UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

August 31, 2016
Andrea Estrada

A Public Honor

A collaborative effort of the Public History Program at UC Santa Barbara, the UCSB Library's Department of Special Research Collections and the campus's divisions of student affairs and humanities and fine arts has earned a Leadership in History Award from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH).

The UCSB contingent is one of 63 recipients of the annual award, which is described by the organization as "the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation of state and local history." UCSB is recognized for "We Remember Them," an exhibition that honored the acts of love and compassion that emerged in Isla Vista and on the UCSB campus following the tragedy of May 23, 2014, and for the May 23, 2014 Isla Vista Memorial Archive. The latter consists mainly of condolence items left at spontaneous memorial sites as well as items sent to the university in the wake of the tragedy.

"The UCSB Library is honored to accept this award alongside other partners on campus," said University Librarian Denise Stephens. "Preserving and providing access to university and local history for the benefit of scholars, students and the community is part of our enduring mission. The archive is a moving testament to how this community came together in the aftermath of tragedy and the outpouring of support we received from around the world."

The exhibition, which took place during the spring and summer of 2015, was conceived and curated by Melissa Barthelemy, a doctoral student in history at UCSB. The UCSB Library agreed to create and curate the collection, add the items to its

archives and help develop the exhibition, with support from the other campus partners. The items that comprise the Isla Vista Memorial Archive have been cataloged — primarily by UCSB students under the guidance of campus librarians — and are part of the library's permanent collection as an enduring historical record.

Barthelemy, along with Julia Diane Larson, exhibit installation manager, and Annie Platoff, a UCSB librarian and curator of the archive, will accept the award at the 2016 AASLH Annual Meeting in Detroit, Michigan, in September.

"This award is a testament to the importance of the exhibit and collection on a national scale," Barthelemy said. "It also indicates the quality of collaborative work on this campus since the award process is rigorous and UCSB is receiving the award alongside prestigious museums, libraries and historical sites."

What made the exhibition so effective, according to Barthelemy, was its authenticity and attention to detail. "We focused primarily on the grieving process of students and the youth of Isla Vista and sought to tell the story through their eyes," she said. "Everyone who worked on the exhibit recognized both the emotional and intellectual significance of this project, and of paramount importance was creating a space where visitors felt taken care of while viewing emotionally charged artifacts."

Barthelemy said one of her primary motivations in creating the exhibition was to provide a larger context for people to think about the various ways we create meaning out of acts of violence, "whether it be calls for political change such as gun reform, combating violence against women, or turning to artistic expression to help grapple with loss."

Based in Nashville, Tennessee, the AASLH is a non-profit professional organization of individuals and institutions working to preserve and promote history. The Leadership in History Awards Program was established in 1945 to build standards of excellence in the collection, preservation and interpretation of state and local history throughout the United States.

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.