

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

October 18, 2011

[Andrea Estrada](#)

Author Demetria Martínez to Receive UCSB's Luis Leal Literature Award

Poet, novelist, and journalist Demetria Martínez is the recipient of UC Santa Barbara's 2011 Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature. The award will be presented during a ceremony at 4 p.m. on Thursday, October 27, in the campus's Corwin Pavilion. The event is free and open to the public.

Martínez is best known for her novel, "Mother Tongue," which received a Western States Book Award for Fiction. The book focuses on Central American refugees entering the United States during the 1980's, and the role of the sanctuary movement in providing assistance to people the U.S. government refused to recognize as legitimate political refugees. The book is based, in part, on charges of conspiracy against the U.S. that were leveled against Martínez in connection with two Salvadoran refugees smuggled into the country. Her 1988 trial ended with a not guilty verdict.

"Demetria Martínez is a voice of liberation against oppression, whether personal or social," said Mario T. García, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and of history at UCSB, and the organizer of the annual Leal Award.

Martínez is also the author of "The Block Captain's Daughter," a collection of short fiction forthcoming from the University of Oklahoma Press; and "Grandpa's Magic Tortilla," a children's book written with Rosalee Montoya-Read and published by the University of New Mexico Press. Her autobiographical essays, "Confessions of a

Berlitz-Tape Chicana," also published by the University of Oklahoma Press, received the 2006 International Latino Book Award in the biography category. Martínez is also the author of two books of poetry, "Breathing Between the Lines" and "The Devil's Workshop."

Born in Albuquerque, Martínez completed her bachelor's degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. She teaches at the annual writing workshop at the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. In addition, Martínez writes a blog about human rights issues for The National Catholic Reporter. She serves on the board of directors of Enlace Comunitario, an immigrants' rights group that works with Spanish-speaking survivors of domestic violence, and is the co-founder of the Albuquerque Chapter of Poets Against War.

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 Jimmy Santiago Baca, Graciela Limón, Pat Mora, Alejandro Morales, Helena Maria Viramontes, Oscar Hijuelos, Rudolfo Anaya, and Denise Chávez.

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.