The 2020-21 academic year passing since last spring’s publication of the inaugural issue of *Humboldt Geographic* has been defined by the accoutrements of pandemic: sitting in isolation, staring at computer screens, and surviving another damn Zoom session. I was limping to the finish line of the school year.

Then came graduation. In person. A bunch of 2020 Geos, with their commencement relegated to YouTube, joined this year’s crop for the real deal, live. The joy of GESA grads celebrating, hugs, photos, and meet-the-parents... Well, commencement 2021 seemed a sign that we may have turned a corner, that geographers may soon return to doing geography face-to-face, together exploring and trying to make sense of the endlessly, fascinatingly weird “real world.”

COVID-19 forms the backdrop of much of this issue of HG. In the following pages, read a pair of feel-good stories made possible by the pandemic. Discover how Geography majors adapted to the virtual university. Search for Bigfoot, view a city in China through the eyes of an HSU Geog alumnus, visit southern Humboldt cannabis farms, go door to door with an enumerator for the 2020 US Census, and experience a bunch of other enchantingly bizarre places. Enjoy! See you soon.

~MAD
The Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis showed up with spirit for the 75th annual conference of the California Geographical Society, April 23-25, 2021. This was the first-ever virtual CGS meeting.

The conference featured an impressive lineup of featured speakers. Friday’s Keynote Address, titled “Between the Lines: California’s Carceral and Abolitionist Geographies,” was delivered by Dr. Sharon Luk, professor of Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies at the University of Oregon. After Luk’s talk, a panel of formerly incarcerated students who are now undergraduates at various CSUs, spoke about their experiences, offering valuable advice to Geography instructors on how to better serve students who have been incarcerated. Amana Harris, executive director of Oakland’s Attitudinal Healing Connection, gave a powerful talk, “Claiming Concrete Canvas: The Oakland Super Heroes Mural Project,” for Saturday’s Presidential Plenary.

HSU accounted for a large share of undergraduate presenters, earning most awards. Senior Katie Piper landed the first place McKnight Professional Paper Award for “Nature’s Spigot: Bofedal Presence in the Peruvian Andes Mountain Range,” and sophomore Jessica Janecek took second for “The Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project.”

Taking the presidency in 2019, Dr. Derrick announced that 2020 would mark the first professional geography conference to be held in Oakland. The pandemic may have foiled that plan in 2021, but, fingers crossed, 2022 will be the year Oakland finally hosts a professional geography conference.

Dr. Sharon Luk delivers opens the conference with Friday’s Keynote Address.
**FACULTY UPDATES**

**LEENA DALLASHEH** is in her sixth year at HSU, teaching classes for Geography, History, and Politics. Having spent the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic with family, Leena says she felt strangely isolated in Humboldt County. Despite challenges, she has made progress on a book manuscript, now approaching completion. Most fall semesters, Leena teaches the Modern Middle East, a course cross listed in Geography and History. She also runs the Let’s Talk about the Middle East film series, now in its fifth year. Leena is a member of the Committee on Academic Freedom at the Middle East Studies Association, and she is on the steering committee of Historians for Peace and Democracy.

**MATTHEW DERRICK** is in his third year as chair of GESA, doing his best to steer the department through the challenges of the pandemic. He is also serving as program coordinator for International Studies and in his second year as faculty leader of Global Humboldt, a first-year learning community. He is in his second year as president of the California Geographical Society, additionally serving as co-editor of the *California Geographer*, the organization’s flagship peer-review journal. Along with his colleague Nick Perdue, Matt supervised a team of GESA students in the production of the inaugural (2020) issue of *Humboldt Geographic*. Over the past year, he published five peer-reviewed articles, including a piece co-authored with a former HSU graduate student, and delivered three conference presentations. An affiliated faculty member of the Humboldt Institute for Interdisciplinary Marijuana Research, Matt is excitedly working with GESA undergraduates on the Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project, a collaboration with the California Cannabis Oral History Project.

**AHMED FOGGIE** began teaching at HSU in 2020 as a Geospatial Concepts lab instructor. In the fall of 2020, Ahmed co-taught a class on *Golden Gulag*, Dr. Ruth Gilmore’s book on prison reform. Spring 2021, he designed and taught Transatlantic Studies, an innovative course investigating how the Transatlantic arose as a region through the trade of enslaved Africans and how legacies of slavery in the Americas continue to influence contemporary culture, politics, and socio-economics. He published “Why the Transatlantic,” an article bringing attention to the legacies of inequality found throughout the Transatlantic, in the 2020 issue of the *California Geographer*. Ahmed is active in CGS, working as a consultant to develop the organization’s anti-racist agenda, chairing a committee building a mentorship program for BIPOC students of Geography, and playing a key role in organizing its 2021 conference. Last year, Ahmed was a featured guest on the podcast *Honoring the Baobab Tree*. Ahmed serves as a member of the North Coast Cooperative’s Board of Directors and is an active member of the local NAACP chapter.
LAURA JOHNSON, in her fifth year as a lecturer at HSU, regularly teaches GEOG 300: Global Awareness, GEOG 301: International Environmental Issues and Globalization, and AHSS 108: Nature, Culture, and Food. Last fall, she taught a course at HSU’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute called Yoga for Ecological Grief. She was on parental leave for the spring 2020 semester, following the birth of Laura and Nick Perdue’s daughter Cordelia Rose in November 2019. Laura has reflected on new parenthood in essays and poetry published by Tikkun, Resilience.org, and the Good Grief Network. Over the past year, Laura has continued yoga training, completing her advanced teacher training in June 2020 and wrapping up a certification in trauma-conscious yoga in the fall.

NICOLAS MALLOY has taught Geospatial Analysis courses at HSU since the 2012-13 academic year, including GSP 101/L: Geospatial Concepts and the accompanying lab, GSP 270: Geographic Information Science, and GSP 370: Intermediate Geographic Information Science. In 2019, Nicolas published *Geospatial Concepts: The Fundamentals of Geospatial Science*, a textbook co-authored with Dr. Amy Rock. In 2020, Nicolas published two more books, *Essential Modeling Techniques for Geospatial Analysis Using ArcGIS: An Intermediate-Level GIS Workbook* and *Pass the FAA Drone Pilot Test: Remote Pilot Exam Preparation 2020*. Both books are undergoing peer review through HSU Press and will be available as free downloads. Nicolas also works as a consultant and subject matter expert on projects related to geospatial science and the development of geospatial educational materials. He is founder of the Geospatial Institute, a company that publishes geospatial educational resources, and contributes open educational materials for publication through HSU Press, the Geospatial Institute, and his YouTube channel.

LUKE “TY” McCARTHY is in second year teaching for GESA as a lab instructor for GSP 101: Geospatial Concepts. With his son Arroyo arriving last May, Ty moved back to his hometown near Yosemite National Park to be close to family. Ty also remotely teaches Introduction to GIS and Technology and Applications in Natural Resources for College of the Redwoods, all the while pursuing an online master’s degree in Geography. He serves as website editor and an *ex officio* CGS board member. In the fall 2020 semester, Ty teamed up with GESA colleague Ahmed Foggie in leading a book discussion of *Golden Gulag* with HSU Geography students, culminating in participation in the first-ever CGS Social Justice Book Club hosted. Ty is an advocate of social justice, environmental responsibility, and self-care/self-sufficiency as a form of protest.

NICHOLAS PERDUE is in his fifth year at HSU and loves living in Humboldt. This year Nick and Laura Johnson welcomed daughter Cordelia into their lives and have enjoyed spending so much time...
together as a family, although parenthood presents new challenges. In addition to his usual rotation of courses, Nick taught the initial offering of GEOG 100: Critical Thinking about Digital Technologies in summer 2020. Nick continues to work on a variety of research and creative projects, including a study of the geographies of permaculture and backyard relations, development of an atlas of the North Coast of California, and collaboration with students and colleagues on *Humboldt Geographic*.

**AMY ROCK** has been working on finding ways to improve her virtual classroom, remaining connected to students in our new remote reality, and wrapping up a few research projects. Her article “Home Tweet Home: Can Social Media Define a Community?” was published in the *Journal of Appalachian Studies* in March 2020, and “Bringing Geography to the Community: Community-based Learning and the Geography Classroom” was recently published in *GeoJournal*. Amy taught Community Geography for the second time, following the course’s debut in spring 2020. She also created maps for the *Edible City*, a forthcoming atlas on Cincinnati’s foodshed and food history. Doc Rock is also hoping to pick up her research on company towns, looking at communities like Scotia that were founded on extractive industries and are now trying to redefine themselves.

**CHELSEA TEALE** is in her eighth year teaching at HSU. She has taught nine courses along with their respective labs/depth sections, crossing the 2,000-student mark in the fall of 2020. She had a paper accepted in 2020 by *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* that pairs historical records and pollen from sediment cores. Chelsea took advantage of the pandemic to write an article on disease in the 1650s for *New Netherland Matters*. She continues an ongoing project investigating the climate history of the Dutch colony of New Netherland (now New York). Chelsea is preparing a podcast on 17th-Century Hudson River flooding for *Dutch New York Stories*. Last summer, she took a course on reading Dutch. In the fall of 2020, Chelsea started her first term as a University Senator, representing lecturers, and was asked to become Treasurer for the Society of Women Geographers. She works for the New Netherland Institute on digital outreach and programming. The organization is working on an ArcGIS StoryMap to bring geography to its website. Chelsea is also in her third semester teaching Physical Geography at College of the Redwoods.

**ROSEMARY SHERRIFF**, on leave for the 2020-21 academic year, is focusing on the second year of a three-year study funded by the National Science Foundation. The research explores how competition, species, and habitat interact to influence conifer tree responses to drought in northern California in order to improve management efforts to mitigate conifer die-back and wildfire risk. The research provides hands-on field- and lab-based research experience and employment for multiple graduate and undergraduate students.
Community Geography
Doing Geography in Partnership with Local Organizations
Dr. Amy Rock

On the surface, Community Geography—a new offering in the GESA curriculum—is a class about making maps. But to call it a “map class” is to ignore the fundamental purpose of the course: connecting students and community organizations around spatial issues. Community Geography is an emerging subfield that applies geographic methodologies to community issues. For geographers, this connection is obvious, but bringing the power of maps to illustrate community challenges and opportunities can be eye-opening for many others.

The connection of students to their local community during their time in school has been shown to foster lifelong civic engagement and sense of place (and in the short term, boost retention rates). Folding in spatial thinking creates a process in which decision making is space- and place-driven, geographically coding the learning environment and enhancing memory. The focus of Community Geography efforts at universities around the nation is to co-produce solutions and knowledge, rather than students-as-cheap-labor or top-down researcher-driven projects that may or may not directly benefit the community. These types of courses often fall under the category of service learning, but that designation does not always mean the exchange of knowledge is a two-way street, as it is in this course.

Community Geography developed from my past life working at nonprofit organizations. Working at a nonprofit, I saw it as a no-brainer to apply spatial thinking and GIS to our community projects and environmental reviews, building capacity and improving where and how we served the community. Later, as I moved into teaching full time, I had the opportunity to introduce many of my nonprofit contacts to enthusiastic students who helped them visualize data in ways that made powerful statements, evolving into a course called GIS and Nonprofits. But not all geographers are GIS folks, and just as geography isn’t only about maps, neither is Community Geography. In this new course, offered for the first time by GESA last spring semester, students learned about the power of community involvement and how they could use their skills to achieve some of the change they want to see in the world.

Throughout the course, we discuss the role of nonprofit organizations in serving the public, how to identify community needs, and how to collaborate in developing the capacity to meet community needs. Students are paired with local organizations, working with them to design and develop their projects. Most students in the spring 2020 class opted to build projects using Esri’s StoryMaps, a web-based platform that allows them to develop interactive stories and videos and, yes, make maps, without requiring programming experience. Students were responsible for communicating with the organizations on needs, data transfer, and outcomes. When the pandemic caused us to switch abruptly online, we were fortunately able to do so relatively seamlessly. We had to get creative with some of the data collection, but for the most part, communication and data transfer shifted to the virtual setting with few changes to project goals. (Many thanks to all our project partners for their grace under pressure at a time when many of them faced enormous challenges themselves due to COVID-related restrictions and impacts.) Projects ranged from environmental awareness and education campaigns to historic preservation.

