UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

October 29, 2015

Andrea Estrada

A Voice of the Latino Generation

Reyna Grande was not quite 10 years old when she came to the United States as an undocumented immigrant. Thirty years later, she is an award-winning novelist and memoirist whose books have been published internationally.

She also is this year's recipient of UC Santa Barbara's 12th annual Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature. The award will be presented during a ceremony at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 4, in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building at UCSB. The event is free and open to the public.

Grande is the author of three critically acclaimed books, including "The Distance Between Us," which tells of her life before and after illegally emigrating from Mexico. In 2012 it was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Her first novel, "Across a Hundred Mountains," received the 2007 American Book Award and the 2006 El Premio Aztlán Literary Award. Her second novel, "Dancing with Butterflies," garnered a 2010 International Latino Book Award.

"Reyna Grande is one of the most powerful voices of the Latino Generation for immigrant rights and for the dignity of undocumented immigrants," said Mario T. García, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and of history at UCSB, and the organizer of the annual Leal Award.

Born in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico, Grande was only 2 years old when her father left the family to find work in the U.S. Her mother followed two years later, leaving

behind Grande and her siblings. In 1985, seeking to live with her father, Grande entered the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant.

She went on to become the first person in her family to graduate from college, earning a bachelor’s degree in creative writing and in film and video from UC Santa Cruz. She received her master’s of fine arts in creative writing from Antioch University and teaches creative writing for UCLA Extension.

The Leal Award is named in honor of Luis Leal, a professor emeritus of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UCSB, who was internationally recognized as a leading scholar of Chicano and Latino literature. Previous recipients of the award include Demetria Martínez, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Graciela Limón, Pat Mora, Alejandro Morales, Helena Maria Viramontes, Oscar Hijuelos, Rudolfo Anaya, Denise Chávez, Hector Tobar and John Rechy.

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.