



**THE COMMITTEE ON
ETHNICITY,
MIGRATION,
RIGHTS**

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021

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Photo by Idaho-based hybrid artist Paul Bonnell. Bonnell presented “Between Tower and Sea: Creative Directions,” a workshop through EMR’s Processing the Pandemic series.



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear EMR Community,

As we approach the end of this academic year, I want to take a moment to look back and reflect on all that has happened since July 2020. The global pandemic defined the past year in many ways: devastating, unfair, unpredictable, relentless, inhuman. We switched to virtual teaching and learning; we adapted to new ways of living and of experiencing college life; and we transitioned to a work and school day spent in virtual meeting rooms within our own homes. We have changed, we have been hit incredibly hard, and we are eager to go back to normalcy.

But how do we understand normalcy now? The pandemic is not the only thing we have experienced this year. We have witnessed systemic racism and police violence against African Americans; a surge of violent attacks on Asian Americans; the fragility of democracy, evident in the siege on the U.S. Capitol; the shameful inequality that shapes the world, exemplified in disparate learning opportunities and vaccine distribution; the horrifying impact of COVID-19 on global poverty; the sudden closing and raising of borders in a matter of hours due to changing COVID-19 trends; incremental environmental disruptions that have skyrocketed climate and economic migration from Central America. These are just a few of the many catastrophes that have unfolded during the last twelve months.

It has been a year like no other, a time many of us would like to forget. But let's not forget. We should not forget those who have suffered, we should learn from what has happened, and we should take heart where we can. Let's remember the hundreds of thousands of health workers who have been fighting on the front lines of the pandemic since day one; let's celebrate Juneteenth and renewed energy for historical reckonings; let's find inspiration in a global movement of solidarity that led hundreds of millions of people to wear masks and get vaccinated to protect themselves and protect others; let's see hope in the mass protests against systemic racism in more than 2,000 U.S. cities and 60 countries around the globe in support of the Black Lives Matter movement; and let's put our faith in how migration around the world is dismantling the homogeneity and negative rhetoric that come from governments and restrictive policies.

At EMR we would like to recognize the resilience, strength, and patience of our students; congratulate you for the impressive work you have undertaken, even without access to libraries, personal interaction with your peers, and casual conversations with your faculty; and celebrate the great achievements of our secondary fielders and friends of EMR. In particular I would like to thank you for your patience when children and pets popped up on the screens, for trying to stay focused when Zoom conversations were not synchronized, and for working hard to build a sense of community through virtual lunches and talks. Thank you for your sustained interest in EMR, where our interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches have created a space that encourages experimentation. It may seem like our secondary fielders, who come evenly from the divisions of Science, Social Science, Arts & Humanities, and SEAS, take courses in apparently disparate disciplines. But they have much in common: they are drawn to innovation and dynamism; their research, which is consistently fascinating and fresh, always deepens and expands our understanding of academic excellence; inspired by our mission, their work makes visible the invisible, engaging with our community and examining the interconnecting stories and histories of migrants, ethnically and racially minoritized communities, and Indigenous communities in a local and global context; and with the help of graduate student mentorship for the recipients of our thesis research grants, their senior theses have repeatedly conceived original and inclusive narratives, designing bridges between different forms of knowledge. As ethnic studies, border

and migration studies, and Indigenous studies at Harvard continue to grow, I would like to express my gratitude to the students, faculty, and staff who make our work so fulfilling, stimulating, and innovative.

In college we think of students as learning from faculty, but this year has taught us again that faculty can learn a great deal from students. At EMR we have witnessed the mutual learning that takes place in our talks, guest lectures, and senior thesis showcase. This year we organized two EMR course preview events, with a total attendance of 115 students. In particular I would like to highlight the fascinating series sponsored by the AAPI Studies Working Group, “Processing the Pandemic/These Times,” which discussed AAPI responses to COVID-19 through an interdisciplinary and community engagement approach; and the two roundtables of “Indigenous Women Convening for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation,” where nine Indigenous women leaders from seven indigenous socio-cultural zones of the world (from five different continents) shared stories of conflict in their territories and discussed ways of understanding indigenous conflict resolution and peace-making processes. Together we have discovered many new ways to use technology, which have allowed us to continue our college education and keep in touch with our families, friends, teachers, and students. But we have also realized that we cannot replace the value of people, the space of the classroom, the talks over lunch or coffee, the stopping-by in offices to say hello, the continuation of conversations in the hallways, and the hugs and handshakes that we have taken for granted for years. At EMR we are looking forward to resuming all of this next year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Eleanor Craig, program director of EMR, an essential member in keeping all the EMR community together, and a true inspiration and wonderful source of advising to EMR students. Thank you to our Administrative Coordinator Andrea Davies and our Program and Communications Assistant Eiji Miura, for keeping the EMR events on track and the EMR community informed. Thank you to all the members of the Faculty Advisory Committee for the dynamic and fruitful conversations we have had this year. Thank you to the members of the Student Advisory Council, Harvard Ethnic Studies Coalition, Coalition for a Diverse Harvard, The Task Force for Asian American Progressive Advocacy and Studies, and all the graduate students and faculty advisors of our working groups. I especially thank our partners in American Studies, the Harvard University Native American Program, History and Literature, the Observatorio Cervantes, Romance Languages and Literatures, Women, Gender, and Sexuality, and the Warren Center for their continuous support in coordinating events and courses. And I would like to thank the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, the Center for the Study of World Religions, the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice, and Peace, the Harvard College Writing Program, the Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative, the Scholars at Risk Program, the department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs for co-sponsoring and planning events with EMR.

