

## RRS NEWSLETTER

v. 2, Spring 2024

### ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

We are nearing the end of this eventful academic year! We have been excited to host several speakers series, and our faculty have been presenting at a number of events, educating us all about the serious issues our world is facing right now. We have several more events planned before this year is up! Please check out our website events page for more information.

We also awarded our first RRS scholarships and will be holding our graduation recognition ceremony in May where we will be handing out awards to some of our many outstanding students.

If you have questions about anything, please reach out to me (bakrania@sfsu.edu) or our Office Coordinator, Gautam Baksi (gautam@sfsu.edu). If you or someone you know would like to donate to RRS, click <u>here</u>.



DR. FALU BAKRANIA



Our 2024 ceremony will be held on Wednesday, May 22, 2024 in Jack Adams Hall from 4-7pm.

Save the date!

## **GRADUATION!**

We are so excited to once again be able to celebrate all of our graduates, including RRS majors and minors, as well as minors in QTES, AMED, and CPIOS.

This year's festivities will take place on May 22nd, between 4-7 p.m. in Jack Adams Hall. **SAVE THE DATE!** 

We will have food, live music, speakers, and poetry readings. We will also dedicate time to hear from our graduating majors and awardees.

More details coming soon!

Our dear friend and colleague, Catrióna Rueda Esquibel, passed away on February 8, 2024. She served as the Associate Dean for the College of Ethnic Studies for six years, and was Interim Dean from 2022-2023.

She started her tenure at SFSU in 2005 as Assistant Professor of an informal "program" in Ethnic Studies. In the ensuing years, she worked tirelessly alongside her colleagues to first create an official "Program" in Race and Resistance Studies, and then the department, with a major and a minor.

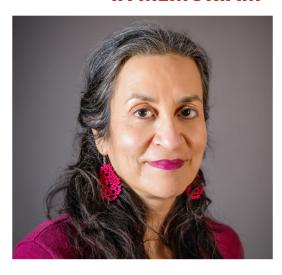
Without her, we would not be here today. As she moved from the department to the Dean's Office, she was a fierce defender of the College of Ethnic Studies and its curriculum. Here are some of the many ways in which we remember and honor her:

Leticia Marquez-Magana: "Catriona was committed to inclusive excellence. She will be missed."

Ashley Aaron: "As a former Graduate Student, Catriona made me feel seen, as a Faculty Member, Catriona made me feel valued and cared for. I will miss her presence and the joy and creativity she brought to all the places and spaces she inhabited. Her legacy will live on in all of the hearts and minds she touched, and the perspectives she shifted."

Rama Ali Kased: "Catriona was a fierce leader and truly embodied decolonization and social justice in real time. She will be missed for her guidance, leadership, and her insights. Her legacy lives on."

Larry Salomon: "Catriona was always so helpful to everyone who calls the College of Ethnic Studies home. She never put herself at the center, but so many of us on the faculty, and among staff and students, would have been lost without her constant encouragement and guidance. She was the straw that stirred the drink. She loved the College. I just hope she knew how much she was also loved and admired."



Omar Zahzah: "I deeply regret not having the opportunity to get to know Catriona Esquibel more, but her reputation preceded her. I had learned of the importance of Decolonize Your Diet and its reputation as a crucial text during my doctoral program at UCLA. Lo and behold, several years later. Catriona, then serving the position of Interim Dean, would be the first person who interviewed me during my campus visit at SF State. From the other side of her desk covered with beautiful, crocheted dolls, Catriona spoke to me about the importance of keeping one's creativity and not being afraid to take chances, try new things it was exactly in that spirit, she told me, that Decolonize Your Diet had been written.

That combination of cutting edge work and creative enthusiasm has always been the mark of a great scholar to me. And she was generous: while I didn't know her well, she was always very supportive of me as new faculty. In December 2023, she emailed me to let me know that the literature course I was to teach in the Spring had first been taught by Matthew Shenoda in 2003, and that the continuation of the course marked "21 Years of Arab American Literature at San Francisco State University." I didn't respond to that email in time, and she transitioned two months later.

As strange as it sounds, I still responded to that email to thank her—for everything. Even as I was just getting to know Catriona, it's evident what a great loss this is to RRS, to the college, to faculty, students, SF State, and ethnic studies at large."

## **NEW FACULTY SPOTLIGHT**

My name is César "che" Rodríguez and I was raised by a working-class, Mexican migrant family in Daly City and South San Francisco. My family is originally from Los Chapiles, Michoacan and Guadalajara, Jalisco. I pursued my formal, academic training in public schools from pre-K to PhD, including community colleges like the College of San Mateo and Skyline College (s/o to all the transfer students).

