Mexico’s Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to Receive Notre Dame Prize

Mexican statesman and democracy advocate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has won the 2010 Notre Dame Prize for Distinguished Public Service in Latin America. The prize will be awarded at a ceremony in Mexico City on February 16. First awarded in 2000, the Notre Dame Prize recognizes the efforts of visionary leaders to enhance the region’s welfare.

Cárdenas will be honored for his leading role in promoting democracy by opening up the political process in his native Mexico, dominated for almost 60 years by the one-party rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, known as the PRI. Cárdenas broke “the logjam of the authoritarian system,” says Dain Borges, associate professor of history at the University of Chicago.

In 1987, Cárdenas challenged the PRI’s unwritten rule that allowed presidents to designate their own successors. Leaving the PRI, he ran for president in 1988. He came very close to winning against the PRI candidate—indeed, many Mexicans contend that the government stole the election when it declared a “computer system crash” partway through the vote count.

“The electoral outcome triggered a popular mobilization that accelerated Mexico’s transition to democracy,” says Soledad Loaeza, professor of political science at El Colegio de México’s Center for International Studies and a former Kellogg Institute visiting fellow. “Cárdenas gave hope to many people. Thanks to his dignified leadership, the left in Mexico developed into a responsible political alternative.”

The son of one of Mexico’s most revered PRI presidents, Lázaro Cárdenas, Cuauhtémoc rose through PRI ranks before becoming fed up with the party’s increasing corruption and electoral fraud. A civil engineer by training, he served as senator (1974–1980) and then governor of the state of Michoacán (1980–1986). In 1989, he helped to found the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), and in 1997 was elected to the new post of mayor of Mexico City.

Called the “moral leader” of the PRD, Cardenas ran for the presidency again in 1994 and 2000. Currently president of the Fundación para la Democracia (Foundation for Democracy), he has remained active in efforts to confront problems facing Mexico. “Addressing poverty and expanding Mexico's formal economy are necessary parts of any strategy to stem drug trafficking and drug-related violence and to provide alternatives to those leaving Mexico for the United States,” he said in a March 2010 address at UCLA.
His most recent book, Sobre Mis Pasos (Aguilar, 2010), combines a political history of contemporary Mexico from the perspective of a central participant with deep personal reflection and testimony on how his objectives and convictions shaped his path as an unwavering advocate for democracy and justice in Mexico.

Established in 2000 by the Kellogg Institute for International Studies and funded by The Coca-Cola Foundation, the Notre Dame Prize for Distinguished Public Service in Latin America is the only award of its kind to recognize the efforts of civic activists and intellectuals as well as leaders in business, religion, government, or the media, to enhance the region’s welfare. The award carries a $15,000 cash prize, with a matching amount donated to a charitable organization recommended by the laureate.

Among the previous recipients of the Notre Dame Prize are microfinance pioneer María Otero, president and CEO of ACCIÓN International (now US Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs); human rights activists José Zalaquett (Chile), Helen Mack Chang, president of the Myrna Mack Foundation (Guatemala), and Sofía Macher of Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission; four former or sitting presidents, César Gaviria of Colombia, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, and Patricio Aylwin of Chile; Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, SBD, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras; and Enrique Iglesias, president of the Inter-American Development Bank.

Founded by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, the University of Notre Dame’s Kellogg Institute for International Studies brings interdisciplinary social science inquiry to bear on issues relevant to contemporary societies around the world. Grounding the Institute’s scholarship and teaching is an appreciation for the benefits of democratization and human development.

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An unwavering advocate for democracy and justice, Mexican statesman Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was instrumental in opening up the political process in Mexico, long dominated by one-party rule. He will be awarded the Notre Dame Prize for Distinguished Public Service in Latin America in recognition of his steadfast commitment to democratic ideals and a lifetime of public service.

