

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Campus to Host Conference on the Legacy of CSDI

A remarkable group of journalists and intellectuals, including Los Angeles Times columnist Patt Morrison and NewsHour with Jim Lehrer commentator Roger Rosenblatt, will celebrate the lasting influence of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions during a two-day conference at UC Santa Barbara.

Titled "The Legacy of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions," the event will take place April 3 and 4 at UCSB's Corwin Pavilion and Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall. The program will include performances, panel discussions, and three keynote addresses.

"The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions was instrumental in California acquiring and retaining its reputation for substance. For generations, the so-called thinkers in this country dismissed California as a kind of vacuous playground. The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions provided one of the first testaments of the state's sociopolitical strengths," said Morrison, also a commentator on KCET's Life and Times.

Founded in 1959 by former University of Chicago president Robert Maynard Hutchins, the Santa Barbara-based CSDI was a unique experiment in harnessing independent thought and criticism for social good. Attracting the talents of important writers, philosophers, and scientists, the center was a think tank devoted to interdisciplinary study of the basic issues confronting democratic societies.

At its height, the CSDI boasted an international membership in excess of 15,000 - and produced a series of publications, including a bi-monthly magazine. In 1979, two years after Hutchins' death, the center moved from its Eucalyptus Hill home in Montecito to the UCSB campus. Eight years later, under the strain of financial and administrative problems, it folded.

Journalist Ruben Martinez will open the conference at 8 p.m. April 3 with a performance art piece titled "The New Americans: Migrant Culture's Effect on 21st Century Society" in Corwin Pavilion. An examination of both the Internet's potential as a journalistic medium and the extent to which immigrants influence U.S. culture, "The New Americans" features Web site images of and interviews with Mexican immigrants as well as narration by Martinez.

"I want to define journalistic space on the Internet. My goal is to move past the filter inherent in journalism so that the subjects of reportage, specifically the individuals about whom stories are written, enjoy some agency to present themselves in the manner of their choosing. This could be especially significant in the case of immigrant populations," said Martinez, an editor with Pacific News Service and author of the essay and poetry collection "The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City and Beyond."

Day two of the conference will open at 10 a.m. with an introduction by New Perspectives Quarterly publisher Stanley K. Sheinbaum in UCSB's Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall. Cornell University's Theodore J. Lowi, the author most recently of "The End of the Republican Era," will follow with a keynote address at 10:15.

"The New Political Pressure Groups" will be the subject of a subsequent panel discussion featuring UCSB historian Laura Kalman, The Atlantic Monthly's Jack Miles, and University of Wisconsin historian Thomas Reeves. Robert Bason, a former senior officer with Planned Parenthood, will moderate.

- Following lunch, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, will deliver the day's second keynote address at 1 p.m. Her most recent book, "Spiral of Cynicism: Press and Public Good," was published last year.

The conference's second panel discussion, titled "The New Mass Media and Democracy," will begin at 1:45 and feature Los Angeles Times columnists Morrison and Robert Scheer, Pacific News Service's Martinez, and former presidential speech

writer Frank Kelly. UCSB political scientist Gayle Binion will moderate.

Rosenblatt will present the conference's final keynote address, titled "Liberalism and Its Challenges," at 3 p.m.

"I can't imagine a time in which democratic institutions have been called into question more heatedly and the whole concept of democracy has been more up for grabs. This promises to be an outstanding opportunity to discuss these issues and I'm honored to have been asked to attend," said Rosenblatt, the author most recently of "Coming Apart: A Memoir of the Harvard Wars of 1969."

The conference will conclude with a final discussion among keynote speakers and panelists at 4:45 followed by a reception in the sunken garden area of the campus's music building.

The Special Collections Department in UCSB's Davidson Library is the site of a related exhibition, also titled "The Legacy of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions," through May 31.

Conference events are free and open to the public, but seating is limited. For more information, call 893-7660.

"The Legacy of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions" is dedicated to the memory of Harry S. Ashmore and Walter Capps.

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.