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Department of Ethnic Studies

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COVID-19 Activism & Mutual Aid

Department of Ethnic Studies

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COVID-19 Activism & Mutual Aid

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

It's been over 6 weeks since CA's shelter-in-place order, and we are faced with the stark reality of this nation's failure to protect and support our most essential, vulnerable, and precarious community members. Despite claims that we are #InThisTogether, the staggering numbers of Black and Brown deaths from COVID-19, the lack of protection afforded farmworkers who harvest our food, the traumatic conditions endured by health care workers, and the economic stress of over 30 million unemployed people reveals how differently we are experiencing this critical moment. While the pandemic has shaken all of our lives, it has also revealed how intergenerational racism, classism, and structural discrimination determine [who survives and who does not](#).



Grassroots community organizations have been at the forefront of social justice struggles long before this current crisis. Guided by movement activists who have been in the trenches from the get, these groups know how to organize, mobilize, improvise, and

address the suffering and healing where and when it matters most. In San Diego, the good people at the [Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans](#), [Islamic Center of San Diego](#), [Karen Organization of San Diego](#), and [United Women of East Africa](#) coordinate the [San Diego County Refugee Families Emergency Fund](#) which sends 100% of all donations to Black, Asian, and Muslim refugee families. Groups like [Al Otro Lado](#) and [Otay Mesa Detention Resistance](#) advocate for the human rights of migrants and their families, including those caged in the Otay Mesa Detention Center which has the most COVID-19 cases of all U.S. immigration facilities. Across the state, the [CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative](#) and the [Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California](#) fight for the day-to-day survival of Asian American nail salon workers and Latinx day laborers, respectively, while the [First Nations COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund](#) directly supports Indigenous communities and tribal nations across the U.S. These organizations not only enact the principles and strategies we need to confront the current viral and economic crises but also build the participatory democracy we deserve in its wake.

Amidst it all, I hope we are finding moments of refuge in our everyday. While Zoom teaching is not my jam, I get a kick out of seeing my students' beautiful faces tiled on my computer screen. Brandishing a pair of deceptively dull scissors, I've taken on a new identity as a fabric-cutting member of the [#AuntieSewingSquad](#). The 4-foot weeds in my backyard laugh in my face every morning, but giant bowls of cottage cheese and avocados offer me a therapy I never knew I needed. And, always, I'm lifted by our incredible graduating seniors, alumni, and colleagues whose inspiring stories are below.

In love and solidarity,

May Fu

Associate Professor & Chair
Department of Ethnic Studies

SAVE THE DATE! Ethnic Studies Graduation Ceremony

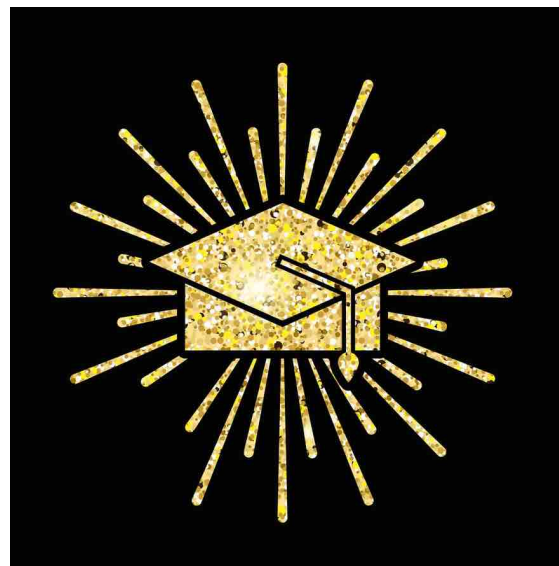
You are invited to the Department of Ethnic
Studies Graduation Ceremony!

Saturday 5/23

10:00-12:00pm

Zoom link TBA

Join us as we honor our majors and minors,
enjoy fantastic senior presentations, and
celebrate departmental achievements!



New Fall 2020 Courses!



