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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Urgent Forum: The Murder of Lenca Activist Berta Cáceres
and the future of Indigenous and Afrodescendant Rights in Honduras**

American Indian Studies Center
UCLA

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On April 8, 2016 an Urgent Forum organized by the American Indian Studies Center will gather academics and community members on the UCLA campus to discuss the murder of Berta Cáceres and the future of indigenous and afrodescendant rights in the violent context of Honduras. Among those speaking will be Berta Cáceres' youngest daughter, Olivia Zuñiga Cáceres, who is travelling from Honduras to participate. The event will be held from 9:00 am – 1:30 pm in the Presentation Room of the Charles E. Young Library. Zúñiga Cáceres will speak at 11:45.

On March 3, Berta Cáceres, an award winning environmental rights activist, was brutally murdered in her home in La Esperanza, Honduras. Cáceres, from Honduras' largest indigenous group, the Lenca, had been fighting to defend indigenous lands and resources against extractivist industries. Her heroic struggle garnered her several important international awards, including the Goldman Environmental award. It also garnered her multiple of death threats. The risk to Cáceres was so great that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ordered the Honduran government to take precautionary measures to guarantee her safety. Unfortunately, the Honduran regime charged with protecting her life is accused by international

human rights organizations of being responsible for hundreds of deaths of activists since coming into power following the U.S. supported coup of 2009.

This urgent forum will provide historical context and current analysis of the critical situation indigenous and afro descendant communities are facing in Honduras. It will also consider the U.S.' role and responsibility in the region.

Dr. Shannon Speed, director of the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA, states: "In this electoral period in the United States, it is important to understand what has happened and what may happen to indigenous and afrodescendant activists in Honduras, given our government's responsibility in the coup that set up this situation, and in particular the role of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton."

Rony Castillo, Garifuna activist from Honduras, said, "It is urgent to raise in solidarity the voice of the international community and make the people of the United States aware of the human rights violations, racism, violence and suffering of indigenous people in Honduras. There are not even the most minimal guarantees of safety for the indigenous peoples, and the cowardly assassination of our colleague Berta is a clear sign of the defenselessness in which we live. They may kill us all but our people will continue in the struggle."



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Program

9:00 – 9:10 Coffee, light breakfast

9:10 – 9:20 Welcome – Dr. Shannon Speed (Chickasaw, Director AISC)

9:20 – 9:40 Joseph Berra (UCLA Law School)

9:40 – 10:00 Dr. Suyapa Portillo (Pitzer College)

10:00 – 10:20 Dr. Chris Loperena (University of San Francisco)

10:20 – 11:00 Discussion

11:00 – 11:30 Lunch

11:30 – 11:50 Dr. Rony Castillo (Garifuna Education Council and Garifuna Intercultural University)

11:50 – 12:15 Olivia Zuñiga Cáceres (Lenca, Coordinadora Indígena del Poder Popular en Honduras)

12:15 – 1:00 Discussion

1:00 – 1:30 Closing remarks Dr. Leisy Abrego (Chicana/o Studies, UCLA) and Shannon Speed (AISC, UCLA)