Born in Mexico City in 1934, he is the son of Amalia Solórzano and one of Mexico’s most revered presidents, Lázaro Cárdenas, whose achievements included widespread land reform and the nationalization of the oil industry. Cuauhtémoc spent the first six years of his life in Los Pinos, Mexico’s presidential residence.

He trained as a civil engineer, receiving his degree from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico, or UNAM) in 1957. A founding member and president of a professional planning organization, he coordinated surveys and rural development projects in the Rio Balsas Basin in the 1960s.

Like his father, Cárdenas entered public service as a member of the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI) and held early positions as senator for the state of Michoacán (1974–1980) and in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (1976–1980). From the time he was elected governor of Michoacán in 1980, a position he held until 1986, he dedicated all his energy to public service.

As he became increasingly involved in party politics, he became disenchanted by the corruption and lack of democratic process within the party, which had held power for nearly 60 years. Beginning in 1986, he took part in the “Democratic Current,” a movement that arose within the PRI to challenge its practice of appointing presidential successors.

When this effort met with resistance, Cárdenas left the party to run for president as an opposition candidate. The campaign that he ran for the presidency in 1988 is credited with opening up the political process in Mexico.

Even though he lost the election by a narrow margin, due to what many Mexicans believe was massive electoral fraud, he continued in his efforts to promote democratization. In 1989, he was a founder of the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), and he ran for president again under this banner in 1994 and 2000. In 1997 he became the first democratically elected mayor of Mexico City. He is still considered the PRD’s “moral leader.”
Currently president of the Fundación para la Democracia (Foundation for Democracy), he has remained active in efforts to confront problems facing Mexico. “Addressing poverty and expanding Mexico’s formal economy are necessary parts of any strategy to stem drug trafficking and drug-related violence and to provide alternatives to those leaving Mexico for the United States,” he said in a March 2010 address at University of California, Los Angeles.

Cárdenas has served as Tinker Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago and as visiting professor at the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He received the prestigious “Condecoración Cardenal Cisneros,” awarded by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

His most recent book, Sobre Mis Pasos (Aguilar, 2010), combines a political history of contemporary Mexico from the perspective of a central participant with deep personal reflection and testimony on how his objectives and convictions shaped his path as an unwavering advocate for democracy and justice in Mexico.
About the Notre Dame Prize for Distinguished Public Service in Latin America

The Notre Dame Prize for Distinguished Public Service in Latin America was created in 2000 to honor Latin Americans whose work and commitment to public service has substantially furthered the interests and well-being of people in one or more countries in Latin America. The Prize recognizes the efforts of visionary leaders in business, religion, government, or the media, as well as civic activists and intellectuals, to promote the ideals of democracy, economic growth, and a just, stable society. Funded by The Coca-Cola Foundation, the Prize is awarded by the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, and carries a cash award of $15,000.

Another $15,000 is awarded to a Latin American charitable organization recommended by the laureate, thus advancing the work the Prize honors.

The distinguished selection committee for the 2010 Prize included:

- Carolina Barco, ambassador of Colombia to the United States (2006–2010);
- Soledad Loaeza, researcher and professor of political science, Center for International Studies, El Colegio de México;
- José Zalaquett, professor of human rights at the University of Chile’s Law School and 2009 Notre Dame Prize laureate;
- Rodrigo Calderón, vice president, Public Affairs & Communication, The Coca-Cola Company Latin America;
- Rev. James McDonald, CSC, counselor to the president, University of Notre Dame;
- and Scott Mainwaring, Eugene P. and Helen Conley Professor of Political Science and director of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame.
About the Matching Prize Recipient

In addition to the Notre Dame Prize itself, another $15,000 is awarded to a Latin American charitable organization recommended by the laureate, thus advancing the work the Prize honors.

Upon the recommendation of Mr. Cárdenas, the matching prize will be donated to **Hermanos en el Camino** (Brothers in the Road). Founded in 2007 by Rev. Alejandro Solalinde Guerra, Coordinator of the Pastoral of Human Mobility, South Pacific Region of the Mexican Episcopate, the Hermanos en el Camino shelter cares for Central American migrants passing through Ciudad Ixtepec, Oaxaca on their way north.