My first year as faculty Chair has been quite intense, but it has also been very rewarding. Américo Mendoza-Mori will join us this Fall as EMR Lecturer in Latinx Studies; we will strive to strengthen ethnic studies and make migration and Indigenous studies an integral part of EMR; we will continue our support for the interdisciplinary study of our core fields from national, transnational, and global perspectives; and we will keep encouraging new and complex ways of telling stories and histories. We close this year with 79 declared secondary fielders, and for you we will continue working to make EMR into a concentration. With the support, energy, and ideas from every one of you we will keep growing, and we hope to receive your input at every step of the way.

So, rather than forgetting 2020-2021, I would like to thank you for helping to make it such an unforgettable year. I hope you have a restful and fulfilling summer.

Sincerely,
Raquel Vega-Durán
Faculty Chair, Committee on Ethnicity, Migration, Rights

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Student Advisory Council (SAC) meetings continued to host lively discussions about EMR curriculum and programs, working group initiatives, and ethnic studies at Harvard. Throughout spring semester, we discussed and drafted land acknowledgments to honor the history, present, and future of local Indigenous communities at EMR gatherings. In response to SAC members' recommendation that we offer introductory courses that intersect with current events, EMR will list two new courses next year that we hope to offer on a recurring basis: "Topics in Latinx Studies" and "Topics in Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies." Participants in SAC include secondary fielders, working group coordinators, the EMR intern, and members of student-led organizations such as the Harvard Ethnic Studies Coalition and Task Force for Asian American Progressive Advocacy and Studies.



Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of the Arts Vijay Iyer joins EMR for the Approaches to Ethnic and Indigenous Studies speaker series

Working Groups:

Muslim American Studies Working Group

In the fall, MASWG hosted conversations with Sara Awartani (Warren Center, EMR) and Darryl Li (University of Chicago, Harvard PhD). In the spring, the group held a conversation with author, filmmaker, and Harvard faculty member Musa Syeed (English). They also met with Evelyn Alsultany (University of Southern California), the April speaker in the "Approaches" series, to discuss the development of Muslim and Arab American studies in the US academy and the ways it is structured across different institutions. Prof. Alsultany's visit was sponsored by the Regan Fund in the division of Social Science.

Latinx Studies Working Group

Entre Chismes, a peer-led study group coordinated by LSWG, ran as a writing accountability group for doctoral students during the fall semester. Visiting Assistant Professor Marcelo Garzo Montalvo and Yolanda Martínez San-Miguel (University of Miami) gave fall talks hosted by LSWG on ethnic studies, scholarly praxis, and writing in Latinx Studies. LSWG co-hosted the fall conversation with Sara Awartani (Warren Center, EMR) on decolonial solidarities with the Muslim American Studies Working Group. In March, "Approaches" series speaker María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo (New York University) gave an LSWG-hosted workshop on pre-circulated writing by doctoral students. All activities of the LSWG are generously supported by the Observatorio Cervantes.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies Working Group

AAPISWG, with Catherine Nguyen (History and Literature) held a year-long series of events entitled "Processing the Pandemic/These Times." [See the Event Highlights section of this report for details!] The group also held a discussion with Warren Faculty Fellow Melissa Borja to discuss her research on anti-Asian racism and religion in Hmong American communities.