As a teacher, my goal is to work with students to learn how to learn independently and communicate with others — which are two key skills we all need, especially activists. I also believe that we learn by doing, and it can take multiple attempts to learn something well. As such, my goal is to provide students with plenty of support and opportunities for people to learn, practice and grow.

My scholarship focuses on criminalization as a form of "negative-racialization", which helps to advance racial capitalism in moments of crisis. For example, consider how panics over "crack babies", "anchorbabies", "welfare queens", and "illegal aliens" justified cuts to social well-fare programs and the expansion of social warfare (policing, prisons, border militarization, etc.) I also examine "popular self-activity", another way of understanding the social movements of working-class communities of color as they author knowledge and history through struggle.



DR. CESAR "CHE"
RODRIGUEZ

My current work focuses on the "Oscar Grant moment" in 2009, a period of intense popular, political mobilizations in Oakland, California, to contest the extrajudicial police killing of Oscar Grant, a young Black father from Hayward, CA.

I am ultimately motivated by internationalism, autonomy, as well as efforts to radically democratize economy and governance. I am a rank-and-file union member of the California Faculty Association (CFA) and organized with Change SSF.

Finally, I am a Taurus who doesn't know what a birthchart means. I was born in the year of the atomic dog.

Luseane Anga ae Fonu Tutoe earned two degrees from her time at SF State: a B.A. in Sociology and a minor in Critical Pacific Islands and Oceania Studies (CPIOS), which is housed in the department of Race and Resistance Studies.

Luseane identifies as a Tongan Pacific Islander scholar, strongly grounded in the values of an indigenous Pacific Islander lens. CPIOS was developed in 2016 as a result of student organizing during the 2016 Ethnic Studies Hunger Strike. Students called for a discipline that uplifted the narratives and lived experiences of Pacific Islanders.

She is also now enrolled as an M.A. Ethnic Studies graduate student, pursuing her passions to bridge the gap for Pasifika students in higher education and continuing the legacy of Pasifika activism.

Luseane is also building connections between campus and community. She is a student worker for Associated Students and holds an officer position for the Pacific Islander Student Association (PISA), a student organization on campus.

Through community work, Luseane hopes to position herself as a resource for Pacific Islander students on and off campus. She has worked with others to organize events and workshops uplifting indigenous Pasifika livelihoods and knowledge systems. In the fall of 2023, Luseane worked with other Pasifika community members to campaign against the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum (APEC) in San Francisco and to host a counter-summit to discuss how the future economy of the Pacific was being planned without the consent of Pasifika leaders and representatives.

### **ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT**



As a graduate student, Luseane continues the work she established during her undergraduate journey. She recently had the opportunity to be a panelist for the Pasifika Activism & Art Talanoa where she spoke about her journey of coming to understand how activism is an essential part of her Pasifika identity. The CPIOS minor and faculty have left an astounding and long lasting impact on her that she wishes to impart in her scholarship and community work. Luseane encourages other Pasifika students to take up the space within education that they rightfully deserve, and most importantly, to continue walking boldly in their Pacific Island identities in all they do.

## **RRS DEPARTMENT HONOREE**



CONGRATULATIONS TO
VANESSA TORRES!
DEPARTMENT HONOREE FOR
RACE AND RESISTANCE STUDIES, 2024

Vanessa Torres, a graduating student from San Francisco State University this Spring, is majoring in Sociology as well as Race and Resistance Studies. Growing up, Vanessa has lived nearly all her life in Marin County, understanding first-hand the disparities in basic resources for working-class communities of color.

As a first-generation student from an immigrant family, she will be the first person to graduate from college. Vanessa balances multiple life responsibilities, such as taking on a parental role to her little sister while her single mother is constantly working.

Despite these challenges, Vanessa has maintained high academic performance, receiving the Dean's List recognition for nearly three years all the while working part-time and being a full-time student.

Throughout her college years, Vanessa has been actively involved in various organizations and nonprofits, working directly with young students of color. For two years, she dedicated her efforts to San Francisco Rising on their Student Debt Cancellation Campaign and facilitated student involvement. Additionally, she contributed to the RACE Collective at the Health and Social Sciences College and participated in a Student Grantmaking Process with the Stupski Foundation. Currently, Vanessa is working as a respite worker to provide basic needs to people with disabilities.

Vanessa is passionate about empowering the voices of young students of color, recognizing our voices are often suppressed. Following graduation, Vanessa is looking forward to continuing her career in nonprofits, working closely with Latine and Hispanic communities. Her goal is to ensure young people of color have the resources and support to uplift themselves and others.

My name is Maritza Ambriz and I use they/them pronouns. I'm from Santa Maria, CA, a small immigrant run farm city in the Central Coast. I'm a part of the first generation of my Mexican- immigrant field worker family. I first came to SFSU in 2019 majoring in Sociology, and guickly discovered it was not the field for me. My high school counselor suggested Sociology after sharing with her how I wish to actually learn about my own history and the true history of people of color. She replied, "You would make a great social worker!" and I can confidently say I disagree. After hearing about the College of Ethnic Studies and taking a course from the college, I realized that it was only under Race and Resistance Studies that I would be able to get the education I have been dreaming of since I was a kid.

I'm also studying a minor in Special Education and plan to use both RRS and SPED to help me be the classroom presence I longed to have when I was growing up attending public school. I'm not sure where exactly I'll end in the education field, but I hope to reflect the lessons I gained here, which I value, of learning the history of your people and their struggle in order to then connect with the history and struggles of other oppressed people across the world to establish a community of resilience, strength and trust and work together united as one to taste liberation.

### **OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT**



CONGRATULATIONS TO
MARITZA AMBRIZ FOR
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN
RACE AND RESISTANCE STUDIES, 2024

# REPORT BACK FROM RRS 694 + AWARD FOR GOPAL DAYENENI

Last semester, Gopal
Dayeneni taught a brand
new course for RRS
centered on community
engaged learning, RRS
694: "Community Engaged
Learning: Praxis in Race
and Resistance Studies."

Drawing on the extensive network he has built up, he worked tirelessly over the summer of 2023 to reach out to a number of community-based Bay Area organizations to curate placements for students and go through all the paperwork to get the groups registered.

Gopal placed students in five, well-established and well-regarded organizations: Frontline Catalysts, APEN (Asian Pacific Environmental Network), Movement Generation: Justice and Ecology Project, Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples, and Critical Resistance.

The outcomes of these placements were significant for both the students and the communities they worked with.

For example, (1) one student who coordinated the PODER group developed such strong leadership skills that they were hired to work for a \$126k SFSU grant in support of dealing with climate change in Oakland;

- (2) after she graduated, the student working with Sacred Places went on to get a job with them; she went from having no experience to facilitating workshops about energy democracy with frontline communities in LA;
- (3) a student who worked with Frontline Catalyst piloted climate justice curriculum that is now being used in the middle school curriculum in East Oakland;
- (4) another student is now a regular researcher with Frontline Catalyst;
- (5) two students who worked with Frontline Catalyst did a major organizing drive on campus well after their internship ended;
- (6) the work that students with Hummingbird Farm turned into a publication;



**GOPAL DAYENENI** 

(7) both at APEN and Movement Generation, students worked on case studies that were published; they include a pathway to decommissioning refineries and an outline of "just transition projects," a set of organizing strategies to make economy equitable and climate justice.

In recognition of his outstanding work, Gopal was selected as this year's recipient of the Faculty Award for Excellence in Community Engaged Learning. This award acknowledges his exceptional contributions to institutionalizing service learning at SF State and within our College.

Congratulations Gopal! And congratulations to the students of RRS 694!



**GAUTAM BAKSI** 

My name is Gautam Baksi (pronounced go-thum boh-k-she), and I am the AOC (Administrative Office Coordinator) for the department of Race and Resistance Studies. This is my third year in this amazing position. I am honored to serve the students, the department and the College of Ethnic Studies

I was born in India and raised in Baton Rouge. The backbone of who I am was formed throughout my childhood in the Louisiana public school system and witnessing the diverse and inspiring forms of resistance of the beautiful people I called my neighbors and friends.

I left Louisiana at the age of 18, completing my B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and my M.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I spent 15 years chasing corporate career ambitions in Silicon Valley before I finally quit and focused my time on pursuing more ethical, moral and meaningful professions.

#### **MEET OUR AOC!**

When I met Dr. Falu Bakrania, our department chair, she told me about the faculty and the kind of work being done in the College of Ethnic Studies at SFSU. I was elated when this position opened up and I was able to apply!

As an admin, I am here for YOU. All of the AOCs in Ethnic Studies are located on the first floor of the EP building in EP 104. I am your onestop-shop for all of your RRS questions. Do you need to withdraw from a class and don't know to do it? I can help. Need to add a class after the deadline, or change a grade from a previous semester? Please reach out to me, and I can fill out the required forms for you.

My other main duties are to work with the chair and professors in our department to build our course schedules for each semester and plan all events. I also maintain our website, updating information about scholarships, news, and events.

My passion in life is music! I love to play the bass guitar, listen to records and read books. I split my time between San Francisco and my spiritual home, New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz - the African-based improvisational artform that is the root of all modern music.

I look forward to meeting all of you! Please stop by anytime to say hello or ask questions. I'm in the office Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 9-3 (with a break for lunch), but I'm available M-F at gautam@sfsu.edu and 415-338-1052.

### **FACULTY GRANTS**

Dr. Jason Ferriera and Gopal Dayaneni received a highly competitive Climate Action Seed Award. Their project—Advancing Climate Resilience through Youthled Action Research in Oakland—is a community-campus collaboration that is centered in the work of two community-based organizations: Frontline Catalysts (FC) and Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ). It is a \$2M award over two years. This project will provide opportunities for neighborhood youth to lead community-wide, climate-related action research and education efforts in one of Oakland's most climate vulnerable communities. FC/CURYJ youth participants, encompassing middle and high school students along the Interstate 880 corridor, will serve as community researchers to identify and promote actions to improve climate resilience in their own communities. Under the supervision Ferreira and Dayaneni, undergaduate students will be incorporated into this community-led project, supporting project facilitation and evaluation efforts alongside community partner staff.

Dr. Rama Ali Kased received the AA Cares Grant and is working on a cross-racial solidarity project. She also received a FURI grant to fund a student leader to support this work.

Dr. Omar Zahzah received an ORSP Small Grant this semester to work on the manuscript for a book, *Terms of Servitude: Zionism, Silicon Valley and Digital Colonialism in the Palestinian Liberation Struggle*, which is forthcoming from The Censored Press.

### **FACULTY PUBLICATIONS**

Dr. Omar Zahzah published an article on doxing and digital blacklisting of Palestine activists in Electronic Intifada: https://electronicintifada.net/content/kidnapped-posters-serve-genocidal-sentiment/44701

C. Rodriguez, C., Taylor, S. D., Rebanal, R. D., Francisco-Menchavez, V., Gen, S., & Eliason, M. (2024). Transforming Tenure and Promotion: A Grassroots Initiative. ADVANCE Journal, 4(2), 1–40. https://doi.org/10.5399/osu/ADVJRNL.4.2.3

Kased, Rama Ali & Malik, Savita. An Introduction to Public Health, in Foundations For Community Health Workers, (3 rd Edition). Wiley Press.

Kased, Rama Ali, Salomon, Larry, & Malik, Savita. Community Organizing and Advocacy, in Foundations For Community Health Workers, (3 rd Edition). Wiley Press.

## **MAJOR GRANT FOR CPIOS**

We are delighted to share that Critical Pacific Islands and Oceania Studies (CPIOS, housed in RRS) and AA&PI Student Services (Division of Equity and Community Inclusion, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management) has successfully secured a one-time grant of \$460,000 from the CSU's Chancellor's Office, to establish a Pacific Islander student support program called the Oceania Scholars Program. This program will center around the retention, graduation, and success of Pacific Islander students at SF State, including disaggregating data to better serve Pacific Islander communities.

The Oceania Scholars Program will be vital in addressing educational equity for Pacific Islander students. It provides tailored support to help students overcome cultural and socioeconomic challenges and to enhance the inclusivity and visibility of Pacific Islander heritage on campus. The program also boosts academic outcomes through advising and access to culturally relevant resources while promoting leadership skills and community engagement among students. This comprehensive support system not only aids Pacific Islander students in their academic journeys but also fosters a more equitable and diverse educational environment on campus.

Dr. Ponipate Rokolekutu, an Assistant Professor in RRS will serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) and Jeremy Khuth, Director of AA&PI Student Services will serve as Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI).



CPIOS Faculty, members of the Pacific Islander Students Association at SFSU, and AA&PI Student Services

### **PAST AND FUTURE EVENTS**

Below are flyers for some of the events RRS faculty have presented at and/or curated this semester. A few events are coming up! Check out our "Events" page under "About" on our website for more information.













HSESI Scholar Series: Teaching Histories of Anti- Imperialist Solidarity - A discussion with Dr. Jason Ferreira & Michael Schulze-Oechtering

4:30 - 6 p.m. Multicultural Community Center, MLK Jr. Student Union, 2nd Floor, Suite 220, 2495 Bancroft Way Barrielov, CA 94720-4520



Sponsor(s): <u>UC Berkeley High School Ethnic Studies</u> <u>Initiative</u>, <u>The American Cultures Center</u>, <u>The Department of Ethnic Studies</u>, <u>UC Berkeley History Social Science Project</u>

aimed at high school Ethnic Studies education. For this session, U. Dischelley Ethnic Studies department chair Keith Feldman will discuss "Teaching Histories of Anti-Imperialist Solidarity" with Ethnic Studies scholars Dr. Jason Ferreira & Dr. Michael Schulze-Oschtering: The role of understanding solidarily in High School Ethnic Studies courses will also be examined. Attend in person at the



About Dr. Michael Schulze-Oechtering

Dr. Michael Schulze-Oechtering is an Ethnic Studies-trained historian who specializes in the study of anti-racist and comparative/relational racialization, and anti-racist and decolonial social movements. The political and intellectual questions Michael asks were nurtured during his time as a