Arriving in Ixtepec after long journeys on top of freight trains, the migrants become victims of assault and extortion at the hands of both gangs and the local authorities. Accommodating hundreds of men, women, and children daily, Rev. Solalinde and his team of volunteers offer these “brothers in the road” food and lodging, medical and psychological treatment, and legal support.

In the face of violent threats, Hermanos en el Camino remains uncompromising in its daily care of migrants and its stance against the abuse of their human rights.
About the Kellogg Institute for International Studies

The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame focuses its research and teaching on two topics critical to contemporary societies around the world—democracy and human development.

Renowned for its expertise in democratization, particularly in Latin America, the Institute has renewed its long-term focus on economic growth and human development through innovative research and community engagement in Africa.

Kellogg fellows from the University and around the world address a multidisciplinary research agenda that also encompasses religion and society, public policies for social justice, and civil society.

The Institute’s approach to scholarship and teaching is grounded in an appreciation for the benefits that democratization, economic development, and organized civil society may bring to citizens around the world.

Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, CSC, the legendary president of Notre Dame, founded the Kellogg Institute almost 30 years ago to bring scholarly attention to real-world problems and project the University onto the world stage.
The nation’s preeminent Catholic university, the University of Notre Dame is known for excellence in undergraduate education, research, and scholarship. The University’s programs draw students and scholars from across the US and around the world.

Founded in 1842, the University is dedicated to the pursuit and sharing of truth for its own sake. One of its distinctive goals is to provide a forum where Catholic thought may intersect with knowledge found in the arts, sciences, professions, and every other area of human scholarship and creativity.


The University’s academic excellence stems from its faculty. Notre Dame faculty members have won 42 fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities since 1999, the most among the nation’s leading research universities. Twenty-one Notre Dame faculty members, including current President Rev. John I. Jenkins, CSC, and Kellogg Institute Director Scott Mainwaring, have been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the nation’s leading learned academy.

At Notre Dame, education has always been linked to values, among them volunteering in community service. About 80 percent of Notre Dame students engage in some form of voluntary community service during their years at the University, and at least 10 percent devote a year or more after graduation to service.

With a new vice president for internationalization, the University is also focused on studying and making connections to the rest of the world. Notre Dame ranks eighth in the percentage of undergraduates studying abroad among major US research universities.

Admission to the University is highly competitive, with five applicants for each freshman class position. In addition to academics, Notre Dame is known for its beautiful campus as well as its long tradition of enthusiastic support for its athletic programs.

The University is located in Notre Dame, Indiana, adjacent to the city of South Bend and approximately 90 miles east of Chicago.
Additional Quotations about Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas
2010 Laureate
The Notre Dame Prize for Distinguished Public Service in Latin America

Jaime Ros, Fellow of the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, Professor of Economics at the University of Notre Dame and at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México:

The year 1988 represents a parting of the waters in modern Mexican political history, the year in which the old authoritarian political system “failed” and the doors to change opened towards the current multi-party democracy. As Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is the principal protagonist in this change, he is deserving of the prize that the University of Notre Dame grants to a Latin American who has distinguished himself in public service.

Juan M. Rivera, Professor of Accounting, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame:

A timely and well-deserved recognition to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, distinguished Mexican intellectual and prominent political figure. His firm beliefs in true democracy and social justice, deeply rooted in the political and cultural fabric of modern Mexico, have created novel formulas and opened alternative paths towards political aperture and full citizenry participation in today’s Mexico. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas is a visionary leader whose life and dedication to his country serve as a guiding compass for the future generations of young thinkers in Mexico and Latin America.