Human Rights Working Group

HRWG created an event series focused on Uyghur human rights. They collaborated with Harvard Law School's Advocates for Human Rights and Harvard alumna Rayhan Asat, a Uyghur lawyer fighting for her brother Ekpar's release from internment by the Chinese government. One event, organized with Harvard preceptor of Uyghur Chaghatay Gulnar Eziz, brought together Uyghur activists and scholarly perspectives. On the fifth anniversary of Ekpar Asat's internment on April 7th, the group hosted an event with human rights leaders Sophie Richardson, Irwin Cotler, and Thor Halvorsen, featuring prepared remarks from Dean Martha Minow and Senator Chris Coons, and an original song by LyLena Estabine ('24). HRWG co-hosted a two-day conference with the Human Rights Foundation that contextualized Uyghur struggles in relation to issues ranging from digital repression, global markets, and advocacy efforts for over 300 attendees.

Dissertation Writing Working Group

This working group supports advanced (post-exams) graduate students whose research addresses questions related to ethnicity, race, Indigeneity, and migration. The ten members in this year's cohort were from a wide range of fields at Harvard, including American Studies, Anthropology, History, History of Science, Music, Religion, and Romance Languages and Literatures. Sessions focused on workshopping prospectus and chapters in progress, with informal conversations about job searches, publishing, and research methods.

Approaches to Ethnic and Indigenous Studies:

EMR hosts monthly talks with scholars of ethnic and Indigenous studies in which we ask guests to discuss their intellectual journeys, methodologies, and experiences in the academy. Our fall speakers were Harvard faculty members Durba Mitra (WGS), Vijay Iyer (Music, AAAS, EMR), and Tiya Miles (History). Our spring speakers were Mimi Khúc (Georgetown University), María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo (New York University), and Evelyn Alsultany (Southern California University). Shared themes included comparative colonialisms; inter-, trans-, and extra-disciplinarity; commitment to growing ethnic studies; and the relationship of scholarly academic work to creative pursuits in non-academic contexts.



Professor Darryl Li (University of Chicago) meets with the Muslim American Studies Working Group to discuss his latest book The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity.

EVENT HIGH- LIGHTS

Processing the Pandemic/These Times

The AAPI Studies Working Group, with leadership from Catherine Nguyen (History and Literature) and support from the Provostial Fund for Arts and Humanities, hosted a year-long series of workshops to showcase AAPI responses to COVID-19 through interdisciplinary, community engagement, and artistic approaches. Over 125 people from the EMR community and beyond participated in the workshops.

In the fall, a two-part series “Processing the Pandemic: The AAPI COVID-19 Project, Findings, Methods, Community” showcased AAPI responses to COVID-19— as both a virus and a social construction. Directly responding to the increase in anti-Asian racism and to the inequalities made manifest by COVID-19, the AAPI COVID-19 Project is a collective research initiative that brings together social scientists and humanists with the aim of studying the pandemic through the lens of Asian American and Pacific Islander lives and experiences. Jason Beckfield and Vivian Shaw from Sociology at Harvard serve as principle investigators for this initiative. Members of the research team presented on their methods, preliminary research findings, and strategies for organizing and building community resilience.

The spring workshop sequence was called “Processing These Times: Cure/ation and Creation.” The first event was a multi-genre participatory session, “Between Tower and Sea: Creative Directions,” featuring photography, film, and poetry by Paul Bonnell. The final session in the series was a media-making workshop with members of the Asian American Feminist Collective. These sessions emphasized the power of storytelling and art for analyzing historical and present contexts and generating solidarity.

***Straight A's* Contributors' Panel**

Straight A's: Asian American College Students in Their Own Words (Duke UP, 2018) is a collection of poignant essays by students in Christine Yano's 2014 Harvard college course, “Being Asian American: Representations and Realities.” Several contributors reunited with Yano and coeditor Neal Akatsuka to reflect on their experiences in the course and how they have grown in their understandings of Asian Americanness since these writings. Current Harvard students Liana Chow (college) and Jewel Pereyra (American Studies) joined the conversation to discuss the ways that AAPI community consciousness and advocacy for ethnic studies have continued to develop since 2014. This event, which welcomed 114 attendees, was co-sponsored by Coalition for a Diverse Harvard, the Harvard Asian American Alumni Alliance, and the Task Force on Asian American Progressive Advocacy and Studies. A generous donation by the editors from the book's proceeds to the EMR Fund supported several of this year's Asian American studies programs.

Opportunities in Online Teaching

While our online year brought many challenges, it also gave opportunities to gather easily across distances. We took this chance to invite a wide range of guests— artists, activists, and scholars— to speak over Zoom in EMR courses. We would like to thank Comunidad Catrileo+Carrión, R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, Mimi Khúc, Alan Pelaez Lopez, Binalakshmi Nepam, Bianca Nozaki Nasser, Naomi Paik, Azadeh Shahshahani, Quan Tran, Sam Vong, and Susy Zepeda for sharing their work, wisdom, and passions with our students.

