

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

November 3, 2003

Bill Schlotter

Nobel Peace Prize Winner Rigoberta Menchú to Speak at UCSB

Guatemalan human rights activist Rigoberta Menchú, winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, will discuss "Indigenous Rights and Universal Peace" during an appearance at the University of California, Santa Barbara on Monday, Nov. 17.

Menchú, who continues to work for the rights of women and indigenous people in Guatemala and around the world, will speak from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in UCSB's Corwin Pavilion.

The talk is free and open to the public.

A member of Guatemala's indigenous Quiche Maya people, Menchú gained world attention in 1983 at the age of 24 with publication of "I, Rigoberta Menchú," an autobiographical account of the hardships and atrocities perpetrated by the Guatemalan government on native peoples during the country's 36-year civil war.

The Menchú family and their Quiche neighbors lived on small farms in northern Guatemala at a time that the Guatemalan government was fighting a war against rebels also in the area. In 1979, after her father and other neighbors were imprisoned and tortured for allegedly aiding the rebels, Menchú joined an indigenous political group to oppose government abuse. As years went by and her people suffered further abuse -- including the murders of her father, mother, and a brother -- she became increasingly active and outspoken against the government's

treatment of her people.

When some questioned the accuracy of the book, Menchú admitted that some of the incidents she recounted had actually happened to others, not to herself or to her family. But she said the incidents were all fundamentally, if not completely, true.

Her book made her both a leader and a target. Three times she was forced into exile by threats against her life. But she persisted and persists now in seeking a better world for women and indigenous people. In 1992, the Nobel Committee recognized her work with the awarding of its prize for peace.

Her appearance in Santa Barbara will closely follow Nov. 9's presidential election in Guatemala.

Organizing Menchú's visit is Francisco Lomelí, chair of the Department of Black Studies at UCSB, whose Stranger No More event series seeks to promote diversity at UCSB.

The Stranger No More series is funded by UCSB's Executive Vice Chancellor's office.

Also supporting Menchú's visit are the departments of Black Studies, Chicana and Chicano Studies, History, Anthropology, Global Studies, English, Spanish and Portuguese, and Asian American Studies; the centers for Chicano Studies and Black Studies; the Women's Studies Program; Eileen Boris, the Hull Chair for Women's Studies; María Herrera-Sobek, the Luis Leal Chair for Chicano Studies; John Woolley, the acting dean for Social Sciences; the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program; the Mesoamerican Research Center; the College of Creative Studies; the Affirmative Action Office; the Rockefeller Program; the Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research; and the Foreign Language Department at Santa Barbara City College.

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.