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Ethnic Studies in the Time of COVID-19

Department of Ethnic Studies

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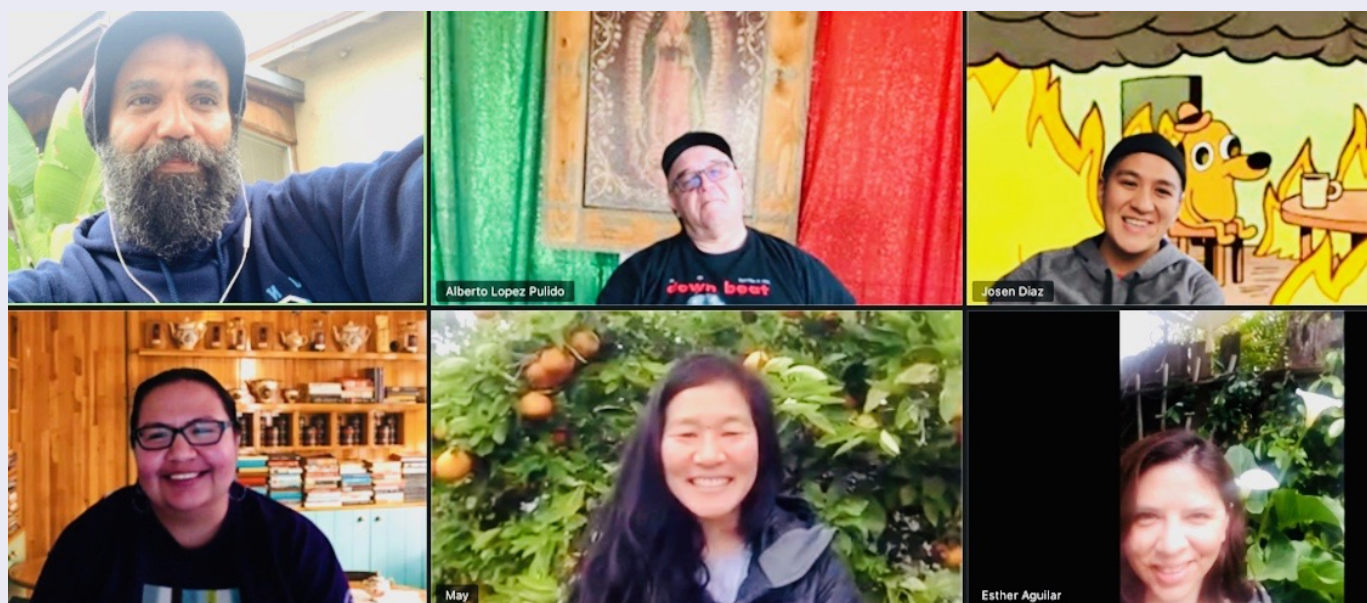
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Ethnic Studies in the Time of COVID-19

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

In her stunning book *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood* about the 1823 Demerara slave rebellion, the indomitable historian Emília Viotti da Costa, writes:

"Crises are moments of truth. They bring to light the conflicts that in daily life are buried beneath the rules and routines of social protocol, behind the gestures that people make automatically, without thinking of their meanings and purposes. In such moments the contradictions that lay behind the rhetoric of social harmony, consensus, hegemony, or control are exposed."

As the vicious cracks and devastating incompetencies of our economic and political structures are laid even more bare, I am moved by the emergence of [mutual aid](#) as a radical act of love and solidarity in our communities. I am comforted by our willingness to [feed, support, listen, reach out, and hold each other](#). I am thankful for my students' generosity and patience as I navigate the techno-maze that is remote teaching. And I am inspired by the Asian American community's capacity to combat [anti-Asian racism and xenophobia](#) in such fierce and creative ways, such as this incredible [zine assembled by Asian American and queer feminists](#).



I am especially tickled by the unexpected activities that me and my ETHN colleagues are engaging. We could be exploring the dazzling collections of [1,200+ international museums and archives](#) or enrolling in [450+ free online courses](#) offered by Ivy League universities. NAH. In addition to consuming way too much daily news, we are trapped in a Gothic literature vortex, snacking on ungodly amounts of avocados and cottage cheese, watching teary episodes of *This Is Us*, experimenting with an embarrassing number of Zoom backgrounds, and homeschooling our little ones.

We are also celebrating our graduating seniors, so enjoy this semester's newsletters which will feature them in all of their gorgeous and shiny goodness. Make sure to scroll down, too, and peep the mini report-back from students who recently participated in the Protect Mauna Kea movement.

All the best, wise, and joyous to you,

May Fu

Associate Professor & Chair
Department of Ethnic Studies



ETHN Senior Spotlight

Sarah Gueno

As a graduating senior, I have constantly been reflecting on the past four years of my life. As cliché as it is, they truly have been some of the best years of my life so far, but not only because I've made some of the best friends I'll ever have or any other basic reasoning for why college is so amazing, but because I have experienced these four years as an Ethnic Studies major. This major has taught me more about myself than I ever could have learned having studied anything else. It is

grounding and humbling to be a part of this department. It challenged me in ways I've never been before, it helped me find more value in my voice as a woman of color and has inspired me to be an ally and an activist every day. After graduation, I will be studying for the LSAT in hopes of attending law school.