What’s the saying? “Think globally, act locally.” And that is what we are doing with Community Geography: bringing our geographic lenses to impactful local issues.
efforts, local food security initiatives, and arts programs. Students shared their perspectives in a recent issue of Redwood Roots magazine, an HSU Press publication focused on community-engaged learning at HSU, and now in this issue of Humboldt Geographic.

Last spring, Community Geography was taught with a one-unit Depth Experience class designed to take a deeper dive into a topic than is permitted within the typical course framework. For Community Geography, this Depth Experience represented the first step in creating an annual survey, dubbed the Eureka Survey, which would capture public opinion on a variety of topics. Based on the Detroit Area Study, a University of Michigan long-form survey project that spanned more than 50 years, the goal of the Eureka Study was to create a questionnaire template that could be used each year, with modifications as needed, to help inform city planning efforts and build a data repository that would allow for longitudinal research projects. The class traveled to a Eureka City Council meeting to introduce the proposed study and receive approval to proceed with the project, which many students reported as an eye-opening experience.

The pandemic caused a significant disruption of the Eureka Survey, as a key component involved public-release events followed up with in-person interviews to collect a stratified random sample. Lockdown precautions meant that all of that was scrapped. Nonetheless, students did gain valuable experience in developing survey questions and building the survey instrument. A handful of responses were collected to test the instrument, but the number was insufficient to draw meaningful conclusions or claim any significant representation of broader community sentiments. Once HSU returns to something resembling normal classroom operations, GESA aims to relaunch the Eureka Survey, as enthusiasm from the Eureka City Council and other community stakeholders was high.

Spring 2021, Community Geography students worked virtually from the outset. So, while we were able to shift to virtual, this year’s projects are designed with COVID-related restrictions in mind, making it easier for students and partners to manage expectations. Even with the pandemic restrictions, we had more community partners wanting to collaborate than we had students to pair up, which is encouraging. Students are engaged in learning about the power of nonprofits and community efforts in the Humboldt area, and we will see some amazing projects emerge even in a time of pandemic.

As geographers, many of us want to help make the world a better place. What’s the saying? “Think globally, act locally.” And that is what we are doing with Community Geography: bringing our geographic lenses to impactful local issues and adding spatial perspectives to the amazing work that Humboldt-area community organizations are doing.

SAMPLE SPRING 2020 PROJECTS

Humboldt Botanical Garden
Friends of the Dunes
Zero Waste Humboldt
Cooperation Humboldt
Jacoby Creek Landtrust
Klamath Watershed Councils
Teaching in a digital space simply means that the classroom is bigger. This was the main idea underlying the structure of my Transatlantic Studies course, which I designed and offered to GESA majors and other HSU students for the first time in spring semester 2021. I laid out the scope of Transatlantic Studies in the opening paragraph of an article published in 2020 issue of the California Geographer:

Spanning 41 million square miles of the earth’s surface and connecting four continents, the Atlantic Ocean houses the origins of our current global culture. Within its depths lie legacies of nightmarish atrocities, traces of great human ambitions, and echoes of enlightened ideas. Traverses back and forth across this giant pool, the epicenter of the so-called “Age of Exploration,” resulted in unprecedented exchanges of humans, ideas and ideologies, goods and gods, technologies and diseases. The manifold consequences of these Transatlantic interactions reverberate with us today. As evidence, one need look no further than the Black Lives Matter movement, reminding us that the current economies in the Americas are founded on the labor of enslaved Africans. Financial interlinkages across the Atlantic, founded and strengthened through waves of European colonization and imperialism, continue to structure the global economy to uphold the dominance of Western Europe and North America over Africa, the Caribbean, and Middle and South America. New and hybrid cultural forms, from food to fashion and music, arose from Transatlantic interactions, subsequently becoming global culture. In short, study of the Transatlantic as a historic geographic region can lead to critical insight into complex social and cultural dynamics that we grapple with today.

The terms “watch it, read it, discuss it, and write it” represent the basic principles of the classes. Developing my skills with video editing software, I designed lectures using formats popularized by video essayists. These videos were then paired with a scholarly article, together forming the content to be ingested prior to class and acting as an entrance ticket for the discussions. Class discussions became the scenes of lively conversations dedicated to the material and allowed space for students to converse despite the limitations of the virtual campus. The cycle for each unit ended with students writing in a discussion forum, critically reflecting on the lecture, reading material, and class discussion. By design, the expert was positioned to be a facilitator. The results of this structure were enlightening. Students became responsible for managing their learning time and could watch the lectures at their convenience. The distance from campus, and the virtual nature of all courses this past academic years, compelled students to be responsible for taking control of the class and their individual experience.
Sun Tunnels Solstice

Isabella Knori (HSU Geography 2017)

What brought me to this remote corner of the Great Basin Desert in the middle of a hot, dry, pandemic summer? A four-hour journey from my home in Salt Lake City, on long dirt roads, through sagebrush and sand. I was drawn out here by the summer solstice, something I had been yearning to do since moving to Utah: experience the solstice magic of the Sun Tunnels (1973-76), a minimalist-yet-amazing Earthwork by Nancy Holt.

The Earthworks movement of the 1970s, also known as Land Art, exploded after artists wanted to distance themselves from the over-commoditization of art in the 1960s. Largely an American phenomenon, Earthworks began in the open landscapes of the West. Probably the movement’s best-known example is Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty, located on the remote north shore of the Great Salt Lake in Utah. But jumping west to another desolate desert in Utah, we find a lesser known but revered example Earthworks: the Sun Tunnels.

The quiet drive through Nevada and Utah on long, empty roads and a couple of cowboy towns is intriguing any time of year. But what makes the solstice so special? Holt designed the four concrete tunnels to line up exactly with the rising and setting sun on both the winter and summer
Each assignment was designed to allow students to apply the learned material. For instance, using an “untest” model, students designed their own midterm with the materials presented as their only tool. Each student created a unique test, displaying not only their mastery of the material, but also articulating their biggest takeaway from the course up to that point. The “untest” midterm allowed me to decide the direction of the course for the second half of the semester. I applied the same methodology in the associate depth course with an “un-essay” based on primary sources. Furthermore, in the depth section, I asked students to familiarize themselves with the dataset management side of digital cartography, imparting the idea that without clean data your maps fall apart.

The digital classroom allowed for the inclusion of other outside experts. On three occasions, I brought guests positioned to guide deeper discussion of course material. My interviews with two of the guests were recorded, which students watched in lieu of a lecture. In these instances, discussion days became live Q&A forums with experts.

Innovations made to Transatlantic Studies over the semester were necessitated by the online campus, prompting the question: Is Transatlantic Studies a digital humanities course? Sure, this course falls within the digital humanities realm, but not because of innovations occurring throughout this semester. Transatlantic Studies, from the beginning, was designed with “watch it, read it, discuss it, and write it” in mind. As such, Transatlantic Studies is not just a look back at history or an evaluation of contemporary cultural and socio-political geographies. It looks to the future, helping equip students with tools to navigate forthcoming changes in the digital age. In terms of utility, the digital tools and course content were equals in the successful development and delivery of Transatlantic Studies.

Watching the sun pass through the tunnels was beautiful. I had never experienced anything so peaceful and unique. Part earth, part art, part magic. The sun exploded through the tunnels and spilled out. The crowd hushed. Even after sunset, the light still lingered and illuminated the tunnels. One can feel the intention of the work, its ties to this incredible piece of desert.

Holt said that “the idea for Sun Tunnels became clear to me while I was in the desert watching the sun rising and setting, keeping the time of the earth. Sun Tunnels can exist only in that particular place—the work evolved out of its site.” The landscape is just as important as the art itself. This art could not exist without this particular slice of desert, deep in the Great Basin. Earthworks are deeply connected to place. This is what draws me to them. Art interacting with natural landscape, and landscape itself intertwined with art.

Although the solstice is the highlight, the sun rises and sets there every night, moving around the tunnels, whether or not anyone is present to gaze in wonder or take a picture. The Sun Tunnels are part of that landscape. Keeping the time of the earth.
It was the beginning of spring break. And the last day of school. It was a normal day until my professor, in the final minutes of my final lecture, announced we would be switching to an online format until further notice. What was supposed to be a few weeks turned into a few months, and now we approach the end of the 2020-21 school year. How will history look back on the COVID-19 pandemic? Who knows. Doing my part in documenting some of the pandemic’s effects, I posed a set of questions to a number of my fellow HSU Geography majors.

**EDGAR NARANJO**

*What has been the biggest change in your daily life?*
Not being able to see friends and family in person has been hard. Also, I have experienced culture shock: Streets are quiet, freeways empty, and there is no nightlife. It really did seem dystopian at first, but after a few weeks, I was just overwhelmed with boredom.

*What have you missed most?*
The thing I miss the most is eating inside restaurants. Now they seem like a distant luxury.

*What is one thing you have learned about yourself?*
I have learned that being isolated is a moment that a person can either thrive in or fail. In my experience, having alone time can be very peaceful.

*Have you noticed professors giving out more work?*
The workload seems intensified. One thing I appreciate is the professors’ ability to adapt and accommodate students.

**KOURTNEY BOONE**

*What has been the biggest change in your daily life?*
Interacting with people.

*What have you missed most?*
Hanging with friends, congregating together, meeting new people.

*What is one thing you have learned about yourself?*
I enjoy staying home and working on my home life.

**BELEN BRASHEARS**

*What has been the biggest change in your daily life?*
Wearing a mask! Outside of school and work, I barely see people and usually just hang out with my dog in wide open spaces, so wearing a mask has been a big change. That and general feelings of anxiety over being confronted with people’s unsolicited opinions of COVID. Also, the constant burden of wondering what is going to happen to the economy and whether I’m properly prepared.

*What have you missed most?*
Traveling and going to concerts! Although I trust traveling much more than going to concerts, I am very afraid of the backlash that may come with telling someone that I am “not from here.”

*What is one thing you have learned about yourself?*
I am very non-confrontational. Through all the social policing on both ends of the spectrum, I very much like to fly under the radar. Before all this, I thought I was a pretty good mediator and that I was kind of lazy. But it turns out that I like to stay moving and avoid conflict at almost any cost.

*How did you prepare for a new school year online?*
Pure denial. I fell behind in school because I was in denial for a couple weeks going into the fall semester.

*Have you noticed professors giving out more work?*
Not necessarily more work, but more smaller assignments. Which I will gladly take as substitutions for periodic giant papers. I have also noticed that professors will cut classes shorter to make up for time that is being spent doing an assignment that week.
How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I tried to come up with a schedule and stay on track.

How have you adjusted to the virtual environment?
It hasn’t been terrible. I’m utilizing Zoom and office hours to stay connected.

CHRISTOPHER
“JONESY” JONES

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
Direct awareness that I can no longer go through the motions of life as usual. I now have to display situational awareness at all times, remaining cognizant of the reality that we are combatants against COVID-19. I have become methodical and careful in actions and engagements I took for granted before this pandemic.

What have you missed most?
I want to say what I miss most is seeing and physically having contact and spending time with family and friends. But the honest answer is having sex!

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
Just how easily I can be lulled into a false sense of security. If I have an inclination that something might be the slightest bit safe, I try talking myself into rather than out of it. It has been a struggle during a pandemic.

How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I made sure that my laptop worked and that I could adequately use Zoom or other virtual platforms. I also made peace with the fact that this is not going to justly measure or academically define your academic tenure. I found myself saying, “Don’t be disappointed if you don’t get straight As or compile loads of new information. Just finishing will be an accomplishment.”

Have you noticed professors giving more work?
Yes, I have. Not a great deal more, but noticeable. I can empathize with my professors in that this is unprecedented for them too and how much of a struggle it must be to decide, “Am I giving them too much work for the sake of being obligated to keep them busy and engaged or not enough work to where this term will be void of new knowledge or a waste of energy.” It seems many of my professors have erred on the side of giving us our money’s worth in the form of a larger work load.

BRITNEY MARTINEZ

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
I have time to meditate and cook for myself.

What have you missed most?
Traveling abroad.

