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Latino identity is at the center of poet's new collection

PITTSBURGH—"A genealogy of the heart: how my family's emotional legacy has shaped—and continues shaping—my Latino identity, sexual identity, and understanding of the big questions of life and death," said Richard Blanco of his new collection, *Looking for The Gulf Hotel*. The book has just been published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

The collection is presented in three movements, each chronicling Blanco's understanding of a particular facet of life from childhood into adulthood. As a child born into the milieu of his Cuban exiled *familia*, the first movement explores early questions of cultural identity and his quest for the elusive meaning of home.

The second part peers into family again, examining the blurred lines of gender, his frail father-son relationship, and the intersection of his cultural and sexual identities as a Cuban-American gay man living in rural Maine.

The last movement focuses on his mother's life shaped by exile, his father's death, the passing of a generation of relatives and the permanence of loss. "*Looking for The Gulf Motel* is looking for the beauty of that which we cannot hold on to, be it country, family, or love," Blanco stated.

Jim Elledge commented, "A virtuoso of art and craft who juggles the subjective and the objective beautifully, Blanco is at the height of his creative prowess and one of the best of the best poets writing today."

Blanco is the author of *Directions to The Beach of the Dead*, winner of the PEN/Beyond Margins Award; and *City of a Hundred Fires*, winner of the Starrett Poetry Prize. Exploring themes of Latino identity and place, his poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry 2000* and *Best American Prose Poems*, and have been featured on NPR. Blanco is a fellow of the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, and recipient of two Florida Artist Fellowships. Blanco, who resides in Bethel, Maine, is also a professional civil engineer.

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Looking for The Gulf Motel, poems by Richard Blanco, is published by the University of Pittsburgh Press 96 pp. • 6 x 8 • ISBN 978-0-8229-6201-4 • Paper \$15.95