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Ethnic Studies Department Newsletters

Department of Ethnic Studies

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Spring 5-2020

## Congratulations, Class of 2020! 1:5

Department of Ethnic Studies  
*University of San Diego*

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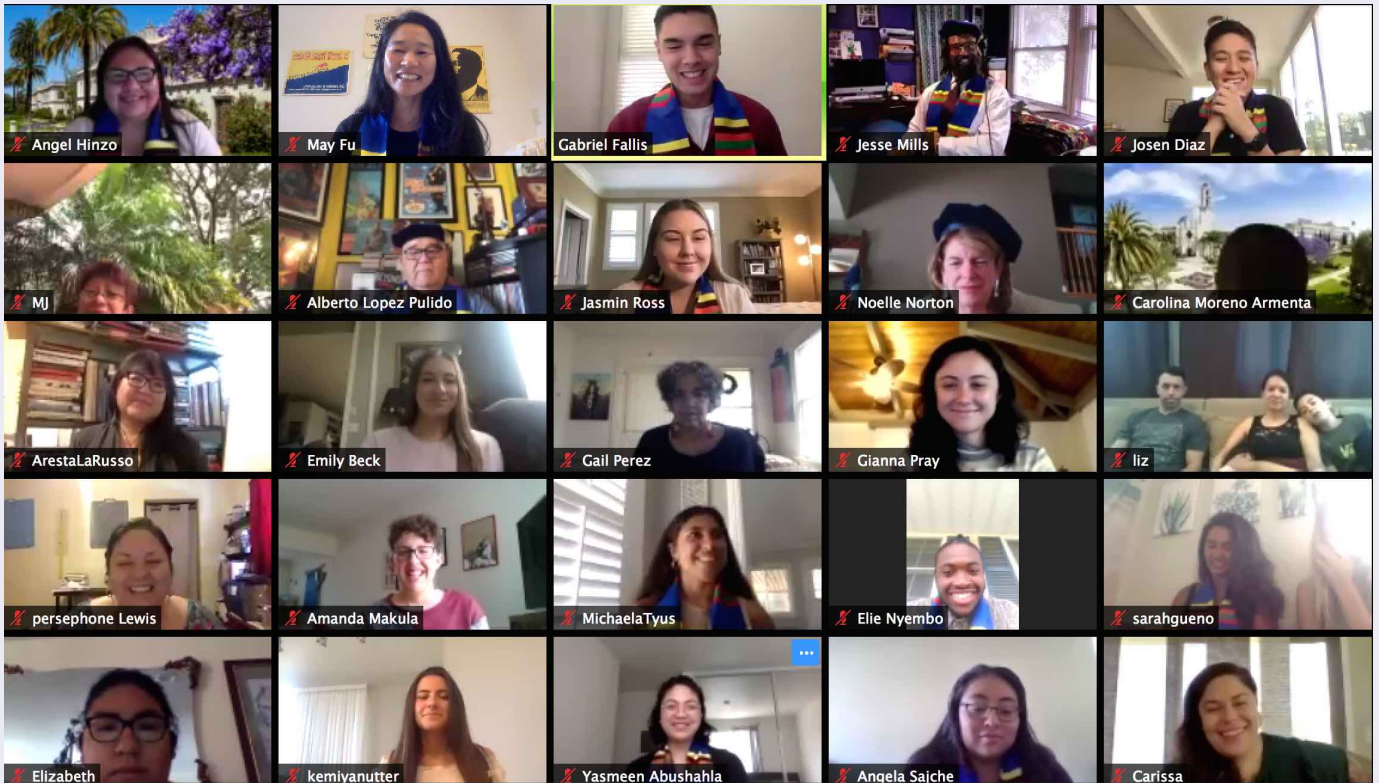
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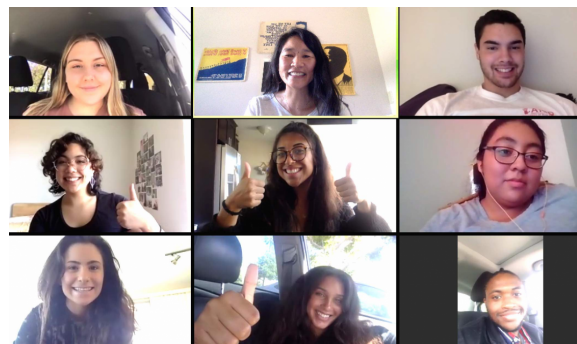
## Congratulations, Class of 2020!

### Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

With the closing of this unprecedented academic year, I reflect on the unexpected mix of uncertainty, humor, difficulty, and generosity that we have experienced for the past two months. Amidst the instability, I have been grounded by the strength of [our most impacted communities](#) to face this [current iteration](#) of [racialized and class violence](#) with such love, tenacity, and on-the-ground care. I am especially energized by the students in our ETHN classes who continued to show up for each other, grappled with material that is more relevant than ever, and produced stirring final projects.

