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UCSB Historian Receives Book Prize from Latin American History Association

Cecilia Méndez, an associate professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has received the Howard F. Cline Memorial Book Prize from the Conference on Latin American History. The award was presented recently at the American Historical Association's annual meeting in Washington, D.C.

Méndez was recognized for her book "Plebeian Republic: The Huanta Rebellion and the Making of the Peruvian State, 1820-1850" (Duke University Press, 2005). The book, inspired by an armed conflict in Peru that devastated the Andean rural areas, delves into the 19th-century history of the Iquichanos, a group of Quechua-speaking peasants who sided with the Spanish king during the Wars of Independence. By following the Iquichanos' transformation from monarchist rebels to liberal guerillas, Méndez highlights their active involvement with national politics and redresses a long historiographical tradition that held them to be a "backward looking group" that remained historically isolated from the modern Peruvian state. Méndez uses a wide variety of previously unexplored sources produced by the barely literate rebels.

"I am very honored to have been recognized by the Conference on Latin American History," said Méndez. "Previous winners of this prize have become classics in the field of Latin American History and, more specifically, in the subfield of ethnohistory, a discipline that combines historical and anthropological methods."

A specialist in Latin America, peasant studies, nationalism, ethnicity, and state formation, Méndez is currently conducting research for a book that will examine the logic of peasant-military alliances and military populism.

The Howard F. Cline Memorial Prize was established in 1976 and is awarded biennially to the book or article written in English, German, or a Romance language judged to make the most significant contribution to the history of Indians in Latin America.

The Conference on Latin American History is a professional association that encourages the diffusion of knowledge about Latin America by fostering the study and improving the teaching of Latin American history. The nonpolitical Conference is affiliated with the American Historical Association.

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.