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Friend, Colleague, Professor, Mentor, Inspiration Don Luis Leal Dies at 102

By Francisco Lomeli

UCSB Emeritus Professor Luis Leal was born in Linares, Nuevo León (Mexico) on September 17, 1907. Leal experienced the Mexican Revolution, the Great Depression, World War II (as a soldier), the Civil Rights era, the Chicano Movement, the establishment of the first PhD in Chicano Studies in the United States at UCSB, and the financial collapse of the last decade.

During this time, he taught at the University of Chicago, the University of Mississippi, Emory University, and the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana (17 years), before coming to UCSB, where he has engaged the campus and town communities for the last 30 years. Don Luis, as he was known by colleagues and friends, died at the age of 102 on January 25, 2010.

Don Luis immigrated to the U.S. in 1926 to study mathematics but he was soon lured into the study of Latin American literature. For his doctorate he focused on Mexican literature, a field that in the 1940s and 1950s was virtually ignored by the academy. Leal gained initial notoriety in 1956 principally through his unmatched *Breve historia del cuento mexicano*



Professor Emeritus Luis Leal at work (copyright UCSB, 2008).

(Brief History of the Mexican Short Story), a manuscript that well exhibits his meticulous and original research. He went on to produce a popular book on Mexican culture titled *México: civilizaciones y culturas* (Mexico: Civilizations and Cultures), in addition to monographic studies on Mexican novelists Juan Rulfo and Mariano Azuela (the latter, the author of *Los de abajo* or *The Underdogs*). Leal's interest in the Mexican Revolution peaked with his book *Cuentos de la Revolución* (Short Stories of the Mexican Revolution). He eventually came to be considered the top expert on the subject of Latin American Magical Realism and Mexican literature overall.

It was not until he

American literature, clearly outlining the origins of a tradition as far back as the 1550s.

Professor Leal was also a tireless community participant, having served as a board member of La Casa de la Raza and other organizations. His many achievements led to numerous awards and recognitions, such as the Santa Barbara Hispanic Achievement Council award and the Scholar of the Year by the National

Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. His awards increased in stature and significance during his later years with the prestigious Aztec Eagle in 1991 from the Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. This award was in turn partly responsible for the establishment of the Luis Leal Endowed Chair in Chicano Studies at UCSB in 1995, held previously by Professor Maria Herrera-Sobek, and held now by Professor Aída Hurtado. In 1997 Luis Leal received the

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

March 1, 2010 marked my 9th week anniversary serving as Chair of the UCSB Chicana and Chicano Studies Department. I must say that it has been a pleasure and honor to follow in the footsteps Professor of Anthropology Juan Vicente Palerm, who served as Interim Chair for the last couple of years. Under his able direction, the department moved forward with many accomplishments, including the revision of the graduate program's requirements, increasing the number of majors to close to 200, and the successful recruitment of a new Chair. His dedication, wisdom, and fair-mindedness sustained the department until a new Chair was recruited. His positive leadership also made the department fertile ground for new and exciting developments. He will be sorely missed.

My initial excitement about assuming this new and exciting position was tempered on the 4th week of the quarter. The honorable, esteemed and distinguished colleague Professor Luis Leal died at the age of 102 (see the special commentary in this issue by Professor Francisco Lomelí, a member of our department and Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese). The passing of

Don Luis, as his friends and colleagues affectionately called him, gave me the opportunity to meet the larger Chicana/Latino community on campus and beyond. Individuals returned to UCSB to give Don Luis one final farewell and it was through their *testimonios* during the memorial service and *entierro* that I witnessed the solidarity, history, and affection many individuals had for Don Luis and the department he helped build. I was humbled by Don Luis's vision, dedication, scholarship and dreams for the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies. I feel honored to follow the map he and others laid before us and look forward to help make the dream come to fruition.

Among the developments in the department is this e-newsletter, which Professors Gerardo Aldana and Inés Casillas have graciously agreed to produce. We wanted to create a space of communication with our various communities and constituencies to acknowledge our accomplishments, announce our future plans, and highlight many aspects of our department. The e-newsletter will be produced quarterly (except during the summer) and we hope to gain extensive readership locally, nationally, and internationally. We look forward to your reactions and suggestions to make our e-newsletter a success and something to look forward to each quarter. Any and all suggestions are welcome.

