

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB Films Premiere at Santa Barbara International Film Festival

Two films with connections to UC Santa Barbara will premiere later this month at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. They are "Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy" by Renée Bergan and Mark Schuller, and "Luis Leal: A Journey of 100 Years/Luis Leal: Un Camino De 100 Años" by Janette Garcia.

"Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy" will screen on Friday, January 23, at 6:30 p.m., and on Monday, January 26, at 3:30 p.m., in Victoria Hall, 33 W. Victoria St. The film examines the lives of five Haitian women and offers an insider's perspective on globalization, the political and economic crisis in Haiti, and the resilient women who are challenging the system. It was produced and directed by Bergan, a 1993 graduate of UCSB's film and media studies program, and Schuller, who received his doctorate in anthropology from UCSB in 2007.

Bergan has since founded the production company Renegade Pictures, Inc., and Schuller is currently an assistant professor of African American studies and anthropology at York College, the City University of New York. Both will be present for the January 23rd screening.

Claudine Michel, a professor of black studies and director of UCSB's Center for Black Studies Research, served as a production consultant, and Santa Barbara resident Mary Becker, who serves on the advisory board of the Center for Black Studies Research, was the film's executive producer. Becker is also chairwoman of the board

of Fonkoze USA, the largest microfinance organization in Haiti. Others who provided support for the film include Eileen Boris, Hull Chair in Feminist Studies; Richard Appelbaum, a professor of sociology and global and international studies; and George Lipsitz, a professor of black studies.

"Luis Leal: A Journey of 100 Years/Luis Leal: Un Camino De 100 Años," which traces the life of Luis Leal, a professor emeritus of Chicana and Chicano studies at UCSB, will screen at 7 p.m. on Friday, January 30, at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, February 1, in Victoria Hall. Garcia, who wrote, directed, and edited the film, will be present for both screenings.

Garcia has produced films for the domestic and international marketplace and for both English and Spanish language audiences. She was commissioned to create the Leal film by co-producers María Herrera-Sobek, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and associate vice chancellor for diversity, equity, and academic policy at UCSB; Mario Garcia, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and history; and Francisco Lomelí, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and of Spanish.

UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang, who wrote the foreword for Leal's 2003 book, "Myths and Legends of Mexico," has been a strong supporter of the film from its inception. He led the fundraising effort that enabled the production of the film as part of the campus wide celebration of Leal's centennial birthday.

A member of the UCSB faculty since 1976, Leal is an internationally recognized scholar of Mexican, Chicano, and Latin American literature. He is the author of more than 45 books and 400 scholarly articles, and remains a prolific researcher and writer. Throughout his career, he has held teaching positions at the University of Chicago, the University of Mississippi, Emory University, and the University of Illinois. His book, "A Brief History of the Mexican Short Story," is considered a landmark of modern literary scholarship.

Leal has received numerous honors, including the Distinguished Scholarly Award, which was presented to him by the National Association for Chicano Studies in 1988 in recognition of his lifetime achievement. In 1991, he was awarded the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor granted to foreign citizens by the Mexican government and in 1997, he received the National Humanities Medal, which was presented to him at The White House by then-President Bill Clinton.

In 1995, UCSB established the Luis Leal Endowed Chair, which he held until 1997. At that time, Herrera-Sobek was named the first permanent holder of the endowed chair.

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