

PRESS KIT

LUPE MENDEZ

2022 TEXAS POET LAUREATE

award winning author, activist & educator



About Lupe Mendez

Originally from Galveston, TX, Lupe works to promote poetry events, advocate for literacy/literature and organize creative writing workshops that are open to the public. He is the founder of Tintero Projects and works with emerging Latinx writers and other writers of color within the Texas Gulf Coast Region, with Houston as its hub. Mendez is a CantoMundo Fellow, a Macondo Fellow and an Emerging Poet Incubator Fellow.

Mendez has close to 20 years of experience as a performance poet - having opened up for such notable writers as Dagoberto Gilb, Esmeralda Santiago and the late Raul Salinas. He has shared his poetry across the country in places like the Holocaust Museum Houston, the Jung Center, MECA (Houston, TX), the Mission Cultural Center For Latino Arts (San Francisco, CA), the National Hispanic Cultural Center (Albuquerque, NM) and the Mexican American Cultural Center (Austin, TX). Mendez has served as a keynote speaker/poetry performer all across Texas. He has hosted writing workshop opportunities across the country, most recently as a teaching artist for the Poetry Foundation (Chicago, IL) as it hosts its Teacher Poetry Summits in Miami, FL and Chicago, IL.

Mendez latest book, *Why I Am Like Tequila* won the 2019 John A. Robertson Award for BEST FIRST BOOK OF POETRY from the Texas Institute of Letters. He was also awarded the Downs Intellectual Freedom Award 2012 for the defense of Mexican American Studies and literature across the Southwest United States. Lupe was selected a Texas Poet Laureate in 2021 and will serve his tenure in 2022.

“Moving seamlessly between English and Spanish, Lupe Mendez re-enchants the world in poems that take root in the intensity and exaltation.”

- Roberto Tejada,
Author of *Full Foreground*

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Available For:

Readings
Writing Workshops
Conference Presentation
Curriculum Design
Organizational Design



Press Kit - Lupe Mendez

Awards & Experience

Recent Awards

2021
Selected
2022 Texas Poet Laureate
Texas Commission on the Arts

2019
John A. Robertson Award
Best First Book of Poetry
for Why I Am Like Tequila
Texas Institute of Letters

2018
Editor's Choice Selection
for Why I am Like Tequila
Willow Books Publishing

Semi-Finalist
Brett Elizabeth Jenkins
Poetry Prize
Tinderbox Poetry Journal

2017
Finalist
Houston Poet Laureate
Houston Mayor's Office
of Cultural Affairs

2012
Robert B. Downs
Intellectual Freedom Award
Univ. of Illinois, Champaign



Experience

Education (Kinder through college)
Publishing and performance
Curriculum Design
Literary Curation
Public Speaking
Literary Journal Editor
Grant Writing
Festival Coordination

Access this QR Code for an example of Lupe's work!



Access this QR Code to see Lupe's Curriculum Vitae!



Press Kit - Lupe Mendez

Call Sheet & Press Info

WHY I AM LIKE TEQUILA

Poetry Collection by Lupe Mendez
2018 Editor's Choice Selection

ISBN 978-1-7322091-7-6

Distributor: INGRAM
\$17.99

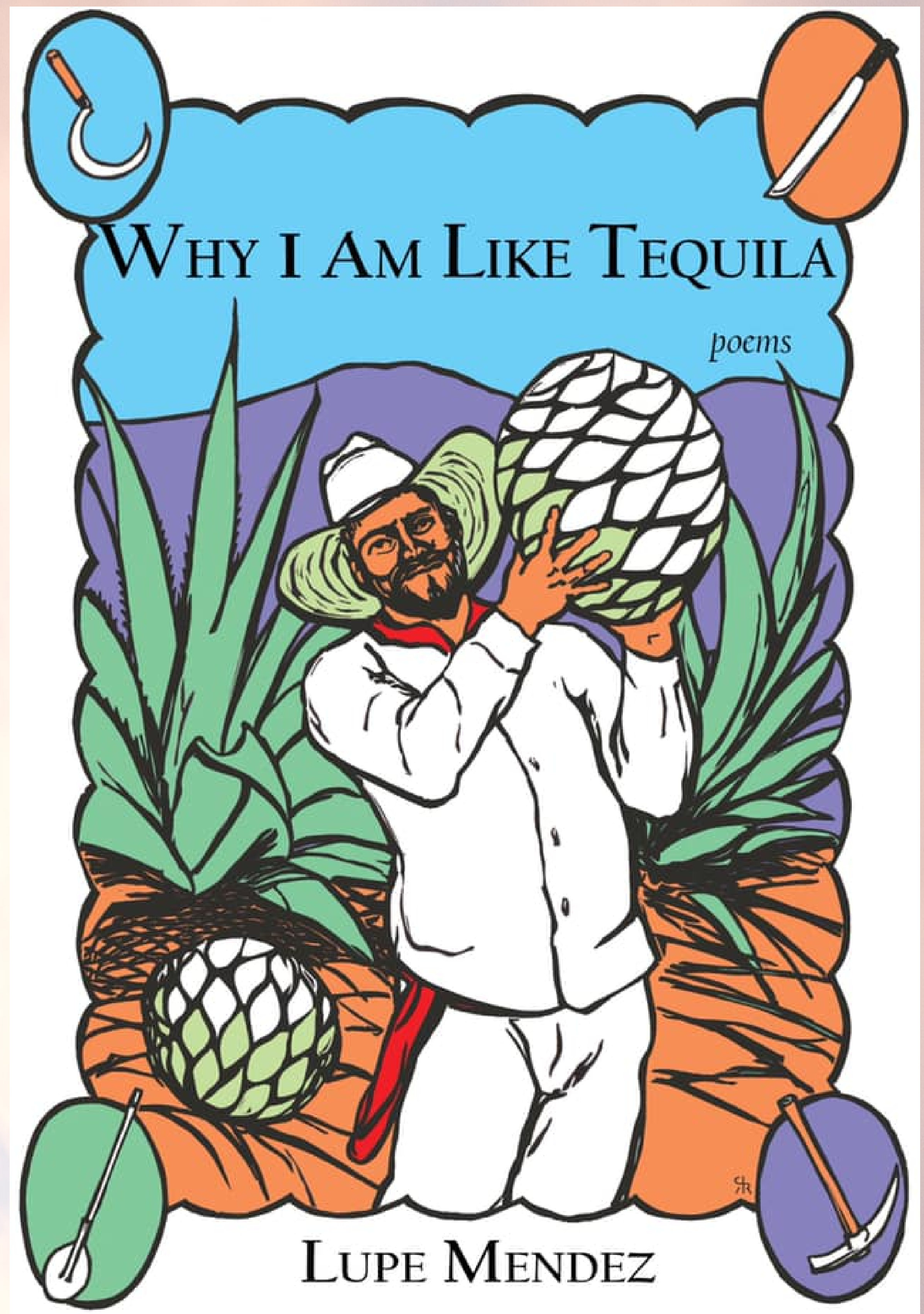
Willow Books
www.WillowLit.net/LupeMendez

