Norma Cantú to Receive Lifetime Achievement Award from TIL

The Texas Institute of Letters is proud to announce that writer, scholar, folklorist, and mentor Norma Elia Cantú has been selected as the 2027 winner of its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. This is the highest honor given by the TIL, which was established in 1936 to celebrate Texas literature and recognize distinctive literary achievement. Cantú will receive the award, which comes with an $8,000 prize, at the annual TIL Awards Banquet in College Station on May 1, 2027.

The banquet will be open to the public. Tickets are available at eventbrite.com/e/2027-texas-institute-of-letters-awards-banquet-tickets-2003320379182.



"In her keen observation and creative exploration of borders — geopolitical and otherwise — and in her many contributions toward the sense of community so vital in our field, Norma Cantú serves as a model for writers in Texas and beyond to emulate," says TIL President Chris Barton. "Even as she receives this honor for all she's already done, Norma's contributions continue. This year, in fact, she's serving as a judge for the TIL Literary Awards (texasinstituteofletters.org/literary-awards). We should all strive to make such a generous, significant, and lasting impact on the lives of others in our literary ecosystem."

Winning the TIL Lifetime Achievement Award puts Cantú in the company of some of the most celebrated Texas writers. Other recipients in recent years have included Sarah Bird, William Broyles Jr., Sandra Cisneros, Elizabeth Crook, Stephen Harrigan, Beverly Lowry, Pat Mora, Naomi Shihab Nye, John Rechy, Carmen Tafolla, Celeste Bedford Walker, Lawrence Wright, and the late Benjamin Alire Sáenz.

"Receiving the TIL's Lifetime Achievement Award gladdens my heart!" Cantú says. "I am humbled to be on a list with such phenomenal Texas writers. I am ever grateful that I have the chance to live in this great state and to write about my beloved borderlands."

Born in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, and raised in Laredo, Cantú (normaeliacantu.com) is the Murchison Professor of the Humanities at Trinity University in San Antonio and a former president of the American Folklore Society. Her books include the autobiographical *Canícula:*

Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera, novel *Cabañuelas*, and poetry collection *Meditación Fronteriza*. Her most recent nonfiction works include *Chicana Portraits: Critical Biographies of Twelve Chicana Writers* (which she edited), *¡Somos Tejanas! Chicana Identity and Culture in Texas* (edited with Jody A. Marín), and *Fiestas in Laredo: Matachines, Quinceañeras and George Washington's Birthday*. Cantú has long been a key participant in the Macondo workshop for writer-activists founded in 1995 by fellow TIL Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Cisneros.

"Norma Cantú is both a legend and a treasure," says TIL member Stephanie Elizondo Griest, author of *Art Above Everything*. "In addition to her remarkable scholarship, she has written some of our most canonized works of borderland literature, particularly *Canícula*. She has also shown exceptional leadership through Macondo, the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa, and the mentorship of countless young writers and students. Norma doesn't just deserve this honor; she epitomizes it."

The Texas Institute of Letters (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 includes the state's most respected writers of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, books for young readers, journalism, scholarship, drama, and songs. The membership includes winners of the Pulitzer Prize, as well as honors from PEN and the American Library Association, 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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