Cathleen Caron, Executive Director of the Global Workers Justice Alliance:

What a bold and wonderful choice to honor the work of our friend and colleague, Father Solalinde, the Director of the migrant shelter in Ciudad Ixtepec, Oaxaca, Mexico. Father Solalinde and his co-workers are some of the brave few who expose the ruthless abuses that migrants suffer when travelling north. Migrants are willing to undergo the tremendous risks of the journey because they want a better life for their children, perhaps the most basic and universal human value of all. Father Solalinde stands up to migrants' abusers, who include Mexican authorities themselves accused of extorting, raping and murdering migrants. For his courageous acts, he is constantly under threat. Thank you for honoring his work and bringing attention to the migrants who deserve so much better.
**René Coulomb**, Sociólogo y Doctor en Urbanismo, Profesor Investigador, Universidad Autónoma de México:

Hemos reconocido su liderazgo en la construcción de un proyecto para una nación más soberana, libre, democrática, justa e igualitaria. Valió la pena acompañarlo a lo largo de esos años, cargados de luchas intensas, de proyectos frustrados pero también de logros portadores de esperanza.

**Adriana Luna Parra**, ex Diputada Federal:

Sumar, encauzar el descontento popular, promover el saber colectivo con la solidez de quien siente al País y le da rumbo es base de su trascendencia. Su visión de estadista siempre se antepuso la defensa del país soberano, el bien común y la dignidad humana a cualquier fin pragmático, había un ideal que defender.

La importancia de la lucha que encabezó, su tamaño como hombre de Estado y como hombre de izquierda, la trascendencia de su aportación a la democracia en México merecen este premio y mucho más.

**Dr. Francisco Luna Kan**, ex Gobernador de Yucatán, ex Diputado de PRD para Yucatán:

Se trata de una persona que independientemente de su genealogía es un hombre con altos valores cívicos. Se ha caracterizado por sostener una visión nacionalista para la superación de las carencias del pueblo mexicano. Su vida se identifica por un acendrado patriotismo, demostrado en la teoría y práctica de sus responsabilidades cívicas.

**Manuel Anguiano Cabrera**, ex Secretario de Educación, Estado de Michoacán:

Cárdenas es el mexicano más distinguido del proceso democrático de México en los últimos años. Muchos michoacanos y mexicanos lo admiramos y lo respetamos por su lucha ejemplar, que durante su vida política ha entregado a favor de los que menos tienen. La lucha que ha dado durante su vida política, la reconocemos como la más importante aportación a la transformación de nuestro país.

Encuentro en Cárdenas humildad, voluntad y disposición para escuchar, congruencia, respeto, y un patriotismo a toda prueba. Estos valores siempre presentes en su persona, generan confianza en muchos mexicanos que, como yo, anhelamos un país distinto al que tenemos, más próspero, más igualitario, más democrático, más equitativo.
Manuel Camacho, Coordinador General del Diálogo para la Reconstrucción de México:

En estos momentos de reconocimiento público a su labor como el líder político y el servidor público que le tocó abrir la transición democrática en nuestro país, coincido con muchos en el respeto que se le tiene por su papel como opositor honesto y como un líder político responsable.

Sara Murúa Hernández, Presidenta de Enclave, Equidad Social y Transparencia, A.C.:

He tenido la oportunidad de compartir con Cárdenas, desde el Poder Legislativo de la Ciudad de México en 1997, la construcción del primer gobierno democrático en este país. Sobra decir que este premio es más que merecido, pero lo que no necesita una presea es su calidad humana y su visión de vida.

C. Maricruz Campos Díaz, Presidenta de la Fundación Juan Villarreal, A.C.:

Cárdenas ha estado, está y seguirá estando en el corazón mismo de los mexicanos que vemos en él la encarnación de un patriota, congruente y digno, que rescata los valores necesarios para el crecimiento sostenido de nuestra nación. Productores, campesinos, pobladores rurales, hombres y mujeres liberales de Michoacán y del país creemos en el progreso con justicia y compromiso social que él promueve.