Special Feature: Susy Zepeda lecture on “Xicanx Survivance and Futurities”

A guest speaker session in Marcelo Garzo Montalvo’s Latinx Xicanx Indigeneities seminar (EMR 145) exemplified the rich modes of connecting such visits enabled. The online platform became an opportunity to bring members of the EMR community into shared space with west coast artists featured in the UC Davis exhibit Xicanx Futurity. Susy Zepeda (UC Davis) presented, spotlighting attendees whose artwork and practices informed her lecture content. The session included writing exercises, storytelling by an artist about a ceremonial experience that led to her artwork, and reflections on the interplay between spiritual practices and academic work. Over 50 people attended from within and beyond the Harvard and UC Davis communities.

Indigenous Women Leading Work for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation

On March 19, 2021 EMR hosted the roundtables *Indigenous Women Convening for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation*. This event brought together Indigenous scholars and women leaders from seven Indigenous socio-cultural zones of the world, from five different continents. In the two roundtables the speakers talked about the systemic discrimination and political marginalization of Indigenous peoples in the world; shared stories of militarization, conflict, and exploitation of their Indigenous lands and resources; and discussed collective ways of conflict resolution and peace-making processes. Over 220 people attended this event.

Professor Elsa Stamatopoulou, Former Chief of the UN Permanent Forum of Indigenous Peoples, and Director of the Indigenous Studies Program at Columbia University, gave the Opening Remarks. In the first session, “Conflict, Militarization & Exploitation of Indigenous Land & Resources,” Prof. Jacqueline Bhabha moderated a roundtable with Rauna Kuokkanen (Professor of Arctic Indigenous Studies at the University of Lapland), Tukumminnguaq Olsen (Inuit Circumpolar Council), Mariam Aboubakrine (President of the Association Tnhinan Canada and Tnhinane Sahel), and Tarcila Rivera Zea (Founder of Chirapaq: Center for Indigenous Peoples Cultures, Peru). In the second session, “Understanding the Indigenous Ways of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Mechanisms,” Prof. Shelly Lowe conversed with Louise Herne (Bear Clan Mother for the Mohawk Nation Council), Claire Charters (Associate Professor at the University of Auckland Faculty of Law), Lucy Mulenkei (Executive Director of the Indigenous Information Network, Kenya), Binalakshmi Nepram (Founder of the Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network and Co-Founder of the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice and Peace), and Vera Solovyeva (Filmmaker and Ph.D. Candidate in George Mason University).

This event was organized by the Committee on Ethnicity, Migration, Rights, the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, the Scholars at Risk Program at Harvard University, and the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples, Gender Justice, and Peace. It was co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of World Religions; the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures; the Harvard College Writing Program; Harvard University Native American Program; the Religion, Conflict and Peace Initiative; and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

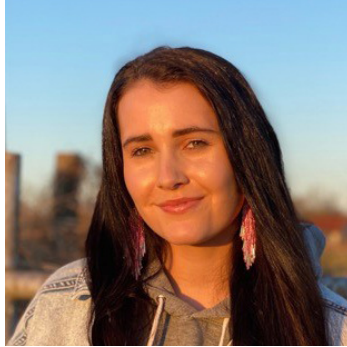


Event poster for Indigenous Women Convening for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation. The background image is of Manipuri Women Meira Paibis — Women with Bamboo Torches. Photo Source: brightthemag.com.

THESIS PRIZE



Vivekae Kim
*Winner of the EMR Senior
Thesis Prize*



Anna Kate Cannon
Honorable Mention



Joy Nesbitt
Honorable Mention

The Senior Thesis Prize in Ethnicity, Migration, Rights recognizes projects that contribute to current scholarly discourses about ethnicity, migration, indigeneity, race, and/or rights. EMR recognized three outstanding theses from a competitive pool of applicants.

‘Future Revolutionaries’: A Campaign to Reform Immigration Court in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands — Vivekae Kim, Winner of the EMR Senior Thesis Prize

Vivekae’s thesis is an ethnographic project emerging from engaged research with “Pima County Justice for All,” a virtual ballot initiative to guarantee public defender representation in Arizona immigration courts. It analyzes issues of race, citizenship, abolition, and immigration with complexity and nuance. EMR readers praised its “careful, precise, and deliberate prose” and artful storytelling, calling it “a fabulous example of engaged scholarship.”