ETHN 494: Latinx Migrant & Refugee Communities with Professor Alexis Meza

This course explores the formation of and contemporary issues concerning Latinx migrant and refugee communities. It utilizes a transnational perspective on the study of mass migration and refugee movements from Latin America while attending to the impact of militarism, global and racial capitalism, and the border control apparatus. Students will especially examine human mobility as a scenario for emerging and contested ethnic, racial and gender identities.

In addition to examining the structural forces at play, students will also learn how migrant and refugee groups navigate everyday



ETHN 494: Hip Hop & The Politics of Culture with Professor Leon Lee

This course engages the politics of Black popular culture through Hip-Hop. We will focus on Hip-Hop not simply as a musical genre, but as a cultural and political movement. In particular, we will examine what makes Hip-Hop a manipulable cultural form - as it often treads simultaneously on terrains of subversion from and incorporation into oppressive societal structures.

We will interrogate Hip-Hop's representation as an oppositional culture and the politics of its mainstream popularity. Is Hip-Hop an effective medium for resistance? Or has it succumbed to national and international corporate interests? Our exploration into the history and

life, create community, and organize collective mobilizations and grassroots movements for social, economic, and political equity in the United States.

development of Hip-Hop will concentrate on the various ways Hip-Hop has been experienced, interpreted and produced by its practitioners, consumers and observers.



ETHN Senior Spotlight

Angela Sajche

I am a first-generation graduating senior at USD majoring in Ethnic Studies with a minor in Theology and Religion Studies. My family is from Guatemala, but I was born and raised in San Diego. Majoring in Ethnic Studies was the best decision I have made, because it has taught me valuable lessons. Everyone in the Ethnic Studies Department has inspired and motivated me to pursue my goals despite the obstacles that may come my way. I walk away from each class with a new perspective that helps me navigate life. I learned what it

feels like to be in a community that truly cares for each other and advocates for people of color to speak our voices and not be silenced by oppression. I learned not just to educate the mind but also the heart and soul. I also want to take this opportunity to thank my family, especially my mom, and amazing friends whom I met in Ethnic Studies, for always being with me every step of the way in this college experience.

In this pandemic, I encourage everyone to be mindful of others and appreciate the work of the medical staff and essential workers because they are the true fighters in this time. Spend this time at home to be with family, stay safe. and take care of each other. Do not let quarantine bring you down. Stay positive!

ETHN Senior Spotlight

Jasmin Ross

Hi! My name is Jasmin Ross, and I'm a graduating senior double majoring in Ethnic Studies and Spanish. As someone who never knew what they wanted to study in college, this all changed after my first Intro to Ethnic Studies class. I finally found something I was truly passionate about and topics that really mattered to me, especially food justice and immigrant rights. In my four years as an Ethnic Studies major, I have learned many important lessons about the world, our society, and myself; specifically, how to pinpoint privilege and injustice within my own life and in the experiences of others. The amazing people I have met, both students and faculty, have influenced who I am as a person and a student.



Although anyone who knows me knows that I am on the quieter side, I was able to find my voice through my writing. Using a critical Ethnic Studies lens to understand how a person's intersectionalities can disproportionately affect their experiences with poverty, hunger, unemployment, incarceration, deportation, and other forms of discrimination fuels our purpose as Ethnic Studies majors to promote racial and social justice in wherever our future takes us.

Especially during these uncertain times that we are experiencing with COVID-19, my Ethnic Studies classes and capstone have grounded me to look at the bigger picture: how and why this virus is adversely impacting communities of color. It is so important that we take care of our bodies, our minds, and the people in our communities so that we can come out of this well-informed and stronger, ready to take on the future.

ETHN Senior Spotlight

Yasmeen Abushahla

My name is Yasmeen Abushahla, and I am a graduating senior here at USD. Outside of academics, I'm a member of the Filipino Ugnayan Student Organization and the director of Less Than Three Dance Club.

