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Writer Denise Chávez to Receive Luis Leal Award

Denise Chávez, a writer who lives and teaches in Las Cruces, New Mexico, will be the recipient of this year's Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature, which is given by the University of California, Santa Barbara, the Santa Barbara Book & Author Festival and Santa Barbara City College.

Her work focuses on border issues, Chicano culture, and women in contemporary society.

"In her writing, Chávez captures the complex human dimensions in Chicano culture," says Mario T. García, professor of Chicano Studies and history at UCSB and the chair of the Leal Award Selection Committee.

"She has had a marvelous career as a novelist, short story writer, playwright, and actress. She richly deserves the Leal Award."

Chávez is the author of a collection of short stories, *The Last of the Menu Girls*, and two novels, *Loving Pedro Infante* and *Face of an Angel*, for which she won the American Book Award in 1995.

She received an award from the Heritage Awards Foundation for her accomplishments in literature in 2003.

In 2004, Chávez's honors included the Distinguished Alumni Award from New Mexico State University, an honorary doctorate in letters from the University of New Mexico, the Governor's New Mexico Distinguished Public Service Award, and the annual literary award presented by the National Hispanic Cultural Center.

The Leal award, which includes a cash prize of \$1,500, is named after Luis Leal, a distinguished writer, scholar, and UCSB professor of Chicano Studies.

Leal, who is 97, has spent much of his 60-year academic career bringing attention to Mexican, Latin American, and Chicano writers.

"I am deeply honored to be this year's recipient of the Luis Leal Award," Chávez says.

"I thank Don Luis for his insights, integrity, and belief that the voice of community matters."

The award will be presented at the Santa Barbara Book & Author Festival on September 24.

Previous award winners are Oscar Hijuelos and Rudolfo Anaya.

About UC Santa Barbara

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