I am most proud of our stellar graduating majors and minors who celebrated the completion of their undergraduate education this past weekend. ([Watch the beautiful graduation celebration here!](#)) This cohort of ETHN graduates is an exceptional group of scholars and community activists. Their senior capstone papers examined food justice



approaches to hunger, devised abolitionist approaches to prison re-entry programs, deconstructed anti-gang legislation, and analyzed the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Brown communities. They worked with local organizations to exonerate people who were wrongfully convicted, assist social workers with bilingual clients, and develop pathways to reduce recidivism. They were central members of MEChA, African Student Union, American Indian Student Organization, Black Student Union, Students of Color in STEM, and organized support for their DACA peers. They theorized student activism and materialized those ideas with the creation of Third World Coalition, a new USD student organization grounded in a politics of intersectionality, social justice, and solidarity.

It has been an honor to watch each of them sharpen their thinking, hone their voices, and grow more fully into their sassy selves. Please join me in congratulating our fantastic graduating class!

Wishing you a beautiful summer,

May Fu

Associate Professor & Chair

Department of Ethnic Studies

## Senior Recognitions



**Gabe Fallis Receives Ethnic Studies Community Scholar & Dr. Judy Rauner Social Justice Awards**



**Elie Nyembo Honored with the L. Reuben Mitchell Award for Campus-wide Impact**

The Department of Ethnic Studies and the United Front Multicultural Center presented Gabe Fallis with the Christopher Wilson Community Scholar Award and the [Dr. Judy Rauner Award for Social Justice](#), respectively! The Wilson Award honors the first ETHN major at USD and their dedication to outstanding community-centered research and engagement. The Rauner Award honors a student who established community partnerships, led community projects, and engaged students in social justice work.

Gabe is a powerful force at USD and in the larger San Diego County Native American community. An enrolled member of the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, he was a student leader in the American Indian Student Organization (AISO), raising awareness and educating the campus about Native American issues, the history of the Catholic mission system, and its impact on CA Native American peoples. Gabe is a tireless advocate, student leader, mentor, and member of ROTC. He played a critical role in renaming Serra Hall, built relationships with non-Native students, worked in coalition with fellow student organizations, and has also spoken with and inspired 200+ Native students from local urban and tribal communities.

Congratulations, Gabe!

Elie Nyembo was chosen to receive the [L. Reuben Mitchell Award for Campus-wide Impact](#) from the United Front Multicultural Center! This award honors a student who has contributed to the University through their exemplary leadership, active involvement, and contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion across campus.

King is a game-changing campus organizer who found ways to flip and recreate the script. He creatively created the conditions needed to make space and build a community rooted in social justice and solidarity. This is no easy feat; however, King's contagious fire, hilarious wit, and steady perseverance pierced many bubbles and had people taking many seats. He has been an integral member of the African Student Union, Students of Color in STEM, Black Student Union, Black Men Initiative, Public Health Club, and interned at the UFMC for several years. Most recently, he co-founded the Third World Coalition with ETHN majors Sarah Gueno and Michaela Tyus which sought to create a space for intersectional and relational coalition building to transform students' lives at USD.

Congratulations, King!





## ETHN Senior Spotlight

### Kemiya Jenab-Nutter

Hello hello! My name is Kemiya Nutter, and I am a graduating Ethnic Studies and Sociology double major. As my final semester comes to a close, I have spent a significant amount of time reflecting on my academic, mental, and spiritual growth over the past four years. In a conversation with the king himself, Dr. Jesse Mills, I realized that I have the Ethnic Studies department to thank for both saving and shaping my life.

This major equips students with the necessary tools to navigate the complex realities of individual identity formation and examine the dynamics of greater social structures. An Ethnic Studies framework reveals the intrinsic ties between the personal and the political. This lens holds a particular significance to the uncertain circumstances in which we - as individuals, as a community, and as a society - are currently immersed. It is critical for all of us to apply our knowledge and discourse from the classroom towards advocacy and action in our communities, as this pandemic is only highlighting the detrimental impact of the socio-political disparities that are rooted in the foundation of this country.

Amidst the chaos of the pandemic, finals, graduation, and so on, I encourage everyone to ground themselves in practices of both self and collective care. It is imperative that we all stand in solidarity with one another, listen to and uplift the voices of those who are often silenced, and continue our ongoing work towards dismantling systems of oppression and collectively constructing a path towards liberatory social change.

## ETHN Senior Spotlight

### King Elie Nyembo

My name is Elie Nyembo, but you can call me King! I am the current President of African Student Union and the Vice President of Students of Color in STEM/M. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I

migrated to the United States of America in 2003.