In solidarity,
Aída Hurtado
Chair of the Department of Chicana/o Studies and Luis Leal Endowed Chair

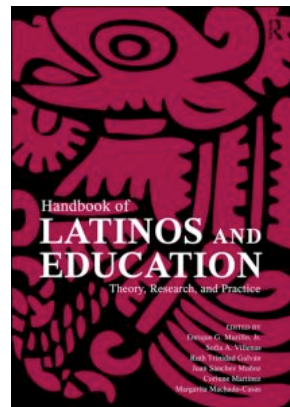
Luis Leal, cont. from Page 1

National Medal for the Humanities from then President Bill Clinton.

Many have referred to Don Luis as "el maestro de maestros" (the teacher of teachers), reflected in part in a dual conference at UCSB and Mexico City on the occasion of his 100th birthday in 2007. The book *100 años de lealtad/100 Years of Loyalty: In Honor of Luis Leal* consisted of essays by over one hundred contributors, taking up 1,456 pages. This monumental work speaks directly to his regard as a scholar who has touched innumerable lives with his erudition, generosity, encouragement, example and humor.

He will be missed.

UP-COMING EVENTS:



LATINA/O EDUCATION & ADVOCACY DAY

Monday March 29, 2010 8am-5:30pm 4205 Education

Contact: Prof. Tara Yosso, yosso@chicst.ucsb.edu

SPRING QUARTER: CHST COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Wednesdays, 4-5 pm
Dolores Huerta Gathering Room, 1623 South Hall

UCSB CHICANA/O STUDIES

Department Faculty

- Gerardo Aldana
- Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval
- Edwina Barvosa
- Dolores Inés Casillas
- Mario Garcia
- María Herrera-Sobek
- Aída Hurtado
- Francisco Lomelí
- Horacio Roque Ramirez
- Chela Sandoval
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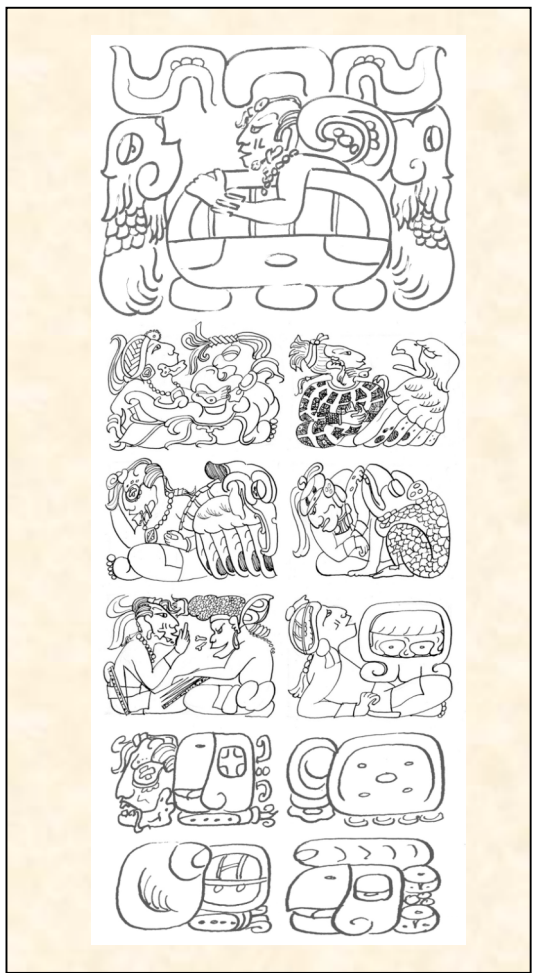
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- Inés Casillas
- Aída Hurtado

This Quarter in Images



UCSB students and faculty at the UCLA Sex y Corazón Conference, February 12. Faculty at the funeral of Dr. Luis Leal, February 1. UCLA Professor of Education Daniel Solórzano's lecture on racial microaggressions at the MCC, March 1. Faculty and Staff Retreat and welcome for incoming Department Chair, Professor Aída Hurtado, December 15. Hieroglyphic memorial for Professor Emeritus Luis Leal.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Professor Dolores Inés Casillas