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
I have little self-discipline, but I’m working on it.

How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I set a special space for school work to help me focus.

How have you adjusted to the virtual environment?
Not very well. It has been a challenge.

CODY LEVILOFF

What has been the biggest change in your daily life?
The lack of interaction. Every talk became a phone call, every meeting became a video conference, and every meal eaten at home. No smiles from strangers, no opportunities for new friends. Just a general dulling of the outside world.

What is one thing you have learned about yourself?
I can handle loneliness better than anticipated. And I have a bug deep inside of me that keeps me going despite the situation. I have found pride in my mental resilience.

How did you prepare for a new school year online?
I didn’t. It was mostly waiting to hear what it would look like, then adapting once we were faced with reality.

What have you missed most?
Traveling abroad.
How the Pandemic Handed Me My Bachelor’s Degree

Cheri Anchondo

I am a single parent of a special needs immune-compromised child, a full-time employee of E&J Gallo Winery in Modesto, California, and a returning—and now graduate!—Humboldt State Lumberjack. I started my journey toward a double major in Geography and Dance Studies in the spring of 2006. In passionate pursuit of both majors, I proudly represented HSU on stage at American College Dance Association, on tour in Spain, and as a student-geographer at annual California Geographical Society meetings.

I was on target to graduate in the spring of 2009, but by then had exhausted my financial aid. Though working full time, I no longer could afford to continue living in Humboldt County and wait until the following spring to enroll full-time for the additional seven units required to complete an undergraduate education at HSU. Therefore, I moved back home with the intention of finishing my bachelor’s degree at a later point in my life.

As more time passed, the more distant that possibility seemed. Living 358 miles away from HSU presented the first obstacle. Finances another. Also, I became a single parent, the sole provider for my child. My priorities shifted. Throughout the years, I inquired into how I might finish my degree. However, attending a local California State University requires residency (meaning additional units). And not all HSU units I earned transfer because not all CSUs are the same. Thankfully, my employer values higher education. I received critical support from managers, supervisors, and coworkers. For years, they encouraged me to make calls and send emails. So I kept at it, every few months contacting various offices at Humboldt and asking how I could finish up, hoping the answer would somehow change.

Enter COVID-19.

I last inquired in January 2020. Per usual, there was not much hope. In March-April 2020, as news broke that universities were transitioning to full online delivery, I found the courage to send one more email and make another round of calls, asking if the courses I needed would be available online. The opportunity to complete my degree arrived as a confluence of luck, a pandemic forcing widespread online instruction, employment at a company providing me with the equipment to work...
remotely, and a tuition reimbursement program. It also involved HSU’s Office of Extended Education, the Registrar, and the chairs of two departments—Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis and Theater, Film, and Dance—all saying, “We can work this out.”

Fortunately, I was able to capitalize on the moment, completing three units during the summer and four units during the fall of 2020, finally earning my double-major bachelor’s of arts!

Finishing my bachelor’s degree has been an incredible bright spot for me during the pandemic. If not for COVID-19, I may never have completed my BA. I am grateful for the online infrastructure and support systems that made it possible. I am also thrilled to be able to model success in the face of obstacles for my daughter, Olivia, who has taught me what is possible when hard work meets optimism because she is thriving with Arthritis and Autism.

Quarantine has taught me so much about being present, being grateful for good health, opportunities to travel, learn, and connect with other humans. Most of all, this strange time in history has taught me to take moments as they happen, never quit, gather myself and coil my strength so I can spring forward. The pandemic has taught me never to give up—it is never too late to try again. My ultimate hope is that others like me will also be able to return and finish what they started, that HSU will reimagine access to higher education.

COVID-19 Gave Me a Second Chance

Erendira “Elly” Hernandez

Although a little embarrassed, I feel the need to tell my story. It may contain a huge lesson for other people. Furthermore, it is probably one of the few good things resulting from the pandemic.

I started attending Humboldt State University in the fall of 2011 and “graduated” in fall 2016. I walked the stage a semester early because I discovered if you do not graduate in May you do not get to walk on stage and my family wanted to see me walk on stage and celebrate graduation with me. The following semester, I thought I had completed the final requirements for my bachelor’s degree. My family and friends were so proud of me. As a first-generation Guatemalan-American, I managed to be the first person in my family to graduate college. And I did it while working, being a full-time student, and raising my daughter as a single mother.

More than likely, I journeyed during the pandemic. My ultimate hope is that others like me will also be able to return and finish what they started, that HSU will reimagine access to higher education and retain the online options for students with stories like mine.

Girls Just Wanna Have Sun: Elly and her daughter Lilith share a beautiful day at a beach south of North Cove, Washington.
About a week after graduation, I packed up and moved to Aberdeen, Washington, to be closer to my family. I landed a great job as a quality control analyst for Ocean Gold Seafood Companies, and everything fell into place. After two years at that position, I decided I wanted a career change. I feel somewhat silly admitting this, but after two years, I realized that I had never received my diploma. When you are busy with a child and a full-time job, life just takes over. I thought, “It’s just a piece of paper. I walked the stage. I graduated.” There was no doubt in my mind that I had finished.

Well, it turns out I had not graduated.

As I discovered, I had failed a class and another class did not double count toward general education requirements. Holy guacamole with a side of fudge berries! The lesson here is twofold:

1. Do not move hundreds of miles away until absolutely sure you have graduated.
2. Talk to your academic, major, and minor advisors to make sure that the classes you take fulfill the right requirements. All the requirements.

I was missing six units. Only six units short of earning my diploma. Horse pucky!

So, I reached out to Dr. Matthew Derrick, chair of the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis, in May 2019 and informed him of my situation. He was shocked. He, along with my other professors, thought I had graduated years earlier. I went ahead and quit my good-paying job for temporary employment, waiting to move to Arcata and complete my BA in Geography at HSU. However, I later found out that my financial aid package for the following semester would not be sufficient for me to return to Humboldt County. To put it mildly, I was disappointed. Trying to save money as a single mother is very tough. Saving at least two months of rent, plus a deposit, and the $2,000 for tuition not covered by financial aid seemed impossible. I did not know how I would ever be able to return and complete my degree.

Then the pandemic hit. I learned that most universities were changing their courses to online classes. I phoned HSU’s Office of Admissions, asking if it would be possible to complete my coursework online even though I lived in Washington. In reply, I heard the greatest word in the English language: “Yes.”

It has been a long journey. Having finally completed my degree requirements, I cannot express my happiness! I, Erendira Elizabeth Hernandez—for real this time—graduated from HSU with a bachelor’s degree in Geography and a minor in Environmental and Natural Resources Planning.

It is never too late to follow your dream.
Transferring to Humboldt State as a Geography major last fall, I joined a fully virtual educational environment. The best way to get information about the department, I quickly discovered, was to check out GESA on social media. Its Instagram page (HSUGESA) has helped me feel a real sense of community. It not only gave a face to its faculty and many of my cohort peers, but this digital space also allowed me to express my artistic mind while contributing to cohesion in the department.

Browsing GESA's Instagram page one evening, I came across a sweet album cover that had been refurbished by Dr. Derrick to announce Geography Advising Night. Like a fish caught in a net, I was drawn in by his diabolical plan to claim our own place and keep digital space evil. With no prior experience with Photoshop, I spent time between classes learning how to put software to work (shoutout to PiXimperfect on YouTube!) to create my own series of GESA Instagram posts. My source materials have ranged from magazine advertisements and pop art to movie posters and postcards, carrying the GESA stamp to help foster a distinct aesthetic associated with the department.

Helping map GESA's digital space has been a blast. In the course of two semesters, I have watched our Instagram posts increase in artistry and complexity. A corpus of social media unlike anything you might expect from an academic program. Viewing our evil assembly on my phone screen has been motivating during the pandemic. GESA on Instagram reminds us to remain flexible and resilient, keep a sense of humor, and be consistent as we plug into global networks and explore spaces that connect us all.
A. This post was part of GESA’s campus beautification campaign. B. GESA held its social hours on Fridays, so I enlisted a couple movie stars to help spread the word. C. Debuting here now, this is a piece I created on Earth Day. Let us not forget our deep roots on this planet. D. The climate in Humboldt is perfect year-round. Can’t beat cloudy days, a cup of joe, and chilling at the Arcata Plaza. E. Elton joined Dr. Derrick in welcoming us back for spring semester. F. I combined material from old magazines with new imagery to create a series of postcards announcing guest speakers and other events at the 2021 conference of the California Geographical Society.
In 2007, the city of Rome, Italy, officially recognized “Gay Street,” a road running in front of the ruins of the gladiatorial school that was located close to the Colosseum. The city of Rome has geographic locations known to be Queer gathering spaces. These spaces are where people who identify in the LGBTQIA+ community can meet. I strove to create a map that depicts the diverse Queer landscape and also highlights its vibrant culture for the benefit of all. This map was made using ArcGIS Pro, Natural Scene Designer, and Adobe Suite. I chose unconventional colors to make people stop and look.
This map, produced in the Advanced Cartographic Design course, was fairly simple to put together, but it utilizes a few different key features that are important in creating quality cartographic design using ESRI and Adobe programs. The texture and contour lines are created from a combination of DEM layers and tools in ArcGIS Pro, both focal statistics and aspect raster, creating different color classifications depending on the data values. After processing the data within ArcGIS Pro, the design process of importing data into Photoshop and choosing different layer masks to accentuate terrain and the 3D effect that the aspect aware contours create was an enjoyable process of experimentation, as was toying with the overall format and title design.
One key fact about me is that I am a huge nerd, and luckily for me, cartography is oh, so welcoming to that! This map is part of a six-map Lord of the Rings series I did with Rowan Gill for our cartography final in the fall of 2019. We started by scouring the internet for usable shapefiles of Middle Earth (the LOTR universe) and we ended up finding a whole treasure trove of data that others had thoughtfully curated. We spent many hours working with the data in ArcGIS Pro, changing fonts, adjusting colors, adding detailed symbols and labels, generally making sure each map followed the same LOTR aesthetic. One of my favorite things about this map and the others we created is that the longer you look at it, the more you see. This project will always hold a special place in my heart because it shows that mapmaking is really only limited by your own imagination. In this case, I was able to combine work for my degree with my love of fantasy, something I would have a hard time doing outside of GIS and cartography. Also, shout out to Doc Rock for her endless moral and technical support!
The goal of this project was to map a lengthy geographic region, using a monochromatic color scheme. This was definitely one of the more challenging maps I’ve made. Mapping in a subgke color is not as easy as I expected. I chose the Baja California Peninsula because I am from San Diego and used to visit Tijuana and Ensenada often. Whether for surfing, feeding on street tacos, or visiting friends, I am lucky to have grown up in such close proximity to a gorgeous place, one that holds both beautiful people and a lively culture.
“So, What Exactly Do You Do?”
Explaining GIS to Friends and Family
Kourtney Boone

For many in the field of geospatial science, the question “So what exactly do you do?” is a familiar frenemy. We often begin asking this question ourselves. Esri, the leading international supplier of mapping software and information, describes geographic information science (GIS) as “a framework for gathering, managing, and analyzing data. Rooted in the science of geography, GIS integrates many types of data. It analyzes spatial location and organizes layers of information into visualizations using maps and 3D scenes. With this unique capability, GIS reveals deeper insights into data, such as patterns, relationships, and situations—helping users make smarter decisions.”

Not bad, as far as definitions go. But I find myself answering this question with something more digestible, such as “map design” or “cartography.” Responding to this question is an opportunity to educate, but it also presents a challenge: How do we explain what it is that we do?

“When I first began doing GIS, I looked at what other people were doing with maps and thought to myself, no way will I ever be able to do that.” I heard this from HSU alumnus Brian Murphy, as he reflected on yet another map from his impressive portfolio that earned first place at the 2019 California Geographical Society (CGS) conference. With this as inspiration, I set out to challenge myself to take on a mapping project for senior research as a small part of Dr. Chelsea Teale’s dissertation on the Connecticut Wetlandscape.

Confident in Dr. Teale’s gift of prepackaged research as well as Dr. Amy Rock’s comical way of deconstructing my user-error issues, I was ready for my first mapping project outside of coursework.

