



## Celeste Bedford Walker Wins Lifetime Achievement Award from Texas Institute of Letters

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Author Celeste Bedford Walker 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, which was established in 1936 to recognize distinctive literary achievement. The award will be presented to Bedford Walker at the TIL's annual banquet on April 23, 2022 in El Paso, Texas.



“Celeste Bedford Walker has been at the forefront of literary Texas for years, and her expertly crafted plays combine surprising drama, sharp and incisive dialogue, and the revelation of opening a new world for fans of the theatre,” TIL President Sergio Troncoso said. “I am thrilled that the TIL council voted unanimously to honor Celeste with this award. She is a stellar writer from Houston who has written dozens of plays that open up your heart and soul, that stay with you long after you have left the theatre, and that often pursue a sense of social justice with humor as well as gut-wrenching testimony. Celeste has dedicated her literary life to writing and dramatizing the many untold stories of the African American experience. You will not attend one of her plays without being moved and even shaken by the power of her words.”

Acclaimed playwright Celeste Bedford Walker is the author of over forty plays that have received national awards and productions. She has won the National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award, the NAACP Theatre Awards for Best Play and Best Playwright, New York's AUDELCO Award, and BroadwayWorld's (Houston) Regional Award for Best Play. For her play *Distant Voices*, she was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, an international award for outstanding work by a female playwright in the English-speaking theatre. *The New York Times* has praised her plays as “forceful, well-crafted,” “vigorous social satire,” “an uproariously good time,” and “unquestionably good theatre.” *Dramalogue* from Los Angeles has described her first play *Sister Sister* (retitled from *Once in a Wife Time*) as “practically flawless.” *Variety* praised Bedford Walker's murder mystery *Reunion in Bartersville* as a “gourmet dish.” The *Houston Chronicle* has called her work “appealing and affecting, expressively written.”

Bedford Walker's play *Camp Logan* has been performed at major venues around the country, including the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., where the *Washington Post* lauded

the military drama as “a textbook example of how to simultaneously entertain and educate an audience.”

Born and raised in Houston Texas, Bedford Walker attended Jack Yates High School and Texas Southern University, both historically Black institutions in the Third Ward. She is a veteran of the Houston theatre scene. Her list of eclectic plays cover the spectrum of the Black experience, including *Once In A Wife Time*, *Sassy Mamas*, *Over Forty*, *Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed*, *I Barbara Jordan*, *Harlem After Hours*, *Black Spurs*, *Praise the Lord and Raise the Roof*, *The Wreckin’ Ball*, *The Red Blood of War*, *More Than Christmas*, and *NeNe*. “My goal is to continue to address current and relevant social issues like my recent participation in a project called “Say Her Name” about women of color who have fatal encounters with law enforcement and to continue to explore Black America’s neglected history in such plays as my historical drama *Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed*, which was performed at historic Karamu House Theatre, streamed on PBS Cleveland, and selected to be a part of the worldwide Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Events,” Bedford Walker said. Her most recent commission is the BOLD Commission with the Ensemble Theatre in Houston. In the spring of 2022, she will publish an anthology of her work, *Sassy Mamas and Other Plays*, by Celeste Bedford Walker (Texas A&M University Press and Wittliff Literary Series).

On her reaction to winning the Lifetime Achievement Award from the TIL, Bedford Walker said, “I was so surprised and grateful when I learned I was going to receive the Lon Tinkle Lifetime Achievement Award. To be recognized by the Texas Institute of Letters with this prestigious award for my years as a writer is the highest honor I could imagine. I am a proud member, and it means so much to receive an award like this from my peers. It inspires me to know that my life’s work is validated and duly noted by one of the most distinguished literary organizations in the land. What a wonderful gift. Now I have to live up to it. Thank you TIL!”

The Texas Institute of Letters ([www.texasinstituteofletters.org](http://www.texasinstituteofletters.org)) is a non-profit Honor Society founded in 1936 to celebrate Texas literature and to recognize distinctive literary achievement. The TIL’s elected membership consists of the state’s most respected writers of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, journalism, and scholarship. The membership includes winners of the Pulitzer Prizes in drama, fiction, and nonfiction, as well as prizes by PEN, fellowships from the MacArthur Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts, and awards from dozens of other regional and national institutions.

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