

>> From the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

>> This Roberto Salazar at the Library of Congress. This December the Librarian of Congress, Dr. James H. Billington, will offer the public an unprecedented American celebration of Mexico. The event will feature Mexico's diversity and cultural legacy. It will also explore what it means to be a Mexican American, an identity that is claimed by 10% of the population living in the United States today. The conference will serve as the stage for two premieres, the unveiling of the Martin Ramirez, Madonna and the debut of a remarkable documentary filmed over the course of 30 years, The History of the Mexican Revolution. For this event the library has gathered a star studded group of speakers. Among them is Mexico's leading anthropologist, Miguel Leon-Portilla, who will be honored with the Library of Congress Living Legend Award. The two day celebration, which will take place in the Coolidge Auditorium on December 12, Thursday and Friday, December 13, will be accompanied by an exhibit of the Library's Mexican Treasures. Public hours will be from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm. For more details please visit www.loc.gov/celebration-of-mexico. And now it is my pleasure to introduce one of our featured guests, Carmen Boullosa. Carmen Boullosa is a Mexican novelist, poet and essayist, a recipient of many international awards including the Mexican Xavier Villaurrutia Award, the German Liberatur and the Spanish Café Gijon Award. She has been called Mexico's Best Woman Writer by the acclaimed novelist Roberto Bolano. She has been a Guggenheim Fellow as well as a visiting professor at Columbia, Georgetown and New York University. Currently she is a distinguished lecturer at the City College of New York. Her best known novels are They're Crows, We're Pigs, Leaving Tabasco and Cleopatra Dismounts. Her most recent is Texas. But she also has written plays, movie scripts, poetry and literary criticism and has proven herself skilled across many fields. Carmen, thank you so much for joining us.

>> Thank you, Roberto. Thank you for this talk and I'm really proud to be part of this event.

>> Carmen, you've lived in and written about many places in this country where you've been able to see firsthand what it means to be Mexican American, as opposed to someone like yourself, a Mexican born in Mexico. Could you give us a sense of what you've seen out there in America?

>> Well I live in New York and my house is kind of [foreign language] in Brooklyn. And I pass part of my time in [foreign language] and I grew up in Mexico. I arrived to New York when I was already 49 years old. And I would call myself a Mexican American because I am Mexican. I'm not a boundary person but all my sensibility and all my training and all my imaginary world was taught in Mexico and I arrived here well already a writer with books published and my inner world set. And my eyes are like, I look at everything through my Mexican glasses or my [foreign language] glasses or the glasses I have from Mexico City. So and as I say my home here in Brooklyn is made like a Mexican space. It's brownstone, totally Brooklynite [phonetic] but my heart is in Mexican and my cooking is in Mexican and my writing is Mexican. So I wouldn't dare call myself truly a Mexican American. Yes, yes, I live in Brooklyn, I know, I'm married to an

American man. But I don't know, I feel, I don't think I'm entitled to use that label.

>> You've certainly written poems, plays and novels, essays, you've even written scripts for movies, what makes you want to leap from genre to genre? And in what genre are you most comfortable?

>> Every book has its own form. And forms are very, very different. I understand because I've taught at universities that you need this division and I understand also that the market and the cultural market needs reservations to manage the products, the culture of products [inaudible]. But I go back and forth without noticing because every book needs, it's so [inaudible] and it's like if every book, literary book imposes its own body and imposes its own rhythm and has itself very strict rules that one or another has to follow. And our work is a little bit like an archeologist or my work is a little bit like an archeologist. I feel when I'm writing a book that I'm discovering a body that's already been done by many others and that body sometimes needs a form of a narrative and the speed of an eventual novel. And some of the times is introspective, more silent, less explicatory and it is a poem or a dialogue. It's a [inaudible]. Or I even don't know when I encounter a book or I start working on a book I am not very sure where I am going to end with it until I figure out the form I know completely what it's going to be about and I don't, I feel more comfortable with the book I'm writing, or sometimes I feel more pain with the book I'm writing because it's not only about feeling at ease but also it's about sometimes touching cords that are painful or tough or difficult to deal with.

>> We've been hearing from the acclaimed writer and scholar, Carmen Boullosa who will appear at the Library of Congress Celebration of Mexico on Thursday, December 12 and Friday, December 13 in the Library's Coolidge Auditorium from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm. Carmen, thank you.

>> Thank you. Thank you very much for this conversation, Roberto. Nice to talk with you.

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