Multiple computer labs on the Humboldt State campus are capable of running mapping programs. My favorite is the Kosmos Lab in Founders Hall, the beating heart of GESA for many students. Kosmos is where the deal is sealed for potential GIS students who are on the fence. It is where students share tips and tricks not covered in the formal classroom. Kosmos is also where rounds of high fives are witnessed when someone really nails a design. And then there are moments of silence when ArcMap crashes and yet another saddened student loses hours of work.

Kosmos is where I converted a Word document containing data from a soil survey into a search query highlighting areas of specific soils known to be found in wetlands as well as their geographical location inside the state of Connecticut. This was my base for plotting latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates from a spreadsheet to represent early settlement locations for colonists from the 1600s-1800s. By looking at the movement of settlement locations in relation to wetlands over the years, we can infer that a relationship exists between humans and this specific physical feature.

A more precise understanding of that relationship can be found pawing through historical documents or consulting researchers who have looked at what sort of significance wetlands may have or have had on human development. ArcMap, the program used to create this map, offers tools that allowed me to create
a circle with a five-mile radius to be drawn around each of the settlement points. It also allowed me to calculate the percentage of land comprised of wetlands within those boundaries. This map was designed to provide information regarding the physical geography of Connecticut. And it allowed Dr. Teale and me to time-travel, surveying a specific landscape that no longer exists.

While this field tends to be lesser known, job opportunities are expanding rapidly as a growing number of employers come to understand the value of spatial thinking and technologies. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment rates for professionals in the GIS community is projected to grow 19% between 2014 and 2024. If that is not enticing enough, the University of Southern California reported that the median income for GIS careers has increased by 15% since 2010.

Entering this field is stepping into a community of fascinating, funny, smart, and caring people who want to make a difference as well as a living. That feeling of victory when finally discovering it took just one button to accomplish a function in ArcMap is rivaled only by the feeling of dissatisfaction as someone who does not understand the number of hours you spent mumbling at a screen, hem-hawing over which side of a dot a city name should sit, glances at your newest masterpiece and answers, “Oh, neat.”
Longquan, City on the Move

Joben Penuliar (HSU Geography 2016)

These photos were snapped over the course of a semester that I spent teaching in Longquan, a prefecture level city of Lishui in southwestern Zhejiang, China. I began taking photos as a form of note taking and a way to push myself to delve into my surrounding environs. I had struggled early on to connect with my neighbors in Longquan. Being unable to speak the language cultivated feelings of distance between the community and me, a feeling I had never experienced before that semester in China. The camera was an outlet to explore and helped spark conversations with locals.

Like many other burgeoning burgs in China, Longquan is rapidly modernizing. But the city felt like it was unsure of what to do with its past. Longquan is famed for its Celadon, a type of jade-like glazed pottery, as well as its history of swordsmiths and bladeware. However, those aspects were treated as secondary topics amid most conversations. Much in the same way an American might view Route 66, Longquan’s tourist locations were often empty, waiting for the first hints of a possible rush from a Golden Week, one of three multi-day holidays in China. Swords and pottery no longer serve as the primary characteristics that once defined the people of Longquan as a community. Instead, I observed in my newfound friends and colleagues greater interest in more Western ideals of marriage, nightlife, and the search for opportunities that come with living in a larger city.

This was only a fragment of time from a city in transition. By the time I left, Longquan was a different place than when I arrived.
et al.: Humboldt Geographic Issue 2

Photo Essay

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HUMBOLDT GEOGRAPHIC

JOBEN PENULIAR

Honed his photo chops while an HSU undergrad, using black-and-white film to document the campus (and beyond) as he uniquely saw it. Joben also joins a long line of ace cartographers who sharpened their craft bunkered down in the Kosmos Lab. See some of his photography from 2015-16 as well as examples of his tasty mappery at www.jobenpenuliar.com/
I went searching for Bigfoot. More specifically, I went to the mythical home of Bigfoot, searching for the effect that the legend has had on the local culture. After a picturesque drive into the Six Rivers National Forest, I arrived at Willow Creek, the gateway to Bigfoot Country. In 1963, Albert Hodgson made a cast of a “Bigfoot” footprint that he found near Bluff Creek on a little sandbar. Thus started the modern legend of Bigfoot in Humboldt County. Shortly after, in 1967, Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin made their famous and contentious Bigfoot film close by. Today, tourists can purchase their own plaster cast of the original footprint just a few yards from a two-story redwood statue of the legend itself. Boasting thousands of footprints and many sightings, Willow Creek and its surrounding area make a convincing claim to the “Bigfoot Capital” title.

A carved wood sign near the Willow Creek tourist information center tells the story of Oh Mah, the Hupa name for Bigfoot, whose footprints have been found countless times throughout the last 50 years. This sign claims that reports of Oh Mah have been consistent and similar in the last hundred years. Whatever the facts behind Bigfoot, Willow Creek has capitalized on the legend, reviving the small, former logging town to the prominence it once enjoyed. Murals and carved redwood statues depicting Bigfoot have replaced the millions of board feet of redwood as the major industry of the area. In any other town, a steakhouse, a bookstore, an outdoor gear repair shop, and a motel would share little or nothing in common. However, in Willow Creek the Bigfoot brand unites these businesses.

It is easy to see why a reclusive and elusive humanlike creature would live in the vast wilderness that is the Six Rivers National Forest. I left Willow Creek and the carved redwood burls behind, heading for the great outdoors and the flesh-and-
blood version of a creature that cannot possibly be captured in wood. Driving toward Fish Lake, hosting the greatest number of Bigfoot sightings, I swung a left off Highway 96 and proceeded west six miles up a windy road. A small trail through the pines led to a small, unidentified lake. The water was glassy and clear, the air felt clean in my lungs, and the surrounding pines were still. A woodpecker tapping out the only sound on a nearby tree sparked thoughts of Bigfoot hiding just beyond my sight. The forest stretching endlessly before me seemed like the perfect place for a reclusive creature to live out its days in privacy.

“Where is he?” I wondered aloud.

And soon it dawned on me: Bigfoot is always with me, manifesting as my inner desire for a return to nature. Myths of wild man-creatures have been present in human cultures for hundreds of years. The most famous are the Yeti, Abominable Snowman, Sasquatch, and Bigfoot. Himalayan folklore gives the name Metoh-Kangmi to the creature that became known as the Abominable Snowman after British explorer Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Howard-Bury found tracks similar to those of a barefooted human high in the Himalayas, subsequently coining the term in his book Mount Everest: The Reconnaissance, 1921. Similar legends can be found throughout the Pacific Northwest, told by the indigenous groups who describe a similar wild man with varying names, temperaments, and dispositions toward humans. The Lummi, in northwestern Washington, call the creature Ts'ekwes, and while some regions harbor stories of a more threatening creature, it is generally described as being rather benign.

Human-creatures also appear in Basque, Slavic, and Central European folklore throughout the ages. The earliest dates back to the ancient city of Uruk in Sumer with the stories of Enkidu, a wild man who is shown in juxtaposition and friendship with Gilgamesh. The description given in the Epic of Gilgamesh is eerily similar to Bigfoot: “His body was rough, he had long hair like a woman’s; it waved like the hair of Nisaba, the goddess of corn. His body was covered with matted hair like Samugan’s, the god of cattle. He was innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land.” Enkidu was created as a reflection of Gilgamesh, one which could rival the great leader in both strength and wisdom. Just as nature has rivaled humankind since the agricultural revolution.

Walking through the environs surrounding Willow Creek, I felt the wild all around. This was not some curated forest with manicured paths. This was the wild, single-track forest, a place where Bigfoot might be lurking anywhere.

Legends of Bigfoot and his cousins in other cultures pop up in intersections between the wilderness and the far reaches of human civilization. Is this because the most elusive zoological mystery in recent history
important cultural values." No matter the origin, people believe in Bigfoot because they want to. They want to keep mystery alive in a scientific era where questions are being answered before the average person can even formulate them.

Winding my way around this picturesque lake, I began to feel a growing sensation of being left behind. Do we collectively feel that our culture has removed us from nature, that we must maintain and create legends and myths to reconnect us with a past we have left far behind?

The answer: yes.

And we see no better proof of this than in rural Humboldt County, where these legends make a home. Willow Creek has certainly taken the "Bigfoot Capital" title to heart, hosting an annual Bigfoot Days festival every Labor Day weekend, when Bigfoot enthusiasts congregate to celebrate the mythical creature. Here, Bigfoot explorers and believers mingle in the gateway to the country where they find their joy. People love the magic the unknown brings. And Bigfoot is just that: unknown and magical. Believers hold their hopes and fears close together with the legend of Bigfoot, for some these myths reflect what could have been and what some of us even hope for. The return to a lifestyle in harmony with nature is an appealing idea, and myths of humanoids who live it have stayed with our culture for 15,000 years. This suggests that it is closer to our hearts than just a passing fancy in the modern age of urbanization.

In A Short History of Myth, Karen Armstrong contends, "Mythology was therefore designed to help us cope with the problematic human predicament." Does this mean that creatures like Bigfoot really exist? Or is it evidence of a subconscious cultural rebellion throughout the ages, humans chafing against increasingly urbanized surroundings and producing antithetical legends to both frighten and excite? Bigfoot exists in our mind, in the collective consciousness of culture. For some, Bigfoot is an entertaining myth. For others, Bigfoot is a treasure waiting to be discovered by a worthy explorer. For me, Bigfoot is hope. Hope that one day humankind can have a symbiotic relationship with nature once again.
Eastern Humboldt is in the rural, upper reaches of northwest California, located about 40 miles east of Humboldt State University. Eastern Humboldt comprises the Hoopa Valley Reservation, part of the Yurok Reservation (Weitchpec), Orleans (Panamnik), and the town of Willow Creek. Both its beauty and challenges characterize eastern Humboldt.

Before white pioneers laid claim to the land, eastern Humboldt was tended for generations by the Hupa, Tsnungwe, Karuk and Yurok people. The current Native American population within the county borders, like other parts of California and the nation, has experienced generational trauma due to genocide, broken treaties, removal from their lands, forced family separations, and intentional efforts to exterminate their tribes. The town of Willow Creek popped up during the Gold Rush era. The lumber and logging industry kept the economy prosperous until the 1980s. The economic, social, and health costs of deindustrialization in eastern Humboldt the past few decades are significant, generational, long-lasting, and wide-ranging.

The remote and rural geography of eastern Humboldt presents a unique perspective on the health and wellbeing of children, youth development, and educational success in low-income communities. Eastern Humboldt is underserved by state, federal, and local governments. The isolation and marginalization of the region are critical issues.

Childhood poverty is disproportionately high compared to the rest of Humboldt County and the state of California (see map at right). Almost all the students (89%) enrolled in the Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified school district, according to a 2018-19 report by the California Department of Education, are socioeconomically disadvantaged and food insecure. Eastern Humboldt has been designated a food desert by the US Department of Agriculture. Children growing up in food deserts are at risk of obesity due to a scarcity of affordable healthy foods, malnutrition, and the dependency on cheap but highly processed foods. The Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified school district has the highest rates of childhood obesity and food insecurity in the county. According to the 2018 California Healthy Kids Survey, 67.2% of fifth graders, 65.3% seventh graders, and 55% ninth graders are obese or overweight.

Educational attainment is crucial to improving population health. Eastern Humboldt youth are less likely to attend a four-year university. In 2019, according to estimates by the US Census Bureau, 83% of high school graduates could not enroll in a community college or a university. From 2016 to 2020, as reported by the California Department of Education, a minimal number of high school graduates ranging from 0-11% met poor Kids: Percentage of students living in poverty within the school districts of Humboldt County (map by author).
A 40-mile drive east from HSU takes you to what appears to be paradise: eastern Humboldt County. Where lush green forests encompass a vast landscape. Where the Trinity River’s tranquil, chilly waters provide a constant lifeflow. And where tourists trickle into Willow Creek, renowned for its Bigfoot sightings, for the inland summer heat as an antidote to cool coastline.

Eastern Humboldt attracted the Los Angeles Times in 2017 and the New York Times a year later. Neither paper remarked on the region’s natural beauty, instead reporting on a youth suicide epidemic and a plethora of other acute social ills hidden behind this corner of the redwood curtain.

