

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Author and Los Angeles Times Journalist Hector Tobar to Receive UCSB's Luis Leal Literature Award

Novelist and Pulitzer Prize-winning Los Angeles Times journalist Hector Tobar is the recipient of UC Santa Barbara's 2012 Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature. The award will be presented at a ceremony at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, October 31, in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building at UCSB. The event is free and open to the public.

Tobar, a reporter, columnist, and book reviewer for the L.A. Times, is the author of two highly acclaimed novels -- "The Barbarian Nurseries" (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011) and "The Tattooed Soldier" (Penguin Books, 2000). "The Barbarian Nurseries," which is set in contemporary Southern California, was listed among the best fiction of 2011 by The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, and the Boston Globe.

Tobar is also the author of "Translation Nation: Defining a New American Identity in the Spanish-Speaking United States." This work of non-fiction examines Latino immigrants as "latter-day pioneers" who maintain their Latin American identities while embracing the opportunities made available to them in the United States.

"Hector Tobar is one of the most important social and political novelists of his generation," said Mario T. García, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and of

history at UCSB, and the organizer of the annual Leal Award. "His writings, including his novels, deal with the hidden lives of Latinos in Los Angeles and the United States. These are the people who live in the shadows due to their immigration status, and yet are very much a part of our contemporary American society. Tobar's characters reveal themselves as human beings who need to be accepted and integrated by the rest of us. Tobar is their voice."

The son of Guatemalan immigrants, Tobar was born and raised in Los Angeles. He completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in Latin American Studies and sociology at UC Santa Cruz, and earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing at UC Irvine.

More recently a weekly columnist for the L.A. Times, he has also served as the paper's bureau chief in Mexico City and in Buenos Aires. He spent several years as the Times's national Latino affairs correspondent, and in 1992 was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his work as part of the team covering the Los Angeles riots.

The Leal Award is named in honor of Luis Leal, a professor emeritus of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UCSB, who was internationally recognized as a leading scholar of Chicano and Latino literature. Previous recipients of the award include Demetria Martínez, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Graciela Limón, Pat Mora, Alejandro Morales, Helena Maria Viramontes, Oscar Hijuelos, Rudolfo Anaya, and Denise Chávez.

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