



Beverly Lowry Wins Lifetime Achievement Award from Texas Institute of Letters

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Author Beverly Lowry has been named the winner of the Texas Institute of Letters' prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. 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 Lowry in Corpus Christi at TIL's annual banquet on April 29, 2023.



From TIL president, Diana López: “Beverly Lowry is most deserving of this award. She is an accomplished writer in both the fiction and nonfiction genres. She has a deep curiosity about people, evidenced by her meticulous research and her authentic portrayal of characters both fictional and historical. I couldn't wait to call Beverly after the TIL council voted unanimously to name her as the recipient of this award. Many commented on the quality of her work, but it's also important to note her service to the field. She spent years mentoring new writers as a professor at the University of Houston and George Mason University. She is also one of the first women to serve as the president of TIL. I have always admired her as a leader and as a writer. The subtitle for her biography of Harriet Tubman, 'Imagining a Life,' is apt for all of her works. Open any of her books, and you will see just how skillfully she imagines lives, allowing us, her readers, the gift of imagining them, too.”

Originally from Memphis, Tennessee and Greenville, Mississippi, Lowry moved to Houston in the mid-1960s. She began her career writing primarily fiction. Her first novel, *Come Back, Lolly Ray*, was published in 1977. Other novels include *Emma Blue* (1978), *Daddy's Girl* (1981), *The Perfect Sonya* (1987), *Breaking Gentle* (1988), and *The Track of Real Desires* (1994). Her short works have been featured in several publications, including *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and the *Mississippi Review*.

Her journey to writing nonfiction began in 1984 when Lowry, mourning the death of her son after a hit-and-run accident, began visiting Karla Faye Tucker, an inmate on death row and the first woman to be executed in Texas since 1863. Lowry's conversations with Tucker inspired her to write *Crossed Over: A Murder, A Memoir* (1992), which was favorably compared to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. In 2002, the book was adapted to a film of the same name, airing on CBS and starring Diane Keaton (as Lowry) and Jennifer Jason Leigh (as Tucker).

Lowry followed with two biographies of inspirational African American women, *Her Dream of Dreams: The Rise and Triumph of Madam C. J. Walker* (2003) and *Harriet Tubman: Imagining*

a Life (2007). She then turned to writing about true crimes. Her book, *Who Killed These Girls? The Unsolved Murders That Rocked a Texas Town* (2017) investigates the murder of four girls at an Austin frozen yogurt shop. *The New York Times Book Review* praised it for being "heartfelt . . . chillingly concise . . . Lowry works the case from a human rather than a forensic angle" and the *Austin Chronicle* stated that it was "deeply compassionate . . . an agonizing portrait . . . we're fortunate to have [Lowry] as our investigator, our cultural historian, our mourner." Her latest book, *Deer Creek Drive: A Reckoning of Memory and Murder in the Mississippi Delta* (2022), focuses on Ruth Dickins, a woman convicted and then pardoned for the murder of her wealthy, socialite mother. It is praised by *The Washington Post*, which stated that "few stories are more fascinating," and by the *Oxford Review*, which called it "the crown jewel of Lowry's literary career."

Lowry has been honored with several awards and fellowships, including those granted by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1981, she won two of the literary awards offered by the Texas Institute of Letters: the Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Book of Fiction for her novel, *Daddy's Girl*, and the short story award for "So Far From the Road, So Long From the Morning." Her most recent book, *Deer Creek Drive*, has been named a winning title for one of the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing. This year is the first time it is being given for a book in the nonfiction category, making Lowry its inaugural winner.

When notified about being named the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, Lowry said, "I am not only honored but also jazzed to the gills to be receiving this award. Thank you, TIL."

The [Texas Institute of Letters](#) 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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