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Writer Alejandro Morales to Receive Luis Leal Literature Award

Alejandro Morales, a novelist and professor of Chicano/Latino studies at the University of California, Irvine, is the recipient of this year's Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature. The award is presented annually by the University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara City College, and the Santa Barbara Book Council.

Considered one of the country's premier Latino writers of fiction, Morales is the author of several biographical novels in which he tells the fictional story of a character's life using historical events. He has published a total of seven books, including his newest, "The Captain of All These Men of Death" (forthcoming from Bilingual Review Press). Among his other works are "Pequeña nación" (Editorial Orbis Press, 2005); "Waiting to Happen" (Chusma House Publications, 2001); "Barrio on the Edge" (Bilingual Press, 1997); "The Rag Doll Plagues" (Arte Publico Press, 1992); "Death of an Anglo" (Bilingual Review Press, 1988); "Reto en el paraíso" (Bilingual Review Press, 1983). His novels have been published both in the United States and Mexico.

An award-winning author who grew up in East Los Angeles, Morales has said many of his ideas come from real life experiences. For example, "The Brick People," which tells the story of an immigrant family settling in Simons, California in the early 1900s and going to work for Simons Brick Company, parallels the lives of Morales's parents, who lived in Simons and worked for the same company.

"We are extremely pleased to honor Alejandro Morales this year because he is a true pioneer in Chicano literature and one of the most outstanding, powerful, and innovative writers on the Chicano experience," says Mario Garcia, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and history at UCSB and the organizer of the annual Leal Award.

The award is named for Luis Leal, professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UCSB, who is internationally recognized as one of the leading scholars of Chicano and Latino literature. He will celebrate his 100th birthday this year.

Morales will receive the Luis Leal Award at the Santa Barbara Book & Author Festival on September 29 at 3:15 p.m. at the Faulkner Gallery in the Santa Barbara Public Library.

Previous recipients of the Leal Award include 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.