

CONNECTING THREADS:

RESHAPING IDENTITIES

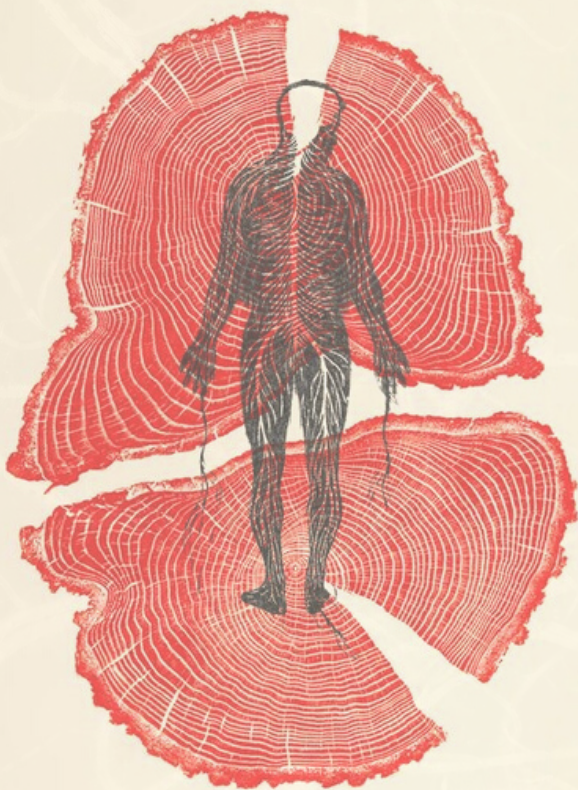
RENEWING COMMUNITIES

RETHINKING HISTORIES

14TH ANNUAL CSER SYMPOSIUM

FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2022 | 10:30AM- 2:30PM

420 HAMILTON HALL



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The Senior Research Symposium is a crucial component of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (CSER) academic experience, which seeks to generate innovative thinking about race, ethnicity, indignity and other categories of difference in order to better understand their role and impact in modern societies. Publicized campus-wide, the symposium showcases thesis projects by seniors in the major.

The symposium offers CSER students an opportunity to share and receive feedback on their original research as part of themed panels with faculty discussants. This event enables students to hone their oral presentation skills to supplement the analytical essays they have prepared on a subject of their choice. We will send you the program, which includes their abstracts and bios.

The members of the Senior Projects Seminar gratefully acknowledge the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race for its support of the 2022 Senior Research Symposium.



GUEST SPEAKER
MILAGRO CHAVEZ-
CISNEROS
CSER ALUM 2021

Milagro Chavez-Cisneros graduated in May 2021 with a major in Ethnicity and Race studies. Milagro is from Richmond, VA and the proud daughter of Salvadoran immigrants. While at Columbia, she was an active member of the Latinx community and also served as a mentor with the Columbia Mentorship Initiative and the Roger Lehecka Double Discovery Center. Milagro received the King's Crown Inclusion and Advocacy Award and was a Columbia College senior marshal.

Milagro completed her honors thesis "Both Separate and Unequal: North Carolina and Present Day Segregation" on the evolution of segregation in North Carolina's public schools since the historic 1954 Brown v. Board decision. She continues this work in education policy, with a specific focus on North Carolina programs, in Durham, NC. In her current role, she supports local and state policymakers in developing and enacting inclusive education policies for all students in North Carolina. She is a 2021-2022 North Carolina Education Policy Fellow.

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RENEWING COMMUNITIES
RETHINKING HISTORIES**

14TH ANNUAL CSER SYMPOSIUM

FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2022 | 10:30AM- 2:30PM

10:30-11:00am

Brunch

11:00-11:10am

**Co-Director Mae Ngai
Welcome / Opening
Remarks**

11:10-11:20am

**Co-Director Karl Jacoby
Welcome / Opening
Remarks**

11:20-11:25am

**Professor Darius
Echeverria
Welcome Opening
Remarks**

11:25-11:35am

**Milagro Chavez-Cisneros
CSER Alum 2021**

PROGRAM

11:40-11:57am	Lianah Sta. Ana
11:57am-12:14pm	Jaala Alston
12:14-12:31pm	Connor Cai
12:31-12:48pm	Riley 'Ikelihiokalani Atkinson
12:48-1:00pm	INTERMISSION
1:00-1:17pm	Monica Victoria
1:17-1:34pm	Kellian Staggers
1:34-1:51pm	Anthony Hidalgo
1:51-2:08pm	Megan Goldberg
2:10-2:20pm	Director of Undergraduate Studies Deborah Paredez Closing Remarks
2:20-2:30pm	Congratulations to CSER's Honors Students Program Ends

BIOS & ABSTRACTS

LIANAH STA. ANA

Lianah Sta. Ana (she/her) is an Asian American artist of Filipino descent majoring in Ethnicity and Race Studies at Columbia University ('22). After making her Broadway debut at 17, she decided to apply to Columbia's School of General Studies, seeing CSER's course offerings as an opportunity to try to make sense of the racialization, orientalism, and power asymmetries she witnessed and experienced firsthand in the theater industry. Lianah's time in college has helped her redefine her creative aspirations, develop a greater understanding of herself, her relationship to performing, and the theater industry as a whole. She aims to combine her artistic and academic passions into creative work, which empowers her communities and encourages critical consciousness.