A troubled paradise, especially for its youth. What are the roots of such troubles?

Last fall, amid the pandemic, I sojourned to eastern Humboldt to speak with members of Dream Quest, a youth-serving organization, to seek some answers. Our conversations centered on barriers local youth confront in attaining education and finding regional career pathways. Some recurring challenges identified by Dream Quest youth mentors were the unavailability of reliable transportation, limited employment opportunities, and economic hardships.

“Transportation is absolutely huge,” according to one transitional youth mentor at Dream Quest. “Let’s say you’re a youth service provider in Eureka and you have a kid who needs a driver’s license. No big deal, you make an appointment and you’re able to take them to the course requirements to transfer to a University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU). Additionally, the California Public Utilities Commission acknowledges that all of eastern Humboldt remains unconnected to wireline broadband services. Residents often depend on expensive and limited satellite-mobile internet providers.

Marginalization exacerbates the mental health crisis among American youth due to a lack of access to broadband, transportation, economic opportunities, recreation centers, and mental health support services. In 2015, the Yurok Tribe declared a state of emergency due to a cluster of suicides among young adults residing in Weitchpec. From 2015 to 2017, as reported by Indian Country Today, the suicide rate on the Yurok reservation rose to nearly 14 times the national average.

Across the nation, the experiences shaping children’s lives are diverse. While many children can receive resources and opportunities to learn and develop the skills needed to succeed, far too many families living in marginalized communities struggle to provide the childhoods that all kids deserve. Eastern Humboldt does not have the resources, services, and infrastructure for every young resident to grow up healthy and succeed. In addition, the analysis of aggregate data and secondary sources point to a community more vulnerable than others to societal changes, such as adverse experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ISADORA SHARON, who earned an MA in Applied Anthropology at Humboldt State in 2017, is a research analyst at the California Center for Rural Policy in Arcata.
the DMV next week. Here [in eastern Humboldt] it’s a three- or four-hour commitment just to get to and back from the DMV. A half a day to run a simple errand.”

Such challenges may not sound overwhelming to coastal Humboldtians, but they can be decisive in the success or failure for eastern Humboldt’s rural youth, a cohort commonly experiencing isolation. “The kids here don’t see as much as kids in other places,” said Trish Oakes, Dream Quest’s executive director.

Reports such as those appearing in the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times add to the determination of community members in eastern Humboldt to provide critical services for the vulnerable youth nestled in their beautiful yet isolated communities. The growth in the number of youth served by Dream Quest speaks volumes. “We went from serving 20 kids a year to serving 250 kids a year,” Oakes reported. “And we went from being open 12 hours a week to 70 hours a week.”

How does Dream Quest address obstacles confronting transitional youth? According to its mission statement, Dream Quest aims to “provide youth with vocational and creative opportunities to imagine and build their dreams.” Dream Quest additionally helps transitional youth by fostering community through outreach. For example, as highlighted in the organization’s website, “Dream Quest participates in a big way at Bigfoot Daze,” an annual festival in Willow Creek where youth ride in parade floats and perform their own musical productions. Through such work, introverted transitional youth gain the courage to speak publicly. “I’ve seen kids go from being so shy that they can’t have a conversation or make eye contact with somebody to being on stage and singing in front of 60 to 80 people,” said another Dream Quest youth mentor.

Dream Quest, along with similar organizations, provide critically needed services for geographically and socially marginalized youth. However, it is important to acknowledge that youth-serving work must not stop at programs like these. The significance of investing in youth needs to be echoed to local and state governments to bring about long-lasting, positive change. Local and state governments bear the responsibility of ensuring that young people have opportunities to succeed in the most rural of landscapes, including the small settlements of eastern Humboldt County.
My Time Working the 2020 US Census

Erendira “Elly” Hernandez

The United States Census, conducted every ten years, is mandated in Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution. The Census is important for many reasons. An accurate count of the country’s population determines how many seats each state receives in the House of Representatives. Calculations for federal funding of schools, hospitals, roads, and other public services are also based on Census data. For these and other reasons, it is important that all people in the US be counted. Population undercounts lead to skewed seats in the House and contribute to the marginalization of certain groups of people.

The 2020 US Census’ validity was hit on two fronts: governmental bureaucracy and COVID-19. The Census was slated to start on April 1, 2020—enumerators knocking on doors, counting residents at their homes—and completed by the end of July. But when COVID-19 hit, tallying halted—going door-to-door and counting people in the middle of a pandemic was a very dangerous task—and the Census was suspended. I was hired in February to work for the 2020 Census and a couple weeks later was supposed to begin training. Instead, I received a call from my supervisor notifying me the Census had been postponed. Finally, I received word I would start work in mid-July, meaning the 2020 Census had been delayed three months, closing on October 16 instead of July 31.

Because of the approaching presidential election, the Census was supposed to have ended in July in order to give the US Census Bureau sufficient time to total the population count and apportion seats in the House of Representatives. With the Census delayed by months and the election process underway, President Donald Trump arranged a court order to halt the Census on October 16 instead of October 31. Cutting the Census short contributed to an inaccurate population count on election day. It also meant that a percentage of the US population remains uncounted.

The first week of October, my supervisor at the Census Bureau asked if I was interested in flying from my home state of Washington to another state where populations counts were far behind. Seven states desperately needed enumerators because their counts were too low. I agreed. So, in addition to my work in Washington, I served as an enumerator in Arizona.

My work for the Census Bureau gave new, sometimes unsettling insights into US population...
geographies. I became more aware of underrepresented communities in our country, some avoiding Census workers out of fear. Enumerating in Washington and Arizona, I walked house to house and occasionally encountered undocumented residents. Many were Hispanic.

Because I am fluent in Spanish as well as English, I was able to converse with many of them. When I explained that I represented the federal government, often folks from this undercounted population informed me that they did not want to fill out the Census because they were afraid of the government. Most expressed fear that, were they to give personal information, immigration would show up on their doorsteps. I would try persuading them to complete the form, informing them that the Bureau only uses the information for statistics. The agency cannot, by law, share any personal information. My efforts sometimes succeeded. But most often, the undocumented residents remained too scared to speak with me, let alone complete the Census.

In Arizona, I met an enumerator who had been working for the Census in Palm Springs. I spoke about my experiences with undocumented residents, describing how deeply they feared deportation. My coworker was surprised to hear of such encounters because, she reported to me, undocumented residents in Palm Springs, like those I encountered in Arizona, were acting out of fear: They reported that they feared being deported for not filling out the Census.

Wanting to know why some residents opted not to partake in the Census, I designed a survey directed at my fellow enumerators, posting it on Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit. The survey results, from a total of 297 responses delivered from across the country, astounded me. The reasons I encountered most often in the field why people refused to answer the Census included:

- I do not trust the government.
- I do not want to buy anything (thinking I was a salesperson).
- Refused to open the door.
- Not interested.

My survey opened with the question: “What reasons did residents give you for not wanting to partake in the Census? (Check all that apply).” Respondents were then posed the follow-up question: “How often did someone refuse to answer the US Census because [followed by each individual reason].”

Four-fifths (79%) of responding enumerators stated that residents do not trust the government. More than one-fifth (21%) reported this reason was offered to them at least a couple of times a week or once a week, just under one-fifth (19.7%) said it happened at least once every day, and 13% said almost never.
We live in unprecedented times. The years 2020-21 have been a period of distancing, isolation, speculation, hysteria, fear, and the addition of protective face masks to our everyday apparel. We have adjusted and adapted our day-to-day lives in response to the pandemic. The words “quarantine,” “self-isolate,” and “contact tracing” have become all too familiar.

Contact tracing is not new in the realm of disease epidemiology, but many of us still are puzzled by what a contact tracer does. Contact tracing of diseases has been a practice performed throughout history, consisting of much of the basic methodology John Snow utilized in his famous spatial analysis of a deadly cholera outbreak in London in 1854. Snow was an English physician who pioneered the tracing and mapping of disease. He did this by interviewing patients and their families. In this manner, he was able to trace their movements and make spatial correlations with their deaths, ultimately discovering an innocuous water pump on Broad Street as the common thread that tied together all those afflicted and the source of the cholera outbreak.

Now I ask you this: What if instead of a stationary and inanimate water pump transmitting the disease, it was numerous mobile and living sources? Yes, COVID-19 is quite different than locating the single source of a cholera outbreak, both in terms of scale and complexity. However, many of the lessons and techniques first implemented almost two centuries ago still hold true.

Contact tracing COVID-19 is done by a team that interviews and informs people who may have been in contact or exposed to somebody diagnosed with COVID-19. This is part in the larger objective of stopping transmission. To stop the spread of COVID-19, movements and interactions are traced to create a mosaic or pattern of contact.

Reaching out to those who have become exposed starts on the level of the individual contact tracer, which can be employed by various agencies and organizations working at a multitude of geographic scales. There is a great deal of mystery and misinformation about what it is exactly these contact tracers do. Luckily, I had the pleasure to interview my mother, Joy Jones, who is a contact tracer for Los Angeles County. She was happy to fill in the grey areas and introduce us to what contact tracing COVID-19 entails.

Jonesy: Please introduce yourself and your position.
Joy: My name is Joy Lavin-Jones. I am a manager for State Unit Two, teams 12, 13, and 14 with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

Jonesy: How did you become a contact tracer?
Joy: The governor of California called for an immediate hiring of state workers to train and become contact tracers for California. I was nominated by an employee and I met all the requirements and once I expressed interest, I was offered the job and I accepted.

Jonesy: How do people typically respond to calls from interviewers or to news they may have come into contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?
Joy: Based on my experience—and I have no data to back this up, this is just my opinion and...
experience—90% of contacts that I have spoken with are completely cooperative. They are generally pretty relieved that they have someone to inform them of this potential danger, and they typically have loads of questions that I will do my best to answer. It is key to have good interviewers, and, in my case, I do. I will say that once again this is anecdotal and just my experience.

Joy: What happens if the contact you are interviewing is showing symptoms?

Jonesy: We will make a presumptive positive addition and immediately inform them that they need to isolate. In this instance, we provide them with whatever resources they might need. The contact then becomes a case, a new investigation is open for them and the appropriate steps and actions are then taken.

Joy: Where does your information go? Where does your information come from?

Jonesy: We have access to large databases that are used and shared by LA County. These databases we have access to are IRIS and CRM. Then lab results go into the IRIS database (both positive and negative) and then County management distributes the positive cases to local contact tracing interviewers.

Joy: What resources do you have for those who contract COVID-19?

Jonesy: There are tons. However, LA County is so big we can’t deal with providing personalized resources unless it is a special circumstance, like somebody who is homeless or pregnant. Some of the resources we can provide are eviction protection, attorneys on staff, numerous websites on medications, and how to isolate properly. In fact, we have an entire call center devoted to providing resources to those in need.

Joy: What actions are in place to protect sensitive groups, such as undocumented residents?

Jonesy: LA county has no interest in citizen status. This is all confidential public health info. It is unfortunate that there are no federal resources available for groups like those who are undocumented because COVID-19 does not care about your citizenship.

Joy: How has contact tracing been successful?

Jonesy: Well, let’s see, there are two main goals of contact tracing. First is establishing contact with the person who has either tested positive or has been exposed to someone who has tested positive to COVID-19 and make sure they isolate or quarantine properly and provide them with resources to do this and answer any questions they might have. The second goal is to learn about others who may have been exposed and gather detailed data about them, such as demographic information that could potentially show how the disease moves throughout communities and where there might be a need for additional focus and outreach. This is also important to forecast where COVID-19 may spread.

Joy: How has contact tracing been unsuccessful?

Jonesy: Early on, as we were all learning about the disease, it wasn’t very successful. It has, however, improved dramatically with an increase in publicization and the interviewers have improved over time with different styles of communicating, the more interviews conducted, the more practice and experience the interviewers get. I also wish the resources contact tracers provide could be more personalized despite the large volumes of cases. One big issue that I have is that those who pay their phone service providers for caller ID that shows who is calling them, in the case of contact tracing interviewers they will see that the call is from LA County Department of Public Health, but if they don’t pay for this caller ID, they will see a 1-800 number that often gets ignored. In my opinion, this is a public health and safety emergency and is similar an Amber Alert notification. Nobody must pay additionally to see an Amber Alert—the phone companies are forced to send them out. It is all the same number for LA county contact tracing interviewers and would only take one number for the phone companies to program to become recognizable. I am currently trying to get this recognized and changed.

