

## Award-Winning Chicana Poet To Perform April 28

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Jan Jennings

"I was born a humanitarian. I was raised in poverty, racism," says Gloria Velásquez, award-winning Chicana poet and novelist, professor and performer. "I was raised with nothing, absolutely nothing, and when I look at my life today, I think a 'milagro,' a dream come true."

*Superwoman Chicana: Poetry and Music with Gloria Velásquez* will be presented at 7 p.m. April 28 in Eleanor Roosevelt College Great Hall at the University of California, San Diego. The event is free and open to the public.

Part of the month-long UCSD 2005 César E. Chávez Celebration, the performance is hosted by the César E. Chávez Celebration Planning Committee, the UCSD Center for the Humanities, and the Helen Edison Lecture Series.

Velásquez is a native of Colorado, where she grew up working in the fields and as a motel maid. She rose from poverty to earn a bachelor's degree from the University of Northern Colorado in 1978. According to her, for a working class Latina, the only way out of the barrio, the fields, or the hotel rooms is a college degree.

She went on to earn a master's degree, then a Ph.D. in Latin American and Chicano literature from Stanford University and currently is a professor of Modern Languages and Literature at California State University, San Luis Obispo.

Velásquez is the author of numerous works of fiction, poetry, and poetry set to music, including the Roosevelt High School series of novels which focus on the lives of young Mexican-American youths dealing with the trials and tribulations of growing up; the *Superwoman Chicana* CD which features poetry and music, and a bilingual selection of poetry, *I Used to Be a Superwoman Superwoman Chicana*.

*I Used to Be a Superwoman Superwoman Chicana* expresses Velásquez's desire to experience life fully, to make the most of every opportunity, and even to transcend to superwoman status, as is evidenced in the book's cover illustration. A superwoman with six arms juggles domestic implements and her university book bag. A giant "S" is in the background. The title poem, *Superwoman Chicana*, tells the multiple roles that turn her into "the super-pendeja Chicana, very very tired, oppressed and fed up."

To the question, "Who am I?", posed by *Superwoman* book reviewer Roberta Gordenstein, Velásquez says she embodies all women of Hispanic heritage and history, la Malinche, la Virgen de Guadalupe, la Llorona, the undocumented woman laborer, the revolutionary Chicana, crying out for human rights and equality.

Of Velásquez, Chicano poet José Montoya says, "It has been her superwoman Chicana efforts and her love for her people and their monumental, untold history that have kept her style so powerfully pure."

Velásquez will sing songs and read her poetry at the April 28 event. A self-described "rebel poet and rebel Chicana from Colorado," Velásquez says she continually strives to be creative and to make a difference for her community.

Velásquez teaches Spanish language courses as well as Latin American and Chicano/a literature courses in Spanish at Cal Poly. Also, she has developed a course on Chicano/a culture which she teaches in English in the Humanities Program, and as an associate faculty member in Ethnic Studies, she teaches about Chicano/a culture in the American Cultural Images series.

She has won numerous awards including the Chicano Literary Prize in the Short Story from the University of California, Irvine, and the Premier and Deuxieme Prix in poetry from the Department of French and Italian at Stanford. She was the first Chicana to be inducted into the University of Northern Colorado's Hall of Fame for her achievements in creative writing, and the Special Collections Department at Stanford has archived materials of her literary production under the title, *The Gloria Velásquez Papers*.

Jorge Mariscal, director of the UCSD Chicana/o-Latina/o Arts and Humanities Program, and Cecil Lytle, provost of Thurgood Marshall College, are co-chairing the César E. Chávez Celebration Planning Committee. Olivia Puentes Reynolds is the community representative. For more information on the Gloria Velásquez performance visit the Chávez web site at <http://blink.ucsd.edu/go/chavez>, the Helen Edison Series web site at [www.helenedison.ucsd.edu](http://www.helenedison.ucsd.edu) or call Edie Munk at (858) 822-0510.

Media Contact: Pat JaCoby, (858) 534-7404, or Jan Jennings, (858) 822-1684