Toward Futures Free from Violence: Responses to Violence Against Indigenous Women and LGBTQ2S People in the United States— Anna Kate Cannon, Honorable Mention

Anna Kate’s thesis demonstrates that legislative and carceral remedies have failed to intervene in violence against Indigenous women and LGBTQ2S persons. It presents thorough critiques of settler structures of sexuality, carcerality, and policing, arguing that their harmful effects are furthered by measures such as the Violence Against Women Act. EMR reviewers applauded the thesis for innovatively connecting political and legal frameworks to visions of justice explored in the genre of a graphic novel; one called it “an exemplary work of interdisciplinary scholarship.”

Call, Response, and Go-Go Live: Making a Musical Movement for Black Lives in Washington, D.C. in 2020 — Joy Nesbitt, Honorable Mention

Joy’s thesis documents the work of the Washington, D.C. organization “Long Live GoGo” in the summer and fall of 2020. An engaged scholarly project with rich theoretical dimensions, it highlights Go-Go’s recurring role in resisting antiBlackness and the organization’s grassroots techniques for generating political momentum and strategy. The EMR jury commended this thesis for weaving between historical and present Black protest movements, music and sound theory, and performance studies “with care and critical dexterity.”

THESIS RESEARCH GRANTS

Each year, EMR awards summer research funding to a cohort of rising seniors planning to write theses. Grant recipients are paired with doctoral scholars in aligned areas of study who mentor their thesis writing through the summer and school year, until thesis submission.

This year's grant winners will be conducting research in the following areas:

- Historical perspectives on the current crisis of denaturalization and deportation in the Dominican Republic.
Oswaldo Ambrosio, History
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Maya Doig-Acuña, African and African American Studies
- Counterhegemonic interventions of Asian American visual art against structures of white supremacy and global geopolitical structures of domination.
Kelsey Chen, Social Studies; History of Art and Architecture
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Karintha Lowe, American Studies
- Undocumented Pedagogy: Resisting the Coloniality of the U.S. School and Immigration System.
Jesús Estrada-Martínez, History and Literature; Romance Languages and Literatures
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Keish Kim, American Studies
- American Anxiety: Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Communism and the Immigration Act of 1965.
Alec Joseph Fischthal, History
Graduate Thesis Mentor: DeAnza Cook, History
- How international human rights NGOs imagine, construct, and intervene in the migrant-state relationship for Cambodian and Burmese forced labor migrants in the Thai fishing industry.
Ruth Hui Min Jaensubhakij, Social Studies
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Gangsim Eom, Anthropology
- Slaveholding in the Cherokee nation in the first half of the nineteenth century; how the Bureau of Indian Affairs influenced the existence of the institution of slavery in the Cherokee nation.
Elizabeth Ann McCord, History
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Mary McNeil, American Studies
- Understanding and questioning representation of Black female sexuality and the Black female body in art history.
Ajibabi Oloko, History and Literature; History of Art and Architecture
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Camara Brown, American Studies
- The meaning of justice for Black womxn survivors of gender-based violence in the US and Latin America.
Jaileen Pierre-Louis, History and Literature; African and African American Studies
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Massiel Torres Ulloa, Romance Languages and Literatures

- Out-of-hospital birth practices such as midwifery and doula services as liberatory, community-based alternatives for Black women.
Kendall Rideout, Social Studies; Women, Gender, and Sexuality
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Leah Gose, Sociology
- How Chinese immigrants negotiate the meaning of citizenship (e.g., material benefit, belonging) in the context of overt anti-Asian violence and a national reckoning on racial injustice.
Barnett Zhao, Sociology
Graduate Thesis Mentor: Seokweon Jeon, Study of Religion



PEOPLE OF EMR

EMR Faculty Advisory Committee for the 2020-2021 academic year: Robin Kelsey (Dean), Raquel Vega-Durán (Chair), Eram Alam (History of Science), Lowell Brower (Folklore & Mythology), Bruno Carvalho (Romance Languages and Literatures/RLL; African and African American Studies/AAAS), Philip Deloria (History), Sarah Dryden Peterson (Graduate School of Education), Roberto G. Gonzales (Graduate School of Education), Vijay Iyer (Music), Ieva Jusionyte (Anthropology), Lauren Kaminsky (History and Literature), Matthew Liebmann (Anthropology), Caroline Light (Women, Gender, and Sexuality/WGS), María Luisa Parra-Velasco (RLL), Mayra Rivera (Divinity School), Philip Torrey (Law School).

On leave: Jinah Kim (History of Art and Architecture), Ju Yon Kim (English), Robert F. Reid-Pharr (WGS; AAAS).

EMR Staff

Eleanor Craig, Administrative and Program Director; Lecturer
Andrea Davies, Administrative Coordinator
Eiji Miura, Program and Communications Assistant

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