Joy: How long do you think COVID-19 contacting tracing to continue?

Jonesy: It will go on for a while. I believe the number of contact tracing interviewers will decrease with a successful vaccine that will lower the incidents of the disease. I also hope that the state employees that have been redirected to work with the local public health jurisdiction can begin to return back to their normal jobs and positions.
For a city boy, camping in lush forests and serene mountains was a big transition. Though challenging, my internship with Geography Professor Dr. Rosemary Sherriff and Forestry Professor Lucy Kerhoulas last summer was filled with excitement and opportunity. Exploring a diverse wilderness, learning to identify its rare and exceptional species, I was introduced to the complex geographies of forests and wildfires.

Every Monday, I arose at 6 a.m., gathered everything I needed for the week, headed out the door, and was loaded up by 6:45 a.m. Sometimes my commute would be local. Other times, the drive would take four to six hours. We traveled as far south as Mendocino County, ventured north close to the Oregon border, and journeyed as far east as Mt. Lassen. The longer distances usually meant we would be spending the week camping, returning to Arcata by Thursday evening. Deprived of luxuries in the great outdoors, I became more resourceful, finding joy in living away from everyone and everything I was accustomed to. Until last summer, I had never had the opportunity to be so close to nature.

Working as a field assistant primarily under the guidance of graduate student Sophia Lemno, I was part of a team investigating conifer mortality and regeneration in the forests of northern California. We began collecting data, undertaking measures to ensure that adequate data was collected in order to monitor specific conditions at sites across northern California. Over the course of the summer, I developed a research methodology that I can apply in future careers. I learned how to sample and assemble cores from living as well as dead trees, count regeneration, measure individual trees, collect samples, and manage data. This internship opened my eyes to the scope and complexity of organizing and carrying out a field research project.

Examining geo-physical systems, we recognize that no natural landscape is free of human interference. Acknowledging anthropogenic influence is crucial in understanding underlying dynamics that create natural habitats. In the lands managed by both public and private entities, one discovers...
discontinuities in those spaces. In many areas, forests are suffering because of severe overgrowth, a hazardous condition for wildfires. In other areas, clear cuts leave few—if any—trees standing.

While California law enforces some of the country’s strictest logging practices, my experience this past summer suggests that many hurdles remain on the path to proper, sustainable timber management. In recent years, Californians have witnessed devastating wildfires which result from longstanding forest management policies that have ignored traditional forestry practices of indigenous peoples.

By going into the field and conducting research, I learned how to read forest landscapes and think critically about the history of a region. Last summer, I fostered a love of nature. And I took part in a research project that helped develop my applied geographic skills, methodology, and my interest in sustainability. My internship has been instrumental in setting me on my current course. The morning drives through mountain roads and past verdant meadows allowed me to apply my recent geographic education to better understand the valuable ecology that surrounds us. With another fire season fast approaching, I hope we can learn from our past mistakes and implement more stringent regulations in order to minimize the damage to California’s biodiversity, ecology, and people.

US CENSUS...Continued from Page 36.

Three-fourths of responding enumerators claimed that residents were not interested in partaking in the Census. Almost two-fifths (39%) reported this happening at least once each day, one-fifth said it happened a couple times per week, and 15% encountered it every other day.

Likewise, three-fourths of the responding enumerators said residents refused to open the door. Just under half (49%) claimed to encounter this at least once daily, 17.6% reported that it happened a couple times per week, and 8.8% said it happened every other day or almost never.

Slightly more than half (52.9%) reported encountering residents who did not know what the US Census is. One-fourth said this almost never happened to them, 19.3% said it happened at least once a week, and 17.6% said a couple times per week.

Of responding enumerators, 27.8% reported encounters with residents who were afraid of immigration/government authorities. And just over one quarter (26.1%) reported interactions with residents who thought the enumerator was trying to sell them something.

The US Census is critically important. We cannot have miscounts or forgotten communities. The 2020 Census was abridged by unprecedented circumstances, leading to an inaccurate and potentially biased population survey. It is important to remember the former integrity of the Census, and aim to return it to a proper, accurate count. Demystifying the goals, repercussions, and implications of the Census is crucial to ensure that the already underrepresented peoples in the US do not fall further into the cracks.
California’s Former Sundown Towns Face Up to Racist Legacies

Michael Christmas

Many towns in California and the United States have a deep history of racism, segregation, and violence. Sundown towns are majority-white places that attempt to keep their towns minority-free through violence, harassment, or discriminatory legislation. “Sundown towns” refers to the practice of town officials posting notices that minorities could work and travel in their towns during the day, but must leave by sunset. From 1890-1960, approximately 10,000 sundown towns stained the US map. Some of these towns were very open about their policies, posting “whites only after dark” signs in public spaces. In Edmond, Oklahoma, a postcard read: “A Good Place to Live...No Negroes.” And Mena, Arkansas, advertised itself by saying: “Cool Summers, Mild Winters, No Blizzards, and No Negroes.”

(On a personal level, one characteristic of my hometown is its disturbing lack of diversity. According to a family story, my grandfather moved to the Palo Cedro area to get away from people in Stockton he deemed as “undesirable,” meaning non-whites.)

With this backdrop, Victor Hugo Green, a post office worker, wrote the Negro Motorist Green Book in 1936. The Green Book, as it became known, detailed areas in the US that were safer for Black people and other racial minority groups to travel. Green stated in his book that the “White traveler has had no difficulty in getting accommodations, but with the Negro it has been different.” The Green Book was issued annually for three decades, used widely by Black people and other groups to navigate racist landscapes. Green ceased publishing his book in 1966, shortly after legal desegregation.

The Green Book was an essential resource for non-white motorists trying to navigate the Golden State. California has the distinction of hosting at least 113 former sundown towns. Some have begun acknowledging their ignoble past, with current residents advocating for more inclusive and anti-racist curricula within their schools. For instance, Glendale, California, was a sundown town with an active Ku Klux Klan and a neo-Nazi group from the 1960s into the 1990s. The California Real Estate Association used to boast that Glendale was a “100 percent Caucasian Race Community.” Recently, however, the Glendale City Council voted unanimously in favor of a resolution that not only acknowledges its ugly past, but also apologizes for its residents’ wrongdoings. Carol McGrath, a longtime Black resident of Glendale, characterizes the resolution as mainly symbolic. While such resolutions are offered up as symbolic gestures, the move by the Glendale City Council marks a start for former sundown towns to face up to their histories and try to move forward with a clearer understanding of how the past continues to shape the social and geographic conditions of the present.

Schools have assumed center stage in this reckoning. Last year, the California Department of Education announced new anti-racism lesson plans for the state’s schools, responding to then-President Donald Trump’s call for the removal of the 1619 Project from all school curricula nationwide. The 1619 Project, an ongoing education plan put together by the New York Times focuses on “the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans.” Trump was seeking to replace 1619-influenced curricula with a more “American-first” education.

Anti-racist lesson plans counter the current lackluster education on civil rights, slavery, manifest destiny, and host of other race-related issues. Public schools across the US are built on lesson plans skewed toward the white-centric American exceptionalist point of view. There are few critiques of capitalism and brief, if at all, is the acknowledgement of atrocities against Native Americans. In their stead, schools and school systems across the country prioritize white, male, and hetero-normative perspectives.
Both Eureka and Arcata were known sundown towns. The 1860 massacre of Wiyot on Tuluwat Island stands a reminder that Eureka may rightly be considered a sundown town upon the arrival of the first white settlers. However, many trace Eureka’s history as a sundown town back to 1885, when a Chinese man accidentally shot and killed a City Council member. This event led to people of the city forcibly removing all 480 Chinese-American residents from Eureka. A law was then drafted and accepted by “concerned” citizens that banned all Chinese people from the town. A committee was formed to enforce the law. Town property owners received official notification they should not rent to Chinese people. The law was repealed only in 1959. Today Asian-Americans make up 8% of Eureka’s total population of around 27,000. Only 350 of the 2,627 businesses in Eureka are owned by racial minorities. Despite being repealed more than six decades ago, the effects of legalized racism remain with us.

In 2017, HSU sophomore David Josiah Lawson was stabbed and murdered at an off-campus party. Elijah Chandler, a close friend of Lawson, gave him CPR for 15 minutes before emergency medical technicians and police arrived. According to Chandler, EMTs and police were unceager to help. And while he was attempting to revive Lawson, Chandler reported, two white women watched and kept repeating, “I hope that n-word dies.” Lawson later died at a nearby hospital.

Despite multiple witnesses, Lawson’s death remains unsolved. His mother, Charmaine Lawson, contends that, had her son been white, his murder would have been solved quickly.

Eureka’s status as a former sundown town is evident today. The City of Eureka’s main webpage includes no obvious attempt to recognize its history as a sundown town. Also absent is any evidence of the City of Eureka commenting on social justice rallies or events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. The city issued a press release on June 22, 2020 that details the Eureka Police Department’s (EPD) support for “CA Leading the Way,” the California Police Chiefs Association’s (CPCA) new platform. “CA Leading the Way” supports police reform nationwide. This is a step in the right direction. However, it appears that EPD and the City of Eureka have made no visible efforts to reach out to minority groups or social justice groups within the area.

Despite small steps forward, former sundown towns in California and across the US have immense work to do to avoid repeating horrendous histories of racism. With more inclusive and diversity-focused teaching in public schools, the next generation may understand more accurately the legacies it inherits, with atrocities taught as they actually happened.
Over the last 50 years, few places in the world could match the economic and cultural impact of California. Perhaps in no other realm is that more evident than in the state's primary cash crop: cannabis. From pioneering breeding techniques and the development of groundbreaking strands to a production volume that dwarfs every state in the union, California—and especially Humboldt County—has long stood as the epicenter of American cannabis. The wave of legalization in recent years has finally brought this important industry out of the shadows. In doing so, it has also opened the door to develop a true historical record on cannabis in the Golden State.

Initiated by GESA Chair Dr. Matthew Derrick, the Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project is a partnership with the California Cannabis Oral History Project, together seeking to take the first steps in creating that historical record by conducting in-depth interviews with the principal growers of the county’s renowned cannabis industry. The project also partners with the 420 Archive, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of cannabis history, and Oral History Center at UC Berkeley, one of the nation's leading oral history offices. Through the firsthand accounts of the growers themselves, the interviews provide a detailed history of Humboldt’s cannabis industry, tracing its origins, development, and evolution over the last five-plus decades. Such firsthand accounts offer important insight on topics ranging from cannabis culture and world-renown breeding techniques to the long fight against prohibition and changing market dynamics.

The Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project, as envisioned by Dr. Derrick, is also designed to develop HSU Geography majors into field-savvy, experienced researchers. Through interviews with growers and others who have played pivotal roles in making Humboldt world-famous for its cannabis, undergraduate geographers are invited to hands-on investigation and exploration of the histories of some of the more fascinating places and people in the county.

Research articles drawn from the project’s first two oral history interviews grace the following pages.
The first person interviewed for the Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project, Sunshine Cereceda, was raised in southern Humboldt by back-to-lander parents, enjoying what she paints as an idyllic childhood. The early 1980s of her youth were filled by playing in the woods, sleeping outdoors, helping neighbors, and potlucking. She fondly remembers living in a house with neither electricity nor hot water. In school, parents in the community were her teachers who, Sunshine recalls, “encouraged us to grow spiritually” and become self-reliant.

Like other southern Humboldt children who were exposed to cannabis cultivation young, Sunshine reports becoming aware of the healing aspects of cannabis while still a kid. She witnessed firsthand how her mother, after smoking a joint, found relief and peace. She also came to understand that marijuana cultivation helped pay bills. Sunshine grew her first marijuana plant as a teenager to pay the tuition required at Petrolia High School, then a boarding school of thirteen students. With that first plant, she took up a practice widely shared in SoHum. Evidence of cultivation stood in plain sight. It was common to see a cannabis plant in front of someone’s home, she recalls, there for everyone to see.

