UC SANTA BARBARA

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An Author of Distinction

Tim Z. Hernández, an award-winning author and poet and an assistant professor of creative writing at the University of Texas, El Paso, will receive UC Santa Barbara's 15th annual Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature.

The award will be presented during a ceremony at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 24, in the campus's McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building. The event is free and open to the public.

An accomplished writer, poet and literary scholar, Hernández is best known for his genre-bending novel, "All They Will Call You" (University of Arizona Press, 2017), based on Woody Guthrie's song, "Plane Wreck at Los Gatos (Deportee)," which recounts the airplane crash in California in 1948 that claimed the lives of 32 passengers, including 28 Mexican farmworkers being deported by the U.S. government; and "Mañana Means Heaven," a work of historical fiction that weaves a portrait of Bea Franco, the real woman behind famed American author Jack Kerouac's "The Mexican Girl." "The Mexican Girl" is part of Kerouac's classic novel "On the Road."

"Mañana Means Heaven," published by the University of Arizona Press, received the 2014 International Latino Book Award in historical fiction.

"Tim Hernández is one of the most exciting and innovative new literary voices linking history and fiction to the Chicano/a experience," said Mario T. García, professor of Chicana and Chicano studies and of history at UC Santa Barbara, and

the organizer of the annual Leal Award.

Currently an assistant professor in the bilingual master of fine arts (MFA) program in creative writing at the University of Texas, El Paso, Hernández received his bachelor of arts degree in writing and literature from Naropa University and his MFA from Bennington College in Vermont. Hernández is the author of several other books, including his debut collection of poetry, “Skin Tax” (Heyday Books), which received the 2006 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation and the James Duval Phelan Award from the San Francisco Foundation. His debut novel, “Breathing, In Dust” (Texas Tech University Press) received the 2010 Premio Aztlán Prize in fiction, the California Book Award and the Balcones Fiction Prize. A second collection of poetry, “Natural Takeover of Small Things,” came out in 2014 and won the 2014 Colorado Book Award.

Most recently, Hernández was one of four finalists for the inaugural Freedom Plow Award from the Split This Rock Foundation for his work on locating the victims of the Los Gatos plane wreck. As a performer he has collaborated with Grammy Award-winning classical composer Eugene Freisen, and in 2001 was commissioned by the United Way of Greater Los Angeles to write and perform an original play on homelessness.

Since 2007, Hernández has worked with Poets & Writers Inc. and the California Center for the Book at UCLA teaching poetry, fiction and non-fiction workshops across the west coast. He has served as the statewide coordinator for Colorado Writers-in-the-Schools with a focus on rural, underserved communities, and he is a frequent guest artist at universities, cultural institutions and literary centers across the country and around the world.

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

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.