Before taking any Ethnic Studies classes, I viewed school and education as compulsory



instead of something to feel empowered through. I decided to major in Ethnic Studies after taking Intro to Asian American Studies my very first semester at USD. This class opened my eyes to the vibrant histories of marginalized peoples in the United States. Ethnic Studies has given me a place to not only feel seen and understood, but also somewhere to be empowered and work towards helping others feel the same. I feel more connected to my culture and heritage than ever, and I enjoy learning more about other's histories and stories, especially surrounding activism in the US. The Ethnic Studies department has given

me a community where I've found amazing friends and mentors that I look up to tremendously. I have learned how crucial community is, especially during these trying times. Ethnic Studies has given me the framework to understand how important it is to have empathy for essential workers and their rights to better working conditions and hazard pay. Stay home if possible, and I hope you all are safe and healthy!

Faculty Updates



Dr. Angel Hinzo: Bricks and (Pet) Balloons



Dr. Alberto Pulido: Music Within, Healing Throughout

It has been a month full of ups and downs. I recently used the “bricks and balloons” icebreaker in my ETHN 494: Native American Women & Indigenous Feminisms class. “Bricks” refer to the challenges that we are facing, and “balloons” are the things that keep us uplifted as we work with the “bricks” in our lives.

I have experienced plenty of “bricks” this last month, made even more challenging with the current pandemic. However, there have also been a number of “balloons” that have lifted me up. I am grateful for the ability to still teach topics that matter, the Zoom conversations that I’ve had with friends and colleagues, online game nights, online lectures and events, and daily group chats.

As the term comes to an end, I look forward to remaining close to family and friends during this time of physical distancing. I hope everyone takes time to reflect on the bricks and balloons in their lives and evaluate when they need to reinflate those balloons. Stay safe and keep physical distancing!

* Thanks to my friend Amber who turned my pets into balloons in a group chat!

I have been spending endless hours looking within myself. A daily ritual of affirming those things which beyond family, friends and loved ones, represents a quest for my single most significant passion that for me is my music.

I have reconnected with my tiny music room or cubbyhole that over the years I have filled with a lifetime collection of CDs, LPs and books. With the stay-at-home order, it has become my home office where I have been afforded the gift of writing, thinking, reading and listening. I have surrounded myself with those ephemeral sounds that brought me great comfort while growing up as a light-skinned Chicano in a culture defined by patriarchy, parental stoicism, and finding myself caught living in-between worlds.

I am reminded that I owe my life to jazz, because it enabled me to create and fully embrace an uncharted third space without limitations. Music is my sonic medicine, and I am thankful to be able to reconnect with it during these challenging times.

Paz.



Class of 2015: Olivia Glazner Cassil

Osiyo>Hello! My name is Olivia Glazner Cassil. After graduating from USD in 2015, I returned to my home of Oklahoma City and obtained a Juris Doctorate and a master's degree in Native American Studies from the University of Oklahoma. I spent my first year of law practice in an Indian Law Fellowship at a small law firm called Berkey Williams in Berkeley, California. Working with tribal nations across the United States, I gained experience negotiating a water rights settlement, protecting tribal sovereignty and cultural property, and providing strategic guidance on the web of tribal, federal, and state

laws in the context of employment, healthcare, welfare, and the environment. Since, I have been practicing law in Oklahoma, continuing in the field of tribal and Federal Indian Law in addition to general civil litigation.

My most cherished takeaway from my treasured time as an Ethnic Studies major is the powerful intersection of the head, the heart, and the hands in education and beyond: your work should engage you physically, psychically, and cerebrally. My advice to majors and soon-to-be graduates is to reflect on what that intersection looks like for you. Make a list of your passion projects (past and future) and a list of your most engaging moments in education. Think about where those meet. And for what it's worth, law school is not as hard as you might think! I am happy to discuss options with students at anytime. Please feel free to contact me at oglaznercassil@gmail.com. I am rooting for you!

Alumni News

Class of 2013: Andrew Grimes

I grew up in Chula Vista, part of the South Bay of San Diego, and went to USD to pursue playing football. Soon after arriving at USD, I decided to redirect my life toward a career in medicine as a physician. While I questioned playing football as part of my future, I never questioned the role of Ethnic Studies in my life and future career despite having to pursue

additional pre-med coursework.