Sunshine remembers cannabis cultivation in her youth as small scale, even subsistence level, a way to pay bills in a remote area offering few opportunities for gainful legal employment. By the end the 1980s, however, cannabis cultivation had transformed from a home-grown and self-sufficient interest to a large-scale commercial endeavor. Before commercial cannabis, “people were living on food stamps,” she recalls. “Then when people started figuring out this would be a cash crop for them, people started to up their production.”

The increased scale of cultivation was accompanied by an expanded cohort of growers in southern Humboldt. “We were very open,” Sunshine says, “and I think that’s what made it inviting... With very little knowledge, they could become a grower because we were a community.” As the number of pot fields and people working in them multiplied, legal surveillance began to creep in, Sunshine remembers. The Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP), a multi-agency law enforcement task force launched in 1983, aimed to eradicate illegal cannabis
farms across California. One area consumed most of CAMP’s energies: the Emerald Triangle, the tripartite heart of cannabis cultivation consisting of Humboldt, Mendocino, and Trinity counties.

A feature of the 1980s war on drugs, CAMP is notorious in southern Humboldt for its heavy handedness. In response to increasingly frequent raids, community members would “go out there and record what CAMP was doing because there were young families that were being terrorized,” according to Sunshine. Governmental surveillance did little to stymie the flowering industry. The lure of large profits attracted locals and a stream of new folks to large-scale pot farming. The menace of helicopters coupled with the influx of money caused suspicion and stress, she says, and sometimes brought violence within the community.

Sunshine recalls how this atmosphere affected her: “It was difficult for me to really love the herb and love what I did because it could be taken away and taken away in such a violent kind of way.” Still, she and so many others in southern Humboldt carried on growing. Heavier surveillance spurred Sunshine to change cultivation sites every few years. “If you stayed in one place for too long, you’d get too comfortable,” she says. “And if you got too comfortable, you’d make mistakes.”

In addition to rotating sites, Sunshine developed new tactics in what became known as “guerilla growing.” Guerilla growing refers to the practice of hiding plants deep in forests—for instance, in the canopies of redwoods or in the shadow of manzanitas—hidden from the searching eyes of law enforcement.

Surveillance drove many farmers out of open fields and into the shade, giving rise to “diesel dope growing.” Diesel dope refers to growing cannabis in the hills, generally in large shipping containers using bags of potting soil, fertilizer, and artificial light. As Sunshine came across this scene, she found it to be ugly with substantial waste.

The passage in 1996 of California Proposition 215 ushered in the era of medical marijuana, bringing newfound awareness of the plant’s homeopathic properties. Sunshine began exploring the creative and healing aspects of cannabis and turned inward to “look more deeply at the mental constructs that I had around me from growing up during prohibition.” Other benefits came with Prop 215. Sunshine contends it helped single mothers, who turned to cannabis cultivation when partners failed to pay child support, and suggests a broader empowerment of women in weed. “We realized more openly that it was a medicine, women started to do a lot of medicine making,” she says. “Also, women were able to leave bad marriages
High and Dry:
Showing her farm to HSU Geography majors Jessica Janecek (left) and Belen Brashiers (right), Sunshine (center) explains the intricacies of outdoor dry farming (photo by Matthew Derrick).

quantities of marijuana, prices dropped precipitously, ultimately squeezing out many old-timer craft farmers.

Eventually deciding to attend Humboldt State University, Sunshine soon was introduced to a new community: indoor growers. She discovered that indoor growing, thanks to 215, was flourishing in Arcata and other larger settlements of northern Humboldt. Indoor grows became common practice as yet another way to outmaneuver detection by agents of the law. Sunshine left Arcata, returning to southern Humboldt, when serious discussions of state legalization were resumed. The looming end of prohibition fueled her desire to operate a sustainable farm, tell her story, share her message.

In 2016, the citizens of California voted in favor Proposition 64, thereby legalizing the use and possession of recreational marijuana for those above the age of 21. The shifting legal landscape again spelled dramatic change for Humboldt’s cannabis industry. Faced with the realities of commercial cannabis, farmers have become more professional. For Sunshine, legalization has allowed her to plan a business, develop a genetics line, create a brand, and roll out a product line. She belongs to a new class of professional growers who face new challenges brought on with the end of prohibition. The competition that comes with a legal market may be stressful and a source of its own anxieties. But, as Sunshine attests, it sure beats the past fears for oneself, one’s livelihood, family, or community.

For those of us who lived during the darkest times of CAMP, we were the last people to put our plants in the sun.
In 1996, after 3,000 days in prison, John Casali returned to live in his childhood home in southern Humboldt, where he now owns and operates Huckleberry Hill Farms, a legal cannabis estate. Arriving at this place, back at home and happy at home, did not come easy. Hard time and hard work, in prison and after his release, have freed John to live in peace and share his love of cannabis with anybody fortunate enough to visit his gorgeous plot of land in southern Humboldt County.

Included among the fortunate visitors is a GESA gaggle, including one department chair and a couple curious undergraduate researchers-in-becoming, who journeyed out to Huckleberry Hill Farms last fall to record John’s interview for the Humboldt Cannabis Oral History Project. A child of back-to-lander parents, John is a second-generation farmer who, for reasons that will become apparent, requested that his story be recorded without anonymity. He wants his story saved for posterity with his name firmly attached, sharing his experiences with cannabis and how the plant has impacted his life for good.

GESÁ: How did you become involved in cannabis cultivation?
John: My mother educated me on the cannabis plant and the benefits it brought people who had certain ailments… It was shown to me in the same respect as a tomato plant or a zucchini plant or a fruit tree or a vine of grapes. And so, for me as a 10-year-old kid following my mother around, I was growing a tomato or I was growing a cannabis plant—it was the same exact thing. And she taught me right off the bat that the more time or the more energy or love put into this plant, the better it would turn out in the end. That’s what makes sun-craft cannabis so special. And that’s what differentiates our product from product that’s grown on commercial larger scale grows in southern California.

GESÁ: How did your generation compare to your parents’ generation?
John: The more conservative groups like my parents… really didn’t like seeing their children or their generation seeing the effect that this had on us. At that point, it was so addictive, growing the plants and breeding our own strains, that there was really no stopping us. We really just took it to another level. And as that level started to increase, it really started to increase with all of Humboldt County and specifically southern Humboldt County. That’s when enforcement started to get worse. So, the timing of the two created a catastrophe for a lot of us.

GESÁ: How did you respond to surveillance?
John: We did some really evasive, weird things back then… Most of the community would go into town at
six in the morning during the growing season because when enforcement convoys would show up at your property, it was always at 6-6:30 in the morning. So, we were learning from them the habits that they started to take on, we would counteract those habits by not being at our places, and we would be in town. We were a pretty close community. We would all talk. And once you found out where those enforcement teams were, if they weren't at your place, you were able to go back to your house and go along with your day... And along with that, you would once in a while see some helicopters doing aerial surveillance... It was really just this cat-and-mouse game for all summer long every single day.

**GESA: It must have had some effect on you as a kid.**

John: It was very strange, and it was traumatic for a small kid growing up, now looking back at it, to have been growing up in those kinds of pressure situations. The last thing you wanted to do was come back after school and to find out that you parents were arrested, and you were home now alone because they were in jail for growing cannabis.

**GESA: How did you respond to enforcement?**

John: The stakes continued to get higher and higher as enforcement started to get more and more. You could no longer grow out in the open. Where before you could grow one plant out in the open and it would be a five- or ten-pound plant, now we were forced to grow underneath the manzanita bushes, where we would hollow out all the lower stuff and just leave a small bit of leaves so that an aerial surveillance couldn't see down through those leaves to the cannabis plants. What we looked for was either manzanita or white thorn bushes because those were usually bushes that grew in the sunniest south-facing slopes. The downside about growing underneath the trees or growing underneath the bushes was that where I sometimes would get five or ten pounds of plant, now it was an ounce...

**GESA: How did you get caught at 20 years old?**

John: Unfortunately, this old man down the road of this piece of property we bought ended up turning us in...to a BLM agent, who is a [representative of a] federal agency. So, the investigation started off as a federal investigation. They actually went to our garden sites multiple times throughout that summer and filmed us. They had a bunch of different videos of us and pictures of us. It was August of 1992 when I woke here at my house, where I grew up, and 30 federal agents showed up at six o'clock in the morning. I had a nine-millimeter pointed at my head, brought me into the house and served a search warrant here at this piece of property, and at this other piece of property where my best friend and I were growing cannabis... Understand that these are two kids who were first-time nonviolent offenders, who had never had a speeding ticket, would never hurt anybody in their life. And the feds, “Who are they?” We were just in shock, like, “Oh, we're in trouble?” I was able to go in, post bail, and for the next three years I had to go pretty much every month...to the San Francisco Federal Courthouse building with my best friend.

**GESA: What was the trial like?**

John: After three years, over a hundred people from this community came down to the courthouse. The judge stood up in front of me and my community and said...he would wish for nothing else more than to have given us a year or less, that he thought we were rehabilitable. But because of the law and because his hands were tied, that our brackets were under the mandatory ten years to life. So he felt that giving us ten years was kind of doing the best he could do for us... He gave two of us, you know, ten years in jail.
GESA: What was prison like?
John: You start to get into your own routine in there, and so it’s okay for us. But our family and our friends really had to worry about us every day: Are we okay? So, the real crime was against them. I feel very guilty for having put them through that. Fortunately, I had made some pretty good choices while I was going to court that enabled me to fit in pretty easily [in prison] and be accepted into that kind of community.

GESA: What was it like getting out of prison?
John: At the end of the day, we did that time. Unfortunately, my mother passed away while I was in there. And so, so I came out...

For most of the interview thus far, in telling his story, John has not shied away from showing emotion, at times laughing, at times on the edge of tears, at times laughing on the edge of tears. However, at this point in the interview, he is suddenly overcome with emotion, breaking into tears. As do I [MAD], pausing before tapping out the remainder of this sentence, recalling this moment in the interview.

John: I came out to this community that for the whole time that I grew up was part of my family. And now they were my family. And so that’s what this community in Humboldt County really represents, a tight-knit community that no matter what, we’ll be there for you in times of hardship. That’s one thing that hasn’t changed to this day. It’s hard to have something like that happen and leave, because nowhere else in the world that I know is a community like that. When it comes down to it, there’s no money, there’s no amount of money in the world that can replace family, friends, or community. Humboldt County is rich in ways that they don’t even realize, or some of us do realize.

John gathers himself, as do I [MAD], type-typing.

John: They brought this place [his childhood home] back to life. They gave me a second chance at having something special and having a new life. I’ll never forget them.
How much you could grow. It was such a grey area. I think I started growing 10 plants and just really fell back in love with it.

GESA: When did you realize you wanted a legal farm?

John: I woke up in the morning to a Blackhawk helicopter sitting a hundred feet away over my house. The whole house, all the windows were rattling… Minutes later I called my third-party compliance person. I said, “You know what? Sign me up because I can’t put my friends or my family or myself through this again.”

GESA: What is it like being a legal cannabis farmer in Humboldt?

John: At first, it was very strange… It’s easier for me to share about my life and what I’ve done in the past because I’ve already been in trouble. Media has had a hard time talking and getting the truth out of other farmers because they’re so fearful of what has happened in the past… I think this community relies on me a little bit to really be able to share my story and in turn, share their story. Because when I look back at it, the federal government was trying to make an example out of somebody. Unfortunately, it was me and my best friend. But it could have been almost any one of the people that I grew up with. They know that and I know that, and it didn’t slow anybody down.

GESA: Would you change anything?

John: The journey’s been long, amazing. I really wouldn’t trade it for the world because we all have our own individual stories and our own journeys that we created. Looking back on it, it’s just part of my journey and part of my story. I love to share it with people because it really bonds me with people that otherwise it might not, might not have that bond with.