In light of what's happening in the world today, and with so much uncertainty circulating, I just want to extend as much love and support as I can to everyone. I hope everyone and

their families are able to stay healthy and as happy as possible during this time. Take care of yourselves and each other.

ETHN Senior Spotlight

Gabe Fallis

Hello! My name is Gabe Fallis. I am a senior and first-generation student at USD. I am also in the NROTC program awaiting my commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Marine Corps in late May as well as the Chair for the American Indian Student Organization (AISO). Ethnic Studies along with all of the members of the Ethnic Studies department have given me the necessary tools and guidance towards success in college. From student resources to life lessons, from open door policies to mentorship, the faculty has really gone out of their way to set their students up for success. My most memorable experiences with Ethnic Studies have been made through connecting with activists and grassroots organizers. From Chicano Park to Mauna Kea to local Native reservations to Black-owned businesses and non-profits, I now know what change looks like and how it can be accomplished, all thanks to my professors and fellow ES majors/minors who I consider family.

My tip for newer students is to identify who you are, what is your story, and how can you use your life experiences and knowledge to bring about meaningful change for those less privileged than us. A quote I hold dear to me is, "Never forget where you came from, but never let that hold you back from where you want to go." - Anonymous.



ETHN Senior Spotlight

Michaela Tyus

Hi! My name is Michaela Tyus, and I'm a graduating senior majoring in Ethnic Studies with political science and Spanish minors. I'm originally from Upland, CA, a small town



40 miles east of LA. After the spread of COVID-19 caused the closure of USD, I have since relocated back home where I have continued with my studies while practicing social distancing. Although life at the moment is very intense and fearful, it is extremely important to remember how this pandemic has affected already marginalized communities, such as people of color, immigrants, and the working class. From the lack of access to adequate healthcare to undocumented workers receiving no government aid while still employed, this pandemic is detrimental to the lives of those groups who already have been

disenfranchised by US capitalist society. It is for their health, lives, and continuation of future generations that I practice social distancing and highly encourage everyone with privilege to do the same. Staying home for 30 days can mean saving 30 lives.

Faculty Updates



Dr. Josen Diaz: Puppy Fashion & Online Joys

My days generally look like this: coffee, yelling and crying and yell-crying at the news, work, searching



Dr. Gail Perez: Food, Labor & Disaster Capitalism

I am trapped with myself as head chef, and it is not good. Since I am vulnerable, I have been aided by dear friends and colleagues with food and household items. So a lot

for dog memes, searching for new zoom virtual backgrounds, more coffee, more work, gardening, washing my hands, dressing up my dog for pretend fashion shows, holding said fashion shows, reading Jia Tolentino's collection of essays (highly recommend), baking, and Googling other skills I can learn and cultivate to share with others.

It's easy to feel helpless right now, so I want to find ways to be useful — in whatever small or big forms that takes. To that end, I've also been trying to connect with folks to make sure that social distancing doesn't mean social isolation. This has meant brainstorming with colleagues and friends about teaching and other projects. But it's also meant zoom dinner parties, dance parties, family reunions, and game nights.

* Thanks to Josen's dog Mona for posing for this column!

of time is spent scrambling around for deliveries and then figuring out what to do with said deliveries. This would also include time spent not inhaling around the Instacart delivery folks, wiping down packages, putting them in 3-day piles, so I know when I can touch them and so on.

I am now in deep awe of our grocery workers, our Amazon workers, and all the truck drivers out there. I became interested in the Instacart strikers and the ugly exploitation of their labor. My writing has consisted of a fiery letter to the Instacart CEO and one to Jeff Bezos. Aside from constant comforting texts to and from friends, labor and disaster capitalism occupy my thoughts. And, if anyone has a good recipe for spinach, pinto beans, and a can of corn, I'm all ears!

ETHN Students Stand in Solidarity with the Protect Mauna Kea Movement

During spring break, a group of Ethnic Studies majors and Professor May Fu traveled to the island of Hawai'i to stand in solidarity with the kia'i (protectors with responsibility to preserve a person, place, or thing) of Mauna a Wakea. The Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) led movement had organized an encampment along the access road to the mountain for well over 200 consecutive days to stop the construction of the



Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) at the summit of sacred land. With their permission, we joined the kia'i camp.

Prior to our departure, we prepared to join the movement by engaging in readings, researching, communicating with people on the mauna, and overnight camping in the Cuyamaca Forest to prepare ourselves for cold weather conditions. We arrived on Hawai'i Island on the first day of spring break after pulling an all-nighter and missing our connecting flight. Our weeklong experience included traditional Hawaiian farming, activist printmaking, visiting the Hawaiian Cultural Center of Hamakua, and singing "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" in our packed minivan. On the mauna, we participated in a daily sunrise ceremony and a'ha (protocol) three times a day in the morning, noon, and evening, rebuilt tent structures that were recently destroyed in a wind storm, cleaned equipment, moved and reorganized supplies, washed dishes in the freezing rain, served food to the kia'i, and shared stories and songs through the night (see our photos below!).

While we feel that the scope and depth of our experiences could fill an entire book, some of our favorite mauna moments were building relationships with the kia'i community and reflecting on ourselves and our intentions for how to hold space as allies. Ku Kia'i Mauna!

- Emily Beck and Gianna Pray











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