

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

October 10, 2018

Shelly Leachman

## **‘The Best We Could Do’**

It’s been described as “a book to break your heart and heal it.” This is “The Best We Could Do,” by artist Thi Bui. Her illustrated memoir is UC Santa Barbara’s selection for the 2019 season of UCSB Reads.

An annual event now in its 13th year, [UCSB Reads](#) engages the campus and the Santa Barbara community in conversations about a key topic while reading the same book. UCSB Reads is presented by the UCSB Library in partnership with the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor.

An advisory committee made up of faculty, staff, students and community representatives selected “The Best We Could Do” for this year’s book, citing its creative and intimate portrayal of struggles of identity, family relations, immigration and displacement.

UCSB Reads 2019 will kick off in January when Chancellor Henry T. Yang, Executive Vice Chancellor David Marshall and University Librarian Kristin Antelman distribute free copies of the book to UCSB students in the UCSB Library. During the winter and spring quarters, UCSB Library will sponsor faculty talks, book discussions, exhibitions and other programs both on campus and in the community.

Bui will deliver a free public lecture in Campbell Hall on April 25, 2019.

“The Best We Could Do” is a memoir written in the form of a comic book, in the tradition of Art Spiegelman’s “Maus” and Marjane Satrapi’s “Persepolis.” Bui chronicles generations of her family history in Vietnam, including her birth during

the final months of the Vietnam War and her parents' escape to, and early years in, the United States. The story is rendered in flashbacks from Bui's current life as a new mother in California.

A Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator, Bui teaches in the MFA in Comics Program at the California College of the Arts. "The Best We Could Do" was a finalist for both the National Book Critics Circle and Eisner awards, and was selected for many "Best of 2017" book lists. Bui is currently researching and drawing a work of graphic nonfiction about how Asian American Pacific Islanders are impacted by detention and deportation.

Since the program began in 2007, UCSB Reads has brought the campus and Santa Barbara communities together to read a common book that explores important issues of our time.

For more information about UCSB Reads, or to participate in campus or community programming or support the program, contact Alex Regan, events and exhibitions librarian, at (805) 893-3605 or write to [ucsbreads@library.ucsb.edu](mailto:ucsbreads@library.ucsb.edu).

---

## **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.