About WILLOW BOOKS



Willow Books is a division of Aquarius Press. Our mission is to develop, publish, and promote writers of color. Our signature events include the annual Willow Books Literature Awards, national LitFest streaming broadcast and the Willow Arts Alliance Residencies.

For more information, visit
www.WillowLit.net



Themes & Ideas

1st Generation Issues
Mexican / Mexican - American Heritage
Code Switching
Language Connctions: Spanish, Spanglish, English
Masculinity
Latinidad
Immigration
Interesectionality
Politics & Government
Border/Territory Histories
Texas Identity
Texas Gulf Coast
Indigenous Descendency
Education
Family Issues & Fertility

Praise for WHY I AM LIKE TEQUILA

"Why I Am Like Tequila is all "beautiful blue / maguey veins" stretching along the Gulf Coast, where borderlands and littorals meet. Indigenous Tejanx consciousness digs deep beneath the dystopian headlines (hurricanes, immigration officers) and finds "a million interconnected howls," in raw, cleansing songs about fathers, elders, lovers, neighbors, and children (the only, the never born, the never dead). Against Keats, Lupe Méndez seeks out a translingual beauty-truth ("inside I wanted el toque de luz") and insists on those untranslatable moments "when tongue slurs" and language "jettisons / out into the gulf." From found poetry to a Spanish pantoum, Méndez's writing performs "the act of island" where "I hold myself against this want" and we "dig dance move" with him. This is poetry about the contradictions of contemporary Brown masculinity and its discontents, about our island-cities and their archipelagos, about the blessings and curses of familia; in other words, urgent reading. With its heart of agave ("Mi corazón es un mezontle"), this book is firmly rooted in an expanded frontera, full of love and libations for our Américas."

-Urayoán Noel, Author of *Buzzing Hemispheres/Rumor Hemisférico*

"In this shining debut, Lupe Mendez writes the sometimes anguished, always rousing, ever defiant love songs of fatherhood. The son-as-father, carrying his old man up to bed, the sting of his fist still on the son's jaw, the father-to-be, grieving a child that could not arrive. The teacher-father, sheltering with raging and tender heart the student whose own father faces deportation. These poems are storm and elegy, poems of sea foam, maguey, and moonlight. These are poems that ask: "Can you think of a lie you can tell me?" and poems that offer: "Let me shout your name.""

-Lena Khalaf Tuffaha, Author of *Water & Salt*

"WHY I AM LIKE TEQUILA is one of the most exciting books to come out in years. Mendez takes us on a wild ride from birth, to family, to community, with a master's control of language and with gritos that sing and yawp and cry from the rooftops of the Americas. Unpredictable, imaginative, necessary, these poems introduce us to an important new poet for our generation."

-Daniel Chacón, Author of *Hotel Juarez*

"In poems as intimate and outward as they are formally bold in disposition and address, Lupe Mendez connects the murderous brutality of events in Mexico and Latin America to scenes of U.S. violence involving citizens of color and immigrants caught in the institutional racism of church and state and law enforcement. "I am every grave / found in / Juarez, Sayula, Ayotzinapa... Caracas, Jasper, Sugar Land/ the next space, a next space, that next space." The poet's recognition of childhood hardship links his simultaneous life as artist, teacher, son, husband, and father to working class family histories in the precarious US American economy; to vigilante justice and terrorism on the borderlands; to the joyful sensation of blasting cumbias, quarreling lovers, park lights, and kinships, in a tribute to places like Magnolia Homes or in honor of the undocumented to whom Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts are indebted. Moving seamlessly between English and Spanish, Lupe Mendez re-enchants the world in poems that take root in the intensity and exaltation that accompany breathing—"el sonido de alas / un millón de alas en el viento." "

-Roberto Tejada, Author of *Full Foreground*

"With these elegantly crafted poems, Lupe Mendez remueve las memorias of collective and individual tragedies - the devastation of hurricanes Alicia and Harvey, the forty-three students disappeared in Ayotzinapa, the murders of Jessica Cain and Sandra Bland. Then the poet pivots and offers us intimate portrayals of anguish and sorrow of loss and desire. Like Flaco Jimenez's accordion playing, Lupe Mendez' poems resonate with the mejicano barrio aesthetics of passion and insight with wild poems in a wild language where Spanish seeps in and out of English in a wild dance. Lupe Mendez's poems linger. Remain. Persist."

- Norma Elia Cantú, Author of *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la frontera*