



University of Arizona Press poet Juan Felipe Herrera wins Beyond Margins Award

(September 10, 2009. Tucson, AZ) Chicano poet Juan Felipe Herrera has received some great attention for his collection *Half of the World in Light*: he won an International Latino Book Award and a National Book Critics Circle Award. Praised by the *New York Times* as “wildly inventive,” he earned himself a spot on the 2008 New York Times Notable Book list. And, now, thanks to the PEN American Center, Herrera can add another accolade to the list: winner of the 2009 PEN Beyond Margins Award.

The PEN Beyond Margins Awards celebrate outstanding books by writers of color published in the United States during the previous year. The winners were announced in New York by Anthony Appiah, President of PEN American Center, the national association of literary writers, and Elissa Schappell, Chair of the PEN Literary Awards Committee. Herrera will receive \$1,000 and will be honored at the PEN Beyond Margins Celebration on December 2 at the Housing Works Bookstore Café in New York City. The evening will feature a reading and panel discussion moderated by Jane Ciabattari, President of the National Book Critics Circle.

For nearly four decades Juan Felipe Herrera has documented his experience as a Chicano in the United States and Latin America through stunning, memorable poetry that is both personal and universal in its impact, themes, and approach. Often political, never fainthearted, his career has been marked by tremendous virtuosity and a unique sensibility for uncovering the unknown and the unexpected. Through a variety of stages and transformations, Herrera has evolved more than almost any other Chicano poet, always re-inventing himself into a more mature and seasoned voice.

In *Half of the World in Light*, readers encounter the trajectory of this highly innovative and original writer, bringing the full scope of his singular vision into view. Beginning with early material from *A Certain Man* and moving through thirteen of his collections into new, previously unpublished work, this assemblage also includes an audio CD of the author reading twenty-four selected poems aloud. Serious scholars and readers alike will now have available to them a representative set of glimpses into his production as well as his origins and personal development. The ultimate value of bringing together such a collection, however, is that it will allow us to better understand and appreciate the complexity of what this major American poet is all about.

Sponsored by the Open Book Program, the Beyond Margins Award is one of the many ways in which the Open Book Program encourages racial and ethnic diversity within the literary and publishing communities. The Open Book Committee works to increase the literature by, for, and about African, Arab, Asian, Caribbean, Latin, and Native Americans and to establish access for these groups to the publishing industry. Its goal is to ensure that those who are the custodians of language and literature are representative of the American people.

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