Ethnic Studies has given me the voice I wished I had growing up. It has changed the manner I look at the world and now allows me to be able to critically evaluate issues on race, class, migration, sexual orientation, gender and policy making. I am excited to go into the world, enact change, and keep growing as a person and an activist. I will continue everything I have learned this fall as a graduate student in the Ph.D. program in Global Health at Arizona State University.

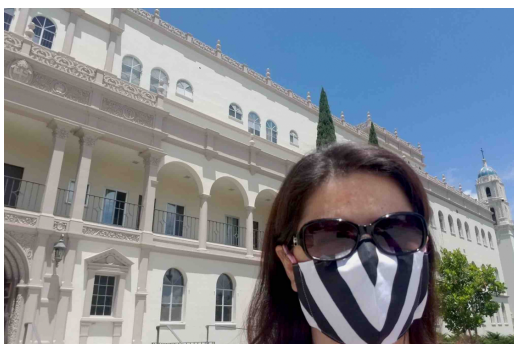


I am thankful for and to the Ethnic Studies department, because they were what I needed to feel seen and heard while at USD. I learned that my voice matters and any silence I have on any issues is a form of violence towards the impacted community. During these trying times of COVID-19, I have been watching a lot of Netflix, reading articles on current events, and staying up to date with the virus that is nowhere near being an equalizer. This virus exposes everything we knew is wrong with this country.

To whomever is reading this, take care of yourself and know that your life matters and that you are deserving of every opportunity that comes your way. Your worth is not tied to your productivity but rather to the mere fact you are a human being who is navigating broken systems to the best of your ability. You are important. You are seen. You are valid. You matter.

King Out. 🙏

## Faculty & Staff Updates



## **Executive Assistant Esther Aguilar: We Got You!**

Greetings from Maher Hall! I want to wish you a happy and safe summer break. We miss everyone, but please know that we are here for you. Congratulations to our seniors!

## **Dr. Jesse Mills: Being Together**

Working from home, I'm so grateful for the family time and the fortune of our health and wellness. I've missed our community in the classroom, the office, and on campus, and I look forward to being back together!



## **Professor of Practice & Tribal Liaison Perse Lewis: Desert Blooms and Pitbull Love**

Hello, beautiful people! I have missed your shiny faces and can't believe that we have been in this new, not-normal normal for over 2 months. The week that we were told to shelter in place, me and my family left San Diego and headed to my partner's tribal community, Gila River Indian Community. We have a family house on the reservation with a big yard and a huge

desert that was in full bloom during that time. Also, because we didn't know what to expect, we thought it was best to be by family and the community.

After the first week of being at the house, a cute, stocky pitbull started visiting us when we were outside. We're used to dogs on the reservation, but this one was exceptionally sweet and friendly. We tried closing up the yard, so he couldn't get in, but he would just push through the gate with his big muscles. It was shocking how little of a space he could squeeze through! Normally, there are rules to rez dogs, but all those rules were quickly thrown out the window. We pet him whenever he walked up to us. We named him "Rocky." Then, we broke the biggest rule: we fed him. He soon found a spot in front of our door and would sleep there day and night.

Rocky has since moved to his grandma's house, so we don't see him anymore.... oh, and his name is actually "Harley." We are all thankful that he chose to be our friend at a time when we were full of uncertainty and sadness at the sudden life changes. I hope you all had a "Rocky" in your life that was able to bring some joy during the uncertain time. I am

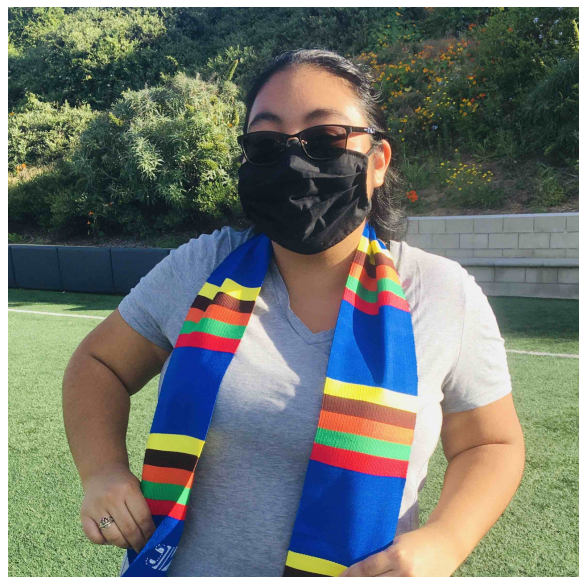


keeping all of you and your loved ones in my thoughts. Congratulations to all the graduates!

## Congratulations to Our Amazing Class of 2020!











University of San Diego  
Department of Ethnic Studies  
5998 Alcalá Park, Maher Hall 210  
San Diego, CA 92110  
(619) 260-4132  
<https://www.sandiego.edu/cas/ethnicstudies>

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