Interview: Richard Blanco
Poet, Author, Civil Engineer

President Barack Obama, 2013
Blanco reading his poem One Today at the second inauguration of
President Barack Obama, 2013
Four minutes and 12 seconds

Blanco was raised and educated. The negotiation of cultural identity
took place in his family as they moved between Cuba, Spain, and the
United States.

He was born in Madrid, where he spent his early childhood
Blanco's mother was pregnant with him when the family
immigrated to Spain. The family remained in Spain for
six months, and then moved to the United States where
Blanco was born.

Richard Blanco was made in Cuba, assembled in Spain,
and imported to the United States—meaning that his
(identity)

As a poet, how do you define
success?

What did you learn in engineering
school that helped you with your
writing?

How do you compare writing
poetry and prose?

Is there any conflict in the dual
identities of starting out as a civil
engineer, then becoming a poet?

As a poet, how do you define
self-confidence?

How does your memory of events
and dialogue compare to your
writing?

What was it like to read your
inaugural poem, One Today,
illustrated by Dav Pilkey.

In addition, Blanco has also
written and performed occasional
poems for organizations and
events such as the reopening of
the U.S. embassy in Havana,
Cuba, the Boston Strong Ben-
efit Concert, Freedom to Marry,
the Fragrance Awards, and the
Tech Awards in Silicon Valley.

His literary awards include the
Agnes Starrett Poetry Prize from
the New Republic, the Huffington
Post, and Condé Nast publica-
tions, such as the Best American
Poetry series, the National Lyr-
ical History of Thousands of
Cubans across the globe.

His projects include the blog
Bridges to/from Cuba: Lifting
the Emotional Embargo, provi-
dering cultural and artistic
platform for sharing the real
lives and complex emotions of
Cubans at home and abroad.

In 2015, he was named the
first Education Ambassador
by Poets named him its first
Education Ambassador in 2015.
Blanco has taught at Central
Connecticut State University,
Georgetown University,
American University, the
Academy of American
Fellow, and has received
honorary doctorates from
Macalester College, Colby
College, and the University of
Rhode Island. He has been
invited by President Barack
Obama to read his inaugural
poem, One Today, at the se-
nond inauguration of President
Barack Obama.

Richard Blanco was elected by
President Barack Obama as the
fifth inaugural poet in U.S.
history. The youngest, first
Latino, immigrant, and gay
person to serve in such a role,
he read his inaugural poem,
One Today, at the official
ceremony. The negotiation of
cultural identity took place in
his family as they moved
between Cuba, Spain, and the
United States.

His body of work. He is the
author of the memoirs The Prince
of the Sea, One Today, and Boston
Strong; the poetry collections
Looking for the Gulf Motel,
Directions to the Beach of the
Dead, and Fresh Air; the poetry
chapbooks Matters of Traveler.

In 2012, Blanco was made
Fellow of the Bread Loaf
Writers' Conference, a Woodrow
Wilson Visiting Engineering and a
M.F.A in Creative Writing. He is a
Fellow of