on Caballero's first book: "Raymond Caballero has employed his lawyerly research skills to solve a mystery of the Mexican Revolution that has stymied historians for a century. In the process, he has produced a great adventure story." Noted historian Oscar J. Martínez on *McCarthyism vs. Clinton Jencks*: "This is a spellbinding read for anyone interested in law and order drama, mining industry-labor relations, and the history of anti-communism." Caballero was the 50th mayor of El Paso.



Gail Caldwell is the author of *Bright Precious Thing*, *New Life, No Instructions*, *Let's Take the Long Way Home*, and *A Strong West Wind*. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism, she is the former chief book critic for *The Boston Globe*, where she was a staff writer for over twenty years. Born and raised in Amarillo, Texas, Caldwell has often written about her Texas roots in her memoirs.



Born in Amarillo, Texas, **Allison Hedge Coke** is the author of the poetry collections *Dog Road Woman*, *Off-Season City Pipe*, *Blood Run*, and *Streaming*. She has also written the memoir *Rock, Ghost, Willow, Deer: A Story of Survival* about her life as a mixed-blood woman coming of age off the reservation, with Huron, Metis, Cherokee, Luso, French Canadian, Scot, Irish heritage. She has won the American Book Award, PEN/Southwest Book Award, and fellowships from the NEA in Poetry and the Lannan Foundation. A Fulbright scholar, Hedge Coke also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas.



Tony Diaz is the author of the novel *Aztec Love God* and the *Mexican American Studies Toolkit*, a guide designed to provide educators with the most up-to-date approach to contemporary issues in Social Studies, History, Rhetorical Analysis, and Ethnic Studies. Founder of the Nuestra Palabra program and the Librotraficante Movement, he has been a tireless advocate for Mexican American Studies on radio and television in the Houston area. His essays have appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*, *The Texas Observer*, *CNN*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Huffington Post*.



David Samuel Levinson is the author of the short-story collection *Most of Us Are Here Against Our Will* and the novels *Tell me How This Ends Well* and *Antonia Lively Breaks the Silence*. Winner of the Marguerite and Lamar Smith Fellowship for Writers, he has also received fellowships from Yaddo, Jentel Foundation, Ledig House, Santa Fe Arts Institute, and Sewanee Writers' Conference. Levinson has taught at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, and Emory University. He is founder of The Big Texas Read, which celebrates other Texas writers.



Author of over thirty novels and past president of the Western Writers of America, **Preston Lewis** is most notably the author of the *Memoirs of H.H. Lomax* series of Western novels. His work—which blends Wild West history, humor, and famous people—has won the Will Rogers Gold Medallion Award for Western Humor and the Elmer Kelton Award for Best Creative Work on West Texas (thrice). Lewis was recently named a Fellow of the West Texas Historical Association.



Singer-songwriter **Michael Martin Murphey** has released more than 35 albums, with chart-topping hits such as “Wildfire,” “Carolina in the Pines,” “What’s Forever For,” “Long Line of Love,” “Geronimo’s Cadillac,” and “Cowboy Logic.” Murphey’s work has earned him six gold albums, multiple Grammy nominations, the Wrangler Award Induction into the Cowboy Hall of Fame, and induction into the Western Music Association Hall of Fame as well as the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame.



Kevin Prufer is the author of *How He Loved Them*, *Churches*, *In a Beautiful Country*, *National Anthem*, *New European Poets*, *Literary Publishing in the 21st Century*, and *Into English: Poems, Translations, Commentaries*. Prufer's many honors and awards include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Lannan Foundation. He has received four Pushcart Prizes, awards from the Poetry Society of America, and the William Rockhill Nelson Award. He is a professor in the English Department at the University of Houston.



Winner of a MacArthur "Genius" Grant for Fiction Writing, **Cristina Rivera Garza** is the author of six novels, five poetry collections, three books of nonfiction, and four short-story collections. Originally from Tamaulipas, Mexico, Rivera Garza is the only Mexican writer to have won the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Prize twice, for her novels *Death Gives Me* and *Nobody Will See Me Cry*. She has also won the Roger Caillois Award for Latin American Literature (Paris) and the Anna Seghers Award (Berlin). Her work has been translated into English, Portuguese, German, Italian, and Korean. Dr. Rivera Garza is Director of the Creative Writing Program in Spanish at the University of Houston.



George Saunders is the author of eleven books, including *Lincoln in the Bardo*, *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*, *Tenth of December*, and *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil*. Winner of the MacArthur and Guggenheim Fellowships, he has also won the Man Booker Prize, the Folio Prize, the Story Prize, and the PEN/Malamud Prize for excellence in the short story, among many other awards. Since 1997, Saunders has taught in the Creative Writing Program at the Syracuse University. A regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, he is originally from Amarillo, Texas.



A native of Houston, **Bryan Washington** is the author of *Lot: Stories* and the novel *Memorial*. Winner of the International Dylan Thomas Prize and Ernest J. Gaines Award, he also won the TIL's Sergio Troncoso Award for Best Work of First Fiction, the New York Public Library Young Lions Award, a Lambda Literary Award, and an O. Henry Award. His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Paris Review*, *The New York Times*, *Boston Review*, and *One Story*.



Scott Wiggerman is the author of the poetry collections *Leaf and Beak: Sonnets, Presence*, and *Vegetables and Other Relations*. Founder and editor of Dos Gatos Press, he has also edited the annual *Texas Poetry Calendar*, *Wingbeats: Exercises and Practice in Poetry*, and *Wingbeats II: Exercises and Practice in Poetry*. Wiggerman established and edited a series published by Dos Gatos Press called *Poetry of the American Southwest*, which includes *22 Poems & a Prayer for El Paso*, *Weaving the Terrain: 100-Word Southwestern Poems*, and *Bearing the Mask: Southwestern Persona Poems*.