Project Title: Performing Filipina

My thesis project, a creative piece titled *Performing Filipina*, unpacks the pressing question: "Ang babaeng Filipina: sino at ano siya" (the Filipina woman: who and what is she?). This question, originally considered by Filipina artist & scholar, Thelma Kintanar, which I encountered in an essay by Professor Neferti Tadiar, is central in developing a greater understanding of the "Filipina Woman" as she appears and is manufactured in literature, government policy, imperial rhetoric, and everyday life. In performing texts and ideas about the Filipina alongside reimagined Filipino folk songs and my own creative material, *Performing Filipina* acts as a contact zone, staging confrontations between past and present, institution and individual, colonizer and colonized. I offer *Performing Filipina* as a supplement to existing countermemorial work, in hopes that its current form and eventual production are able to demystify and reimagine the Filipina's role as a performing object, and (re)stage performance as a medium for resistance, medicine, and healing.

JAALA ALSTON

Jaala Alston is a senior at Columbia University double majoring in Ethnicity and Race Studies as well as Economics. During her time at Columbia University, she has participated in various research fellowships such as the Laidlaw Scholars Program, the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research Fellowship, and the American Economics Association Summer Program. Above all else, her work focuses on the complexities at the intersection of fights for racial and economic justice, as well as racial formation in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Jaala is also a multi-hyphenate creative with experience in acting, editing, graphic design, web design, and playwriting. She participated in the Columbia Black Theatre Ensemble's inaugural IncuBIPOC workshop and subsequent showcase presenting an excerpt of her play "Black Girls Can't Be Witches." Jaala also designed worked as a graphic designed, editor, and web designer for the first volume of *That Which Remains*, the justice journal of the Eric Holder Initiative. She also contributed as an editor of works of poetry, non-fiction, and fiction during her tenure with *That Which Remains*. She is a Columbia University Core Scholar, and received recognition from the University for her collection of poems called "Creation", a reflection on her fragmented family heritage through the lens of women in antiquity.

In her free time, she works to provide resources to WOC, especially Black women, through her work with *Shaping Her Earth*, a nonprofit that aims to empower young women and girls of color to pursue their goals and give back to their communities. Her advocacy work also extends to her experience interning with the African American Policy Forum, where she provided research and writing support to various events and initiatives aimed at shaping policy and shining light on challenges facing the Black community in America.

Project Title: Not Blacks, But Cubans": Pathologized Blackness in the Post Special Period

My paper examines how racial hierarchies are enacted in contemporary Cuba. In 1961, Fidel Castro announced that racism had ended in Cuba following the Revolution. This statement was accompanied by state censorship of discussions about racism with charges that such discussions are counter-revolutionary and anti-Cuban.

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, often called the Special Period, policy changes allowed discrimination to manifest in various contexts, which led many scholars to conclude that racism had “returned” to Cuba since the Cuban Revolution. I argue that racism never left Cuba. Blackness was still pathologized as evidenced by popular revolutionary slogans such as “Not Blacks, But Cubans” which positions Cuban identity as an escape from Blackness instead of addressing anti-Blackness. For my analysis I employ methods of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze Cuba from the Special Period to the present. I utilize Cuban census data to compose the size of the racial income gap and propose explanations for the gap between Afro-Cubans and non-Afro Cubans.

CONNOR CAI

Connor (they) comes to study at Columbia after growing up in central Pennsylvania. In addition to the major at CSER, they are also completing a special concentration in Gender Studies. Connor is grateful to be celebrated by peers and mentors at CSER.

Project Title: “Cloth X Body”

This essay stitches together fragments of memory to examine archives activated through haptic engagements with cloth. Building upon Lorde's erotic methodology, cloth is read as material and metaphor guiding the intimate transit of spectral touch. I engage feminist analytics of porosity and friction to trace the corporeal palimpsest that animates during contact between skin and cloth. Finally, skin negotiates cloth as a technology of the body in an auto-ethnographic account of trans lion dancers pursuing coalition home-making practices in the Lower East Side. By feeling the body as a site of ongoing chronicle, this essay aims to demonstrate an alternative empirical method of reckoning with loss and absence bearing particular significance in gender studies and transpacific studies.

