

UC SANTA BARBARA

# *THE Current*

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Bill Schlotter

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In his award-winning book, "The Story of American Freedom," Columbia University history professor Eric Foner chronicled the 200-year evolution of freedom in the United States from the revolution to the present.

Foner, Cornell University historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Kammen, and other renowned scholars will share their views on that evolution and where it is headed at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Saturday May 22, at a conference based on Foner's book.

Foner's presentation titled, "The Story of American Freedom: Liberty and Its Discontents from the American Revolution to the Present," will open the conference at 10 a.m.

"I will discuss how freedom has always been a subject of debate and contestation and how different views of freedom have come to the fore at different periods," Foner said.

Foner will also describe how activism by various ethnic and gender groups to escape prejudice and disempowerment has broadened the definition of freedom in the U.S.

"I will examine how the efforts of groups excluded from freedom to gain access to it have expanded the meaning of freedom for all Americans," he said.

Foner, a past-president of the Organization of American Historians and president-elect of the American Historical Association, won a Los Angeles Times 1998 book award for best nonfiction book with "The Story of American History."

He won a previous L.A. Times award and the Bancroft Prize for "Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877."

A panel discussion, titled "The Defining Character of American Freedom" and moderated by Stephen Weatherford,

a professor of political science at UCSB, will follow at 11 a.m.

Panelists will be Cedric Robinson, professor of political science and black studies at UCSB; Ellen Carol DuBois, professor of history at UCLA; and Michael Schudson, professor of sociology and communication at UC San Diego.

At 1:30 p.m., it will be Kammen's turn at the podium. Another past president of the Organization of American Historians, Kammen won a Pulitzer Prize for his book, "People of Paradox," and won the Francis Parkman Prize for "A Machine That Would Go of Itself."

At the conference, he will address how Americans felt about the future of freedom in 1699, 1799, and 1899.

And he will offer a mixed prognosis for the enjoyment of freedom here.

"I will express particular concern about the increasingly aggressive nature of law enforcement, often at odds with the Bill of Rights," Kammen said.

Other concerns, he said, are threats to freedom and privacy posed by easily bought and transferred electronic databases, affording a dangerous capacity for people to be profiled without knowing it.

"On the other hand," he said, "freedom of speech is better protected in the U.S. than almost anywhere else in the world."

Kammen's remarks will be followed by a reception at 3 p.m. The conference will be held in the Hatlen Theatre in Snidecor Hall.

There is no charge for admission, but seating is limited and early registration encouraged.

Call (805) 893-3907 for details.

A conference luncheon is also planned.

Cost is \$12.50 per person and requires advance registration.

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.