Sunshine pours herself into building a distinctive brand, Sunboldt Grown. She has operated, under the Sunboldt Grown moniker, her own breeding program since 2015. Since legalization, she has created a unique product line that includes cannabis strains such as “Loopy Fruit” and “Wanderlust.” For the past few years, Sunshine has been collaborating with a hash maker to produce bubble hash, a cannabis concentrate made from the trichomes that are separated from the bud of the plant through a lengthy process using ice water as a solvent to remove resin heads.

Sunshine, along with Sunboldt Grown, is recognized for being organic and for open-field cultivation that relies on dry-farming techniques, meaning no water and minimal fertilizer. Sunshine plunks the plants in the earth, maybe bathing them as babies, but thereafter ceasing all watering. She lets the minerals within the soil, the sun, and groundwater do the brunt of the work.

Sunshine is often called a do-nothing farmer for her innovative and sustainable practices. But any observer of the passion and effort poured into the herb can attest that Sunshine is far from a do-nothing farmer. Hearing the story of her long journey, which is far from finished, we learn not only about Sunshine Cereceda, but also gain insight into the dynamics of Humboldt’s ever-changing cannabis industry as well as shifting contours of local culture.
The sun rises in the morning and you drive out to the several bird traps placed in the Santa Clara River Bed that harbor a group of Brown-headed Cowbirds (Molothrus ater). Upon arriving at the first of six wire traps with wood outlines, you set your supplies outside a locked panel suspended by metal hinges. You unlock the master lock to the opening which barely lets you through, forcing you to a hunched position with a handnet, a black-and-white data sheet, some fresh water, and a smaller cage. With the goal of tallying each male/female/juvenile down on a little paper chart, each with an abbreviation particular to the bird such as BHCO, for the Brown-headed Cowbird, or CATO, for the California Towhee (Melozone crissalis). These four-letter representations of the entire species are the Alpha Codes in accordance with the Institute for Bird Populations, an organization whose mission involves “enabling science-based conservation of species and habitats via a study on demography, abundance and ecology of birds and other wildlife.” You, the trap technician, are the physical embodiment of the organization, an active member in the challenges of conservation. Your daily actions function as the hands. You serve as its face. Today you see that there are more than the target birds flapping their wings from one end of the trap to the other.

Attempting to maneuver your handnet in a figure eight pattern, to predict the ricochet of a particularly wise California Towhee, you see that you have company. A curious child is standing about twelve feet away, his gaze fixed on you and your net with confusion and wonder. You remove the headphones, which were playing a lecture about the metaphysical implications of object-orientated ontology (OOO) by American philosopher Graham Harman, just in time to hear, “What are you doing and why?”

The child murmurs to you without even a greeting. “I am capturing these California Towhees [you point to the tanish brownish birds] to let them go free from this trap, all the while, keeping these Brown-headed Cowbirds [pointing to the darker brownish birds] in the trap to be eventually moved to a storage pen as part of an attempt to manage invasive species in this area.” The child, who was evidently paying attention, asks you to elaborate on the term “invasive species” as well as explain just how and why one species differs from the other. You take a moment to think of the best ways to explain the how’s and the why’s of your invasive species removal so as to convey the message in a positive manner. A stern believer in conservation, you would like to inspire the youth.

For explanation of the “how,” you have a multitude of methods to communicate the modern ecological concept behind a “species.” Biologically speaking, a species is “a group of organisms that share a genetic heritage, are able to interbreed, and to create offspring that are also fertile” (Editors 2016). If you wanted to drown the little one in biological terminology, you could explain that cowbirds reproduce through avian brood parasitism which means “the laying of one’s eggs in the nest of another individual,” granting the cowbird more time to lay “eggs in nests of over 220 species of birds, and over 140 of those are known to have raised young cowbird” (Croston 2010). Bird populations such as the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Empidonax traillii extimus) experience the “costs of parasitism [which] range from diminished nestling growth rate due to competition with larger and more competitive parasitic offspring to total loss of breeding by the abandonment of parasitized broods and the eviction of all host eggs by the early-hatching parasites” (Croston 2010). California’s riparian songbirds face

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“And this is the forbidden truth, the unspeakable taboo—that evil is not always repellent but frequently attractive; that it has the power to make of us not simply victims, as nature and accident do, but active accomplices.”

-Joyce Carol Oates

“There is nothing that can be changed more completely than human nature when the job is taken in hand early enough.”

-George Bernard Shaw
increasing habitat fragmentation, yet worse is the complete transformation of their habitat into human infrastructure (such as the ever growing concrete connections of suburbia).

A geographic stand on the question of “how invasive species?” might relate that invasive species exist within a landscape that, once shaped by and suited for native species, they changed to meet their needs. Or you could list the statistical surveys that correlate the intensive removal of cowbirds with an increased number of endemic species witnessed by ornithologists. A conservation study done by Griffith Biology in the late 1980s near Camp Pendleton found that cowbird parasitism is the likely biggest factor (besides massive habitat loss) leading to certain species being nearer to extinction. The endangered songbird known as Least Bell’s Vireo (Vireo bellii pusillus) was reported to make a comeback around the regions of riparian near managed traps, as cowbird control is considered necessary until a decrease in the number of brood parasitism allows for native species to reestablish their niche and actually rise in numbers (Griffith & Griffith 2000). The increase in cowbird populations is now associated with a loss of overall biodiversity, especially in nest builders whose habitat is already destroyed yearly for human infrastructure projects, further weakening the endemic riparian-bound songbirds’ chance at raising successful offspring of their own.

If feeling a bit artistic, you would respond in a poem to help the child remember. Something like this:

*This is how cowbirds are a pest,
Cowbirds wastes no time on a nest,
Why waste the energy like the rest,
When Least Bell’s Vireos do it best.*

Despite All Their Rage: Brown-headed Cowbirds discover it’s a trap.

These explanations are “how species differs from another one.” Turn now to the “why?” and try answering in a manner pleasing to younger ears. Potential answers to the question “why do anything about it?” are often a bit broader, as they involve a bit of axiology, the study of value, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy. If human beings exist inside what is considered the natural world, then perhaps non-native species spread by humans are just by-products of the human-nature interactions? Ned Hettinger (2012), a retired professor and philosopher, elaborates on a defense for the apathy towards non-native/exotic/alien:

> Native species are those that have significantly adapted/interacted with local biota and abiotia. Non-natives are increasingly pervasive, their presence indicative of and caused by massively increased human global impact...

Preference for natives need not be based on prejudicial dislike of the foreign or misconceived ideas about the nature of natural systems...

The generalized antipathy toward non-natives is justified...
by respect for independent nature, for the vast majority of non-natives are introduced by humans and thus are part of the ever-increasing and arrogant human domination of once natural dimensions of earth... [Non-natives/invasive species have a] negative impact on biodiversity and their tendency to homogenize the world's ecological assemblages. Hettinger defends the biological nativist perspective while acknowledging criticism that some exotic species can naturalize over time as they interact with the region's ecosystem. With an environmental knowledge founded in deep respect for nature, this environmental philosopher argues for nature's aesthetic value alone as a reason to attempt conservation. Any sort of non-native species removal act can be seen with a sense of appreciation for human agency in the pursuit of a natural aesthetics of a balanced ecosystem. Hettinger cites a paper published in Nature, titled “Don’t Judge a Species on Its Origins,” that outlines the concerns of 20 ecologists. This group describes how in the actions of conservation one must “assess organisms on environmental impact rather than on whether they are natives” (Davis et al. 2011). In aesthetic protectionism, natural ecosystems are thought of as worth protecting and preserving for aesthetic appreciation as a significant justification for environmental protection. It is at this moment you remember object-orientated ontology (OOO) for its stance against anthropocentrism (human beings are the most important entity) as well its metaphysics of ecological equality of an object (meaning that an external world exists independently of human awareness).

In the ambitiously titled Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything, Harmon lays out seven axioms of his philosophy:

(1) All objects must be given equal attention, whether they be human, non-human, natural, cultural, real or fictional. (2) Objects are not identical with their properties, but have a tense relationship with those properties, and this tension is responsible for all of the change that occurs in the world. (3) Objects come to just two kinds: real objects exist whether or not they currently affect anything else, while sensual objects exist only in relation to some real object. (4) Real objects cannot relate to one another directly, but only indirectly, by means of a sensual object. (5) The properties of objects also come into just two kinds: again, real and sensual. (6) These two kinds of objects and two kind of qualities lead to four permutations, which OOO treats as the root of time and space, as well as two closely related terms known as essence or eidos. (7) Finally, OOO holds that philosophy generally has a closer relationship with aesthetics than with mathematics or natural science.

In Harman’s explanation, OOO is a flat ontological theory that grants the balance between scientific naturalism and social relativism. Objects are not understood as simple bundles of qualities or clusters of human perception. Harmon is more curious about the “being of objects.” Immanuel Kant has been canonized in Western Philosophy for his ethics, such as the categorical imperative that one should act in respect for other beings’ humanity, while offering the maxim that you can “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.” Harmon argues, however, that the most significant concept (or the most overlooked) of Kantian philosophy is the idea of the thing-in-itself: an object that escapes the phenomena and exists in the nomena, without human perceptions or concepts to distort it. This thing-in-itself is not accessible to science or reason, but fractions of the good/true/beautiful are accessible through aesthetics and experience.

Object-oriented ontology shares a branch with the school of thought known as speculative realism. The philosophy of OOO offers a way of looking at all the objects of the world, including ourselves, that is not human centered. Harmon offers another differing perspective on what knowledge can say about...
anything in this world. He sees two ways knowledge describes an object, with reductionist problems associated with each:

(1) There is the description of what something does to explain what it is, and
(2) there is the description of what something is made of.

Object-oriented ontology exploits speculative realism, attempting to bring something new to the philosophy community by centering humans and identifying the reality within object-object relations. Explaining the need for non-native (“exotic” or “alien”) species removal, OOO would not focus on the relations found between humans and birds. Take the relationships between the two birds and their abbreviations: the Brownheaded Cowbird (BHCO) and the California Towhee (CATO). BHCO is not the actual Molothrus ater, but merely a mental model of an object that externally exists to the relation. OOO points out that most knowledge is sensual and cannot fully grasp the “withdrawn” object.

As an example, Harmon describes a geographer. The geographer understands a three-dimensional globe would be a better model for surface relationships of Earth, but to perfectly relate the three-dimensional world on two-dimensional paper is impossible (especially on local or regional scales). As cartographers, we accept distortion with an overarching goal of minimizing distortion in the region of focus to “be proud of detail, accuracy, and clarity of their final product” (Harmon 2018). This is the same sentiment behind OOO. The acknowledgement for both the real and sensual objects is like a geographer knowing that an aesthetically pleasing map is only a relation to Earth-in-itself. In this manner, the BHCO is not directly invasive, but the relational systems of language and science, bestow this quality on these birds in California in an attempt to relate a certain kind of knowledge.

While explaining the nature of species removal to a child, perhaps you should include the many relations that the object (specific species) has with other objects. The second-person narrative has been employed in this to show that such works of fiction are also objects. Second-person narration also helps readers keep in mind where their knowledge (system of relations) originates. OOO allows for aesthetics to be related to ecosystems, as aesthetic protectionism explains there is value in a non-humanized natural realm. OOO convinces humans to dethrone themselves from the top of the ontological hierarchy and consider other object relations. Now you are tasked with making this message digestible and manageable to future generations.

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In that education shapes the parameters by which we view the world from, HSU Geography is unique in its praxis. Its holistic approach of spatial theory and hands-on research is accommodating of those from many backgrounds and inclinations. For me, the analysis of global regions and global issues was its most fascinating aspect. The department has an exceptional faculty that can open your mind to many pertinent and pressing issues perhaps never before considered. The breadth of research and depth of expertise within the department is such that one might feel eight semesters just isn’t enough! There is some sense that at Humboldt State Geography the whole world is your classroom.”

Humboldt Geography instilled in me a sense of exploration and curiosity. I learned how to ask meaningful questions about the world around me and how to use physical, cultural, and political landscapes to answer those questions. Professors at HSU challenged students not just to study the material, but to engage with it, understand it, and experience it firsthand.”

“Fighting wildland fires in northern California in my late teens, I was given an opportunity to visit HSU’s campus and determined from that moment forward to eventually come back. After a lengthy career in natural resources management and protection, I pursