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Francisco X. Alarcón: Chicano Poet and Educator

In his ten books for children and adults, Francisco X. Alarcón, Chicano poet and educator, tells readers about his culture and linguistic heritage with emphasis on family, community, the natural world, and dreams.

His most recent book of bilingual poetry for children titled, *Poems to Dream Together / Poemas para soñar juntos*, was published by Lee & Low Books, New York, in 2005. His previous bilingual books for children include the series titled the Magical Cycle of Seasons published by Children's Book Press, San Francisco, and illustrated by San Francisco artist Maya Christina Gonzales. The series began with the spring and summer poems of *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems/ Jitomates risueños y otros poemas de primavera* (1997), and *From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems/Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas de verano* (1998), each an

American Library Association Pura Belpré Honor Award winner. *Laughing Tomatoes* also was awarded the National Parenting Publications Gold Medal. The next book in the series was the National Parenting Publications Gold Award titled *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems/ Los ángeles andan en bicicleta y otros poemas de otoño* (1999), and the series was completed with *Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems / Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno* (2001), another Pura Belpré Honor Award book.

Alarcón's poetry books for adults include *From the Other Side of Night / Del otro lado de la noche: New and Selected Poems* (University of Arizona Press 2002), *Sonetos a la locura y otras penas / Sonnets to Madness and Other Misfortunes* (Creative Arts Book Company 2001), *No Golden Gate for Us* (Pennywhistle Press 1993), *Snake Poems: An Aztec Invocation* (Chronicle Books 1992), *De amor oscuro / Of Dark Love* (Moving Parts Press 1991, and 2001), *Body in Flames / Cuerpo en llamas* (Chronicle Books 1990).

Francisco has been a recipient of the Danforth and Fulbright fellowships and has been awarded several literary prizes, including the 1998 Carlos Pellicer-Robert Frost Poetry Honor Award by the Third Binational Border Poetry Contest, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, 1993 American Book Award, the 1993 Pen Oakland Josephine Miles Award, and the 1984 Chicano Literary Prize. In April 2002 he received the Fred Cody Lifetime Achievement Award from the Bay Area Book Reviewers Association (BABRA) in San Francisco. He was one of the three finalists nominated for the state poet laureate of California in 2002.

He has published several textbooks for teaching Spanish at the college and high school level: *Mundo 21* (Houghton Mifflin 2002), *Pasaporte al Mundo 21*, *Tu Mundo*, and *Nuestro Mundo* (McDougal Littell 2000). He co-edited a volume of essays on

teaching Spanish to heritage speakers, *La enseñanza de español a hispanohablantes: praxis y teoría* (Houghton Mifflin 1997).

Alarcón was born in 1954 and lived the first six years of his life in Wilmington, California. As a child, he also lived in Guadalajara, Mexico, and from the age of 18 he has been living in California. He did his undergraduate studies at California State University, Long Beach, and his graduate studies at Stanford University. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Mission Cultural Center of San Francisco from 1986-1990, and served as its Board President from 1986-1989. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of Children Book Press from 1998 to 2003. This is a nonprofit press that has published multicultural books for children for more than 25 years in San Francisco, California.

Alarcón currently teaches at the University of California, Davis, where he directs the Spanish for Native Speakers Program.