

Saint Mary's College of California

Ethnic Studies Program

1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga, CA
94556 tel. 925.631.4000



September 30, 2020

Dear Ethnic Studies Community,

As the Ethnic Studies Program Director, I welcome you to the 2020-21 academic year, and I especially welcome our new majors and minors to Ethnic Studies! We had a difficult end to the last academic year, with the campus closure due to COVID-19 that postponed our graduations on campus. The summer began with the horrific deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and countless other Black lives as well as historic movements on the streets to demand an anti-racist society. It is with both these pandemics that we enter into the new school year. And yet, over and over again, I have witnessed the strength, grace, and love with which the ES community has continued to stand up for social, economic, and racial justice. The struggle is long and can be difficult, but we stand on the shoulders of giants before us. Our ancestors wrote their wisdom into our collective memory to pave our journey forward into a more just and beautiful future.

In my inaugural year as director, I had the privilege of meeting many students through our welcome party and numerous events we co-sponsored on campus. ES held a fantastic event with the writers and stars of the series, "The North Pole," thanks to the leadership of Drs. Emily Klein and Michael Viola and logistical support from our administrative assistant, Lorinda Cunha. Our student ambassadors, Valentina Velasquez and Jocelyn Romero, held regularly scheduled lounge hours for ES majors and minors. We hope to continue to build relationships amongst our ES students in this year both virtually and, eventually, in person. With the support of our student volunteer, Jasmin Hill, we now have Instagram, and we will post updates throughout the year about ES-sponsored events at [SMC ES](#).

We congratulate our amazing eleven ES graduates in the Class of 2020, whose bios and capstone topics are linked on the [ES webpage](#). They have emerged as stellar voices for social justice in their research, and their leadership has been felt throughout the campus during their tenure at Saint Mary's. I want to especially acknowledge ES major Valentina Velasquez on her Sin Fronteras award for demonstrating the values of ES in her studies and leadership. I send a huge congratulations to our affiliate faculty member, Dr. Michael Viola (JCL), for accomplishing tenure, a well-deserved achievement. Dr. Viola has been pivotal in bringing ES into this new stage of our development. Moreover, his research and teaching have had monumental impact on this campus and beyond. Lorinda Cunha and Dr. Ynez Wilson Hirst were honored last year for their decades-long service to Saint Mary's. We are thankful to Dr. Alvaro Ramirez for his many years of service to building ES since its birth as he now transitions into our new Community Advisory Board (CAB). We are also delighted to announce that our new CAB Chair, Dr. Rebecca Anguiano (Counseling), also achieved tenure this past year, as a transformative scholar-activist in her field and in training teachers of tomorrow. Congratulations!

As we begin this academic year, we have much to look forward to as we continue to build Ethnic Studies at Saint Mary's. We have officially formed a new Community Advisory Board! The CAB consists of staff and faculty who work closely with ES on campus, alumni, and nationally recognized community leaders. We are grateful to have a visionary chair, Dr. Rebecca Anguiano, lead this phenomenal group of esteemed community members:

Rocío Avila, State Policy Director and Staff Attorney for the National Domestic Workers Alliance

Carlo Gómez Arteaga, State Director, Dolores Huerta Foundation End Child Poverty Program

Legacy Lee, Director of the SMC Intercultural Center

Dr. Cynthia Martínez of Counseling

Dr. Fuifulupe (Fui) Niumeitolu, Founder of Moana Nui Pacific Islander Climate Justice Project and Oceania Coalition of Northern California (OCNC) and Gender and Women's Studies Lecturer, UC Berkeley

Zachery Norris, Executive Director of the Ella Baker Center,

Jenee Palmer, Director of the SMC High Potential Program

Dr. Albert Ponce, Political Science Assistant Professor and Co-Director of Social Justice Studies at Diablo Valley College

Rob Jackson, Executive Director of Beats, Rhymes, and Life

Dr. Álvaro Ramirez of Modern Languages and ES Co-founder

Freedom Siyam, Principal of Balboa High School

Sudha Shrestha, Assistant Director of the SMC Intercultural Center.

You can find a link to their biographies on the ES webpage soon. They will provide guidance on community-related activities with the ES program and opportunities for students to integrate into community initiatives as interns and volunteers. They will support the visibility of our program to the greater Bay Area and national communities through their own networks and media. ES looks forward to building sustainable, meaningful campus-community partnerships with this inaugural board!

We also welcome a new affiliate faculty member to our Faculty Advisory Board, Dr. Nicole Brown. Dr. Brown is a new faculty member in the Sociology Department and comes to Saint Mary's by way of Stanford University as the former Associate Director of African and African American studies. She has extensive experience with quantitative and qualitative research and teaching at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the National Center for Supercomputing Applications. Dr. Brown's groundbreaking research involves Black feminist computation methodologies and interventions. She will teach Gender and Society, Race and Ethnicity, and other courses that are cross-listed with Ethnic Studies. If you have the opportunity, please welcome Dr. Brown!

Ethnic Studies is committed to its involvement in the Movement for Black Lives as individuals off campus and as a program on campus. We continue to work with the Campus Committee for Inclusive Excellence (CCIE), the Intercultural Center (IC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the Academic Senate and its subcommittees, and the Black Lives Matter subcommittee to fulfill the vision for an anti-racist campus. This vision was articulated in the demands in the summer of 2020 by Black Student Union, Black Lives Matter subcommittee, Institute for Latino and Latin American Studies, the Faculty Caregiving ad hoc group, and Ethnic Studies. We aim to deepen this commitment through our current courses and introduce new courses that center topics of racial justice and Black lives. As Director, I thank the amazing faculty and staff affiliated with Ethnic Studies for their tireless to do the difficult work of racial justice.

Finally, since last spring, many of us have lost loved ones near and far. I want to recognize the pain we have individually and collectively felt as we mourned those we have lost too soon. We honor them as we move together toward a better tomorrow.

"Purpose is the essential element of you. It is the reason you are on the planet at this particular time in history. Your very existence is wrapped up in the things you are here to fulfill."

--Chadwick Boseman, King forever (Howard University Commencement Speech, 2018)

With love and in peace,

Loan Dao

Loan Dao, PhD

Associate Professor and Director

Ethnic Studies Program