

PRESS RELEASE

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FROM: TERESA MARQUEZ, ZIMMERMAN LIBRARY, UNM

SUBJECT: 1998 Premio Aztlán National Literary Prize in  
Chicana/o Literature

Ronald L. Ruiz has been awarded the 1998 Premio Aztlán, a national literary prize in Chicana/o literature. Ruiz's novel, GIUSEPPE ROCCO, was awarded the coveted prize for its strong portrayal of characters, its intriguing plot, and the evocation of the American dream in the Santa Clara valley of California in the 1940s.

The coveted one thousand dollar prize was established by Patricia and Rudolfo Anaya in 1993. This is the sixth year the prize will be awarded. Ruiz will give a reading of his work on February 4 at the Hilton Hotel in Albuquerque at 7 pm. The award of the prize is in conjunction with the Eighth Annual University of New Mexico Conference sponsored by the Department of Spanish.

GIUSEPPE ROCCO is a powerful novel about achieving American success and passing on its fruits to one's progeny. The novel encompasses the lives of an Italian immigrant, Giuseppe Rocco, and his young daughter-in-law, Sally Martinez. These two strong and ambitious characters are driven by a desire to succeed. Caught in a web of fate and of their own making, the two are driven to an arrangement that makes for an unexpected outcome.

PRESS RELEASE

page 2

This interesting and original story is skillfully and strongly written. Its portrayal of the two immigrant cultures reveals the multicultural roots of California. Giuseppe Rocco rises from rags to riches by scavenging rags and a series of shrewd land investments. In the end, it's Sally Martínez who becomes the means by which to further his empire. Thus setting in play the makings of a Greek tragedy.

GIUSEPPE ROCCO evokes a marvelous sense of place in the once agricultural Santa Clara Valley, now better known as high-tech Silicon Valley. This is the second novel by Ruiz. His first, HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS, drew favorable critical comparisons to Ricard Wright's NATIVE SON.

GIUSEPPE ROCCO takes its rightful place alongside previous winners of Premio Aztlán which was established to encourage and reward Chicana and Chicano writers at the onset of their writing careers.

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