

Father of Chicano Theater to Lecture at UC San Diego on “The Challenges of Citizenship”

October 20, 2008

Henry DeVries

Renowned playwright, filmmaker and activist Luis Valdez will lecture on "The Challenges of Citizenship" at 7:30 pm Thursday, November 20 in the UC San Diego Price Center Ballroom. The event is free and open to the public with no tickets or reservations required.

Valdez will discuss the problems of citizenship in the United States and the blending of cultures in California. Following the lecture a panel of experts will discuss human rights and global citizenship.

Acknowledged as the "father of Chicano theater," Valdez is the author and director of numerous plays. He has also written and directed two films: "Zoot Suit" in 1981, based on his Broadway play of the same name and "La Bamba," the 1987 hit movie based on the life of the Mexican-American rock'n'roll star, Ritchie Valens.

Valdez is the founder and artistic director of El Teatro Campesino, which translates to The Farmworkers Theater. Started in 1965, Valdez has led the theater company to international acclaim and numerous awards and honors, including membership on the National Endowment for the Arts Council.

Born June 26, 1940 in Delano, California, Valdez was raised in the agricultural labor camps around California where his parents worked in the fields, picking whatever crop was in season. A small role in an elementary school play and witnessing his parents and those like them work the long, grueling hours for little pay moved Valdez to use the theater to shed light on the Latino experience.

"I took what I most feared, the thing I was most ashamed of, and turned it into something I could write about," Valdez once told a group of university students.

The Valdez lecture is presented by Eleanor Roosevelt and Thurgood Marshall Colleges and the Helen Edison Lecture Series.

In accordance with a major gift from a late philanthropist, the Helen Edison Lecture Series presents ongoing free public lectures on issues that advance humanitarian purposes and objectives. Attended annually by thousands, speakers include former Vice President Al Gore, Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, former secretary of defense Robert McNamara, and Nobel Prize in Literature winner Toni Morrison.

For additional information contact UC San Diego Extension's Helen Edison Lecture Series at (858) 822-0510, email emunk@ucsd.edu or visit <http://helenedison.ucsd.edu>.

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