The North American Academy of the Spanish Language Nominates Chicano Writer For Cervantes Prize

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New York – The North American Academy of the Spanish Language, ANLE in its Spanish acronym, has proposed its member, Prof. Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, regarded as one of the country's most prominent Chicano writers, for the prestigious Miguel de Cervantes prize for literature.

The prize, awarded each year by the Spanish Ministry of Culture based on recommendations from Spanish language academies from around the world, has been described as the Nobel prize equivalent for Spanish language literature, and is the highest literary award in that language.

The most recent Cervantes prize was presented last year to Mexican writer José Emilio Pacheco. Since its beginning in 1976, the award has recognized the most notable Spanish language authors, among them Jorge Luis Borges, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Mario Vargas Llosa, Miguel Delibes, Augusto Roa Bastos, Camilo José Cela, Octavio Paz, Alejo Carpentier, Juan Carlos Onetti and Carlos Fuentes.

With a cash award of 125,000 euros, the Cervantes prize recognizes the global impact of an author whose contribution to Spanish language letters has been decisive. Candidates are proposed by all the members of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, the Academies of the Spanish Language of other countries, and by past winners.

"I am very pleased that the candidate of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language for the Cervantes prize is Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, a permanent member of our organization," said Gerardo Piña-Rosales, president of ANLE: "Hinojosa-Smith is without a doubt one of the best writers in the Spanish language in the United States. Examples are his works Estampas del Valle, Klail City y sus alrededores, Mi querido Rafa, and Claros varones de Belken."

"It is past time for the value of this and other writers to be recognized in Spain," Piña-Rosales added. "For decades, they have been writing and publishing in the language of Cervantes throughout the United States."

The Cervantes Prize jury is made up of the director of the Royal Spanish Academy, the director of an Academy of the Spanish Language from Latin America – the selection of which changes each year – the prize winner of the previous year, and six persons of recognized prestige in the academic, literary or Latin American university world.

Hinojosa-Smith was born in the community of Mercedes, Hidalgo County, Southwest Texas, to a family that had roots on both sides of the border between Mexico and the United States. He has authored a great number of works in Spanish and English.

Just as illustrious predecessors such as William Faulkner, Gabriel García Márquez and Juan Rulfo, Hinojosa-Smith has created a mythical space, the County of Belken, based on the county of his birth, Hidalgo, where his characters move about and conflicts arise in a display of psychological depth and literary prowess.

The Chicano author, who enlisted voluntarily to participate in the Korean War, began his literary career in the early seventies. His first novel received the Premio Quinto Sol, one of the leading prizes awarded for literature in Spanish in the United States. He has received prestigious awards such as the Premio Casa de las Américas (1976), the Best Writing in the Southwest (1981), the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Texas Institute of Letters (1998) and the Achievement Award of the University of Illinois in Urbana (1998). His works have been translated into French, German, Italian and Japanese.

ANLE, one of 22 academies of the Spanish language established on three continents, is a nonprofit institution founded

in 1973, whose mission it is to preserve and promote correct usage of the Spanish language in the United States.

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