Assistant Professor Dolores Inés Casillas joined the faculty in 2007. Prior to that, she held a prestigious University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellowship at UC Santa Cruz, having earned her Ph.D. at the University of Michigan in American Culture. Professor Casillas examines race, gender and language politics in the media, with a strong focus on radio as a site of political assertion and regulation. She recently published "A Morning Dose of Latino Masculinity: U.S. Spanish-language Radio and the Politics of Gender" (*Latina/o Communication Studies Today*, 2008), and is teaching CHST 107, "Politics of Language, Accent, and Translation." Professor Casillas serves the Department as Chair of its Undergraduate Committee. She lives in Santa Barbara with her son, Lazlo, and partner Andrew Csordás.

CHST: What do you believe to be the most exciting trends in your field?

IC: Even though the area of Latino Media Studies is relatively new, there's a crop of women out there who have an impressive emphasis on gender. Isabel Molina Guzman just came out with a book called, *Dangerous*

Curves: Latina Bodies in the Media; Deborah Paredez wrote a phenomenal book about how we remember Selena; María Elena Cepeda just came out with a book called *Musical ImagiNation* about Colombian identity and the Latin Music Boom.

There's just a lot of exciting work and it's not superficial or just textual analysis; it's really interdisciplinary; it's ambitious; and it's really challenging traditional norms about how we view Latino Studies. So, I'm really inspired by these colleagues at different universities who are contributing to this kind of gendered specific focus.

CHST: What intellectual fads do you think have passed their limelight or are on their way out?

IC: I think definitely the—this might be too discipline specific—but the idea of "viewer resistance." The whole idea that 'we're going to buy that and it's [an act of] resistance.' And we're going to tune into that and it's resistance. In Media Studies ... I think it's a fad. Like you know what? They're consumers; it's a capitalist system, and we might be over-reading it.

CHST: So that the trope almost took over the data?

IC: Exactly.

CHST: Who were two unique contributors to your academic aspirations and formation?

IC: Well, definitely, my undergraduate mentor, Adaljiza Sosa-Riddell [UC Davis Professor Emerita of Chicana/o Studies and Founder of the UCD Chicana/Latina Research Center]. She mentored me for two years. She taught me to consider – each time I write

something – its political significance. Even in Media Studies or Latino Studies, she would always ask that. So, even an encyclopedia entry I just co-authored with a [UCSB CHST] undergraduate student, you know, I catch myself asking him that too. How are we going to define this term? What is its political significance?

And the other person, definitely, would be Rosa Linda Fregoso [UCSC Professor of Latin America and Latino Studies]. She served on my dissertation committee; she was my post-doc mentor. I refer to her as my academic *madrina*, because I feel so spoiled by her. I ask for a letter, or advice or feedback and somehow I get it, which is what godmothers do.

CHST: You have a young child and a partner who also works full time. Do you have any rituals that help you keep a balance?

IC: Every weekend, we schedule something for us, which is hard to do with a partner who also works full time at the university. But we do. Every weekend, we ask: what is going to be our event this weekend? That is not an errand. We're not going to go to Costco as our event. We'll go to the zoo; walk along the water; visit a park. And that helps.

CHST: Where did you grow up and do you think it has an impact on what you do today?

IC: I was born in Stockton, but I was raised in a small town called Weed, California. It's forty minutes from the Oregon border. It has a population of three thousand. It has the largest African American community north of Sacramento. The

predominant Asian community there is Laotian and Cambodian—mainly refugee. And the majority of Mexicans are migrants, because it is located in-between the Central Valley tomatoes and the Washington apples. So people would settle in there. And the average socio-economic status—I think the last time I checked—was like twenty-seven thousand dollars a year. It's very different to grow up in a very small community. We have this stereotype that Latino Studies or Chicano Studies is in L.A.; that it's in these urban areas. And we have stereotypes about rural Latinos or Mexicanos. And I have fought against that, saying: actually, that's not the case at all. And even in my work, one of the chapters looks at radio, during the Chicano Movement in rural areas, as a way of saying that there were Movement activities in places that were not L.A. And it didn't have to be a march and it didn't have to be on television. It could be in these other kind of mediums and in these different modes and still be very political. So maybe in that way I'm always, I'm constantly defending rural Mexicanos, rural Latinos.