I am now graduating from the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University as part of the class of 2020 and will continue my medical training in Obstetrics & Gynecology at UC San Francisco. During my medical school education, I also completed a master's degree in Urban Bioethics from Temple University. During the completion of both my medical and master's degrees, my background, education, and experience in Ethnic Studies was foundational to my success in community and patient care. Rarely have I had a patient encounter when my foundations in Ethnic Studies are not applied in some way to ensure the best care for the patient as well as their loved ones.



To current and prospective Ethnic Studies majors, recognize that Ethnic Studies will be the best foundation for whatever you choose to pursue. You will become a leader for your peers and colleagues and most importantly an ally for those you will serve. Ethnic Studies provides the tools and experience to be successful in any career you choose. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at drewtgrimes@gmail.com.



Getting Down With the #AuntieSewingSquad

Hi Everyone! I am a member of the [#AuntieSewingSquad](https://www.instagram.com/auntiesewingsquad), an all-volunteer, mostly women of color, homemade mask-making brigade coordinated by LA-based Asian American performance artist [Kristina Wong](https://www.instagram.com/kristinawong). One month ago, Kristina began sewing masks on her scrappy Hello Kitty sewing machine in response to requests from hospital nurses. The demand grew so

quickly that Kristina issued a call for volunteers to join her in "fixing the federal government's failure to provide personal protective equipment to essential workers."

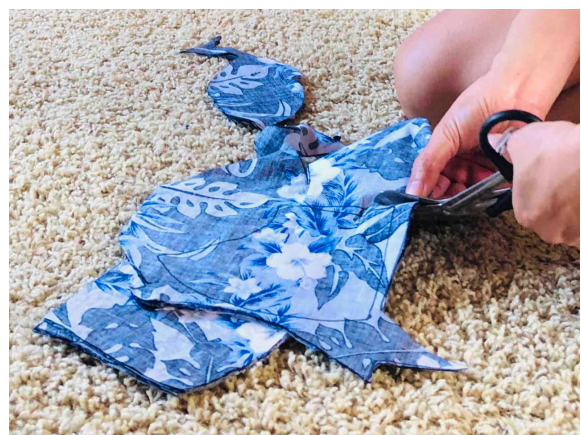
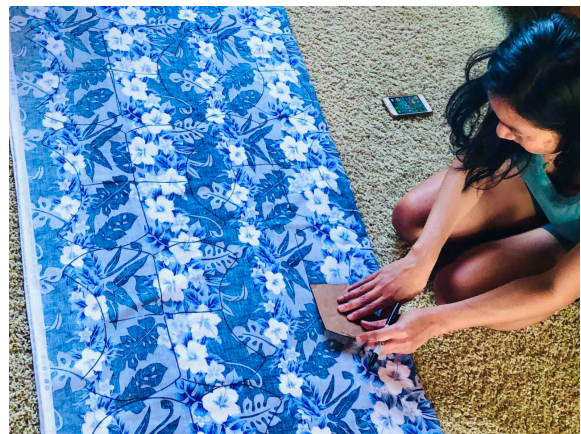
Anyone can volunteer for any part of the process. We coordinate requests, handle donations, secure fabric, cut masks, sew, and ship. For me, this has meant making new

friends over phone and texts, picking up bolts of fabric in parking lots and street corners, swapping yummy treats like chocolate-covered strawberries (with rainbow sprinkles!), recruiting my quarantine homies to cut several hundred masks each week, and handing them off to sewing angels who turn them into protective gear.

Stretching from the Bay Area to Chula Vista and beyond, the #AuntieSewingSquad is now 550+ volunteers strong. We have collectively cut, sewn, and shipped thousands of masks to first-responders, hospital workers, transit operators, farmworkers, food bank workers, tribal communities, and other essential workers and highly vulnerable communities. Just last week, we shipped 1,300 masks to the Navajo, Lakota and Quechan Nations.

Peep us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). To contribute to the Squad's materials and postage fund, venmo @GiveKristinaWongMoney. Better yet, join us!

- May Fu





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