RILEY 'IKELIHIOKALANI ATKINSON

Riley is a Kanaka Maoli who spent her formative years on Moku O Keawe. She is also a proud member of the Native Hawaiian diaspora. Riley studies Political Science and Ethnicity & Race Studies at Columbia University. After interning at the W. M. Keck Observatory through the Kāpili 'Oihana Internship Program, she felt compelled to analyze identity formation amongst *kia'i* in Hawai'i and the diaspora. Through her work, she hopes to unravel the complexities of engaging in aloha 'āina while away from home. Riley gives her greatest thanks to the remarkable individuals who inspire and mentor her. She is especially grateful for her grandfather, Willard Kekauoha, and the impact his indelible legacy has had on her life.

Project Title: Far from Home while in the Diaspora: Kanaka Maoli Experiences with Aloha 'Āina

Data from the 2020 U.S. Census reveals that among the 1,590,632 Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders residing in the United States, only 394,104 live in Hawai'i. The remaining 1,196,530 demonstrate the significant population of Native Hawaiians in the diaspora. Many leave Hawai'i for similar reasons: a lower cost of living, higher salaries, more affordable housing, and better opportunities and resources. Hawai'i is increasingly becoming inaccessible and unaffordable for its native inhabitants. However, aloha 'āina movements such as Kū Kia'i Mauna have a wide reach on social media platforms that have unified the Native Hawaiian community across the oceans that divide it. In tracing the evolution and experiences of the Native Hawaiian diaspora, this thesis investigates how cultural identity is shaped and shifted by physical distance. Through analyzing archival materials alongside modern accounts, this project offers a glimpse into the future of the Native Hawaiian diaspora.

MONICA VICTORIA

Monica Victoria is a Columbia University senior in the School of General Studies double majoring in Ethnicity & Race and Creative Writing with a focus on nonfiction. A Jack Kent Cooke Scholar, she came to Columbia as a transfer student from Westchester Community College (WCC) where she was an honors student. There she studied literature at Cambridge University for a summer and traveled to China for Business & Entrepreneurship courtesy of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. Currently, she is Co-Chair of the Student Advisory Board (SAB) for the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race (CSER) and on the board of OneMamaroneck, a nonprofit organization in her local school district whose mission is to provide resources and support to students and families of color who face discrimination within Mamaroneck Union Free School District (MUFSD). As Vice-Chair, Monica plays a crucial role in the organization's ongoing work to dismantle systemic racism by providing diversity, equity, and inclusive education to the broader community and engaging partner organizations. Throughout her academic journey she has been a working single parent and is extremely thankful to her parents who have supported her these past six years. After graduation, she intends to keep working on her senior thesis with the goal to turn it into a much larger work, study for the LSAT, and pursue work in the legal realm. During her time as a student and parent, Monica has gained a greater appreciation with how much representation matters, therefore would like to continue onward to law school where she hopes to be able to return to Westchester, NY in order to advocate for those who need it most, like the Mexican community in New Rochelle, NY.

Project Title: Breaking Borders: A Braiding of Mexican Narratives from the Northeast

This project is a creative nonfiction work on the nuances of being of Mexican heritage in the suburbs of New York. It was in August of 2020 that Monica learned about the first Mexican national in New Rochelle, NY, Antonio Valencia, where she grew up. Questioning her connection to him led to her mother who shares both the same last name and birthplace, Cotija de la Paz, Michoacán, with Antonio.

By incorporating personal narrative, oral history, and investigative journalism, "Breaking Borders: A Braiding of Mexican Narratives from the Northeast" takes the reader on a journey with the author as she embarks on a mission to seek answers to significant questions evaded or unknown by her family. In the pursuit to learn more about Antonio Valencia, the narrator is led to the New Rochelle Public Library where she finds a complete oral history dedicated to him and the Mexican community conducted from 1999-2001. In the process, she finds discrepancies in the way interviews were conducted. Done exclusively in English, most questions required yes or no responses, which did not allow for interviewees to elaborate or share more substantive information of themselves. Additionally, Antonio's personal life story reveals a much more complicated migration narrative that is not fully captured in articles written about him. Further probing on the life and times of Antonio reveals a personal connection to a notorious pedophile priest, also from Cotija, which inspires the author to explore themes of intergenerational trauma while scrutinizing the way trauma is handled within the broader Mexican community. Ultimately, the personal narratives of Monica, her mother, and Antonio, are intertwined by struggles internally and externally of identity formation, assimilation, exploitation, sexual trauma and abuse, patterns of racism, ethnic Mexican stereotypes, and cultural erasure. With her work, Monica intends to not only shed light on the historical pervasive colonization within Mexican culture, but also help eradicate it.

KELLIAN STAGGERS

Shí éí Kellian Staggars yinishé. Bit'ahnii nishlǫ́, Nááhiłi bashishchiin. Kellian is a Navajo and African American woman who is pursuing a double major in Ethnicity and Race Studies and Creative Writing. She grew up in the Southwest, creating homes in both Arizona and New Mexico. Kellian has dedicated her studies to exploring her Indigeneity and Blackness in an attempt to re-create her personal narrative as an inherent political and social body. Motivated by the close-knit matriarchy in her life and cultural ties, she is dedicated to the (improvement) of visibility of Indigenous women and hopes to be an inspiration to her nieces, her future daughters, and many women after her.

Project Title: My Grandmother Was A Weaver

This thesis project is an interdisciplinary creative work that explores the matriarchal system of Navajo society in the context of my personal family relationships. Through the creation of a rug, which represents my ancestral past while reproducing the richness of Navajo history and life, there is a continuation of cultural knowledge that my rug represents. The body of writing is a result of this process and serves as a reflection of the intensive labor involved with the creation of this art, which is a rug. Equally important, the rug embodies the labor of my existence as a Navajo woman. This project is meant to highlight the Indigenous sorority that is formed between my mother, my grandmother and myself. I am weaving through the warping with wool, but also through the space of relationality and matriarchy with experience and memory at the forefront. I am attempting to fill the gaps with newfound knowledge and tradition that has unfortunately been absent during my formative years, and therefore hoping to continue this trend of imparting cultural knowledge through my own lineage.

ANTHONY HIDALGO

Anthony Hidalgo (he/him) is a senior at Columbia University majoring in Political Science and Ethnicity & Race Studies, originally from Los Angeles, California. While at Columbia, he has served on the boards of the Student Organization of Latinxs, Phi Iota Alpha, Latinx Heritage Month, the Latinx Graduation committee, and the Activities Board at Columbia. He is also a freelance graphic designer. His work with communities on campus and on his own forms of art culminate in his thesis: an investigation and revision of the histories of queer BIPOC drag performers and graphic designers working in modes of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism.

Project Title: Visionaries and Vanguard: A History of Anti-Capitalist, Anti-Imperialist Queer BIPOC Drag Artists and Graphic Designers

While queer BIPOC are often regarded as important contributors to and keepers of artistic culture and tradition in the realms of drag and graphic design, seldom are they credited as the originators of many said practices and traditions. Often, white artists are given powerful platforms through which their works become accepted as the standard, despite a long history of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist art stemming from Black, Indigenous, POC creators. Therefore, there is a desperate need for a revision of history that more accurately reflects the revolutionary nature of visual art and the queer BIPOC culture from which it so often stems. Through the creation of my own art as well as an investigation into the history of art elsewhere in the United States, I seek to re-establish histories which have been erased, and set up living artists as legacy keepers of our forebearers. More than politically and economically revolutionary, we find that early forms of art and graphic design challenge gender constructs, colonization, academy, and other typically formal institutions contributing to colonization.

MEGAN GOLDBERG

Megan is a senior at Columbia University School of General Studies. Originally from Los Angeles, CA, she grew up between California and New York, eventually living and attending high school in the Bronx. A non-traditional student, Megan began her undergraduate career at UC Berkeley before taking a multi-year gap in her education. Over the last decade Megan has focused on building her career in law and business development. Currently, Megan is pursuing a major in Ethnic Studies and a special concentration in Education Studies. Since enrolling at Columbia, she has continued to work full time overseeing operations for an immigration firm and volunteer-tutor in English, Spanish, and Math. She is a member of the CSER Student Advisory Board, Lavender Graduation Committee, and GS Honors Society. Megan is also currently a semi-finalist for the 2022–23 Fulbright Scholarship.

Project Title: Where Have All the Good Mensch Gone: Examining Jewish Millennials' Relationships with Black-led Anti-Racist Movements in the context of Modern Political Identity Formation and the Legacy of 20th Century Black-Jewish Allyship

Within many reform and conservative Jewish communities, the period during 1960s Civil Rights is considered the Golden Age of the Black-Jewish alliance. Existing scholarship attributes the high number of Jewish Americans who participated in Black-led Civil Rights organizing to a Jewish morality and a singular interconnectedness between the two ethnic groups. Through the use of archival research and qualitative interviewing this paper complicates this dominant historical narrative regarding Black-Jewish relationships in the U.S., while bringing the conversation into the present moment. Original interviews with Jewish millennials highlight how an increasing proximity to racialized whiteness, socialization, and an inherited religious morality factor into modern Jewish political identity. Supplementally, the conversations with non-Jewish Black millennials highlight the disconnect between academic discourse and the reality of Black-Jewish racial relations. Original interviews with both Jewish and non-Jewish Black millennials address how evolving racialization of Jewish identity and increasing division over the Israel-Palestine conflict impacts Jewish relationships with Black-led anti-racist movements.

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**CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL CSER'S
HONORS STUDENTS!**