CHST: What was your favorite class in graduate school?

IC: Actually, my favorite class in graduate school was... it's my favorite class to teach now. And it's a politics of language class. I call it 'politics of language, accent, and translation.' I took it with Frances Aparicio, who became my co-chair. But it was all about language ideologies. Latinos, how they are surveilled when they speak Spanish. They're surveilled
(continued on Page 5)

SELECT RECENT TALKS & PUBLICATIONS

Gerardo Aldana. "Gender, the Maize God, and the Politics of Fertility: a re-contextualization of Classic Mayan ritual bloodletting in Ancient Mesoamerica." National Hispanic Heritage Month address to the National Library of Medicine, Washington, D.C., October 28, 2009.

Edwina Barvosa. "Multiple Identity Theory and the Implementation of School Integration Policies in the Era of Voluntary Integration," Paper delivered at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Toronto, Canada, September 5, 2009.

Mario Garcia, ed. *Chicano Liberation Theology: The Writings and Documents of Richard Cruz and Católicos Por La Raza.* Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishers, 2009

Aida Hurtado. "Lifting as we climb': Educated Chicanas' social identities and commitment to social action." In *Mexicans in California: Transformations and challenges*, edited by Ramon Gutierrez and Pat Zavella, 111-129. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2009

Tara J. Yosso, W.A. Smith, M. Ceja, & D.G. Solórzano. "Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates." *Harvard Educational Review*, 79, 4, (2009): 659-691.

In Winter Quarter, 2010, **Mario Garcia** organized a conference "The Mexican Revolution of 1910: A

Centennial Conference." The keynote speaker was Prof. Ramón Eduardo Ruiz. The filmmaker, Ray Telles, previewed his forthcoming PBS documentary "The Storm That Swept Mexico." Panel participants included Prof. Kate Bruhn from UCSB and Prof. Alex Saragoza from UC Berkeley.

DEPARTMENT AWARDS

Aida Hurtado was also awarded the 2010 **Association for Women in Psychology Distinguished Publication Award** for the *Sex Roles* special issue, "Intersectionality of Social Identities: A Gender Perspective," which included the article: Hurtado, A., & M. Sinha, "More than men: Latino feminist masculinities and intersectionality." *Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 337-349.

Tara Yosso's *Critical Race Counterstories Along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline*, (Routledge) was honored in 2009 with the American Educational Studies Association's **2008 Critics' Choice Book Award.**

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT (cont.)

when they speak English. Aparicio was linking it to Anzaldúa's idea of linguistic violence. It was an amazing course. And one of the assignments was to write a linguistic autobiography. Five pages—and it was, to this day, one of the hardest papers I've ever had to write. Which I thought was so compelling. And I loved it. And it's one of my favorite classes now to teach, and they all write linguistic autobiographies. I think I relate at how difficult it is, and even after all these years, I empathize with

them when I'm reading it. And I only read like two or three a day, because they're so heavy. So that definitely was my favorite class that I took and my favorite class I teach.

CHST: What will you be doing on December 22, 2012?
IC: [Long pause] December 22, 2012? [Laugh] Where did you come up with that? [Laugh]

CHST: Good. Next question. When did you realize you were a Chicana/o Studies scholar?
IC: I think I realized that when I was getting my Master's in Education at Michigan. It was supposed to be a theoretically based M.A. I don't want to be too negative, but in a nutshell, I didn't feel as challenged. And I remember thinking: my Chicano Studies and my gender courses as an undergraduate were so much harder than this Master's program. And yet I just traveled across the country to be at a program that's top ten in the nation. And there, that's when I knew I would rather freak out about a topic and a paper and struggle with

it, than feel like I'm wasting my time in the classroom. And I think that's when I knew: okay, I don't think this area's for me. I think I need to pursue more Chicano Studies, Latino Studies type topics.



CONTACT US:

With community or alumni news items, to provide comments, or just to get back in touch.

We also have opportunities for you to support Chican@ Studies at UCSB.

ucsbchstnews@gmail.com

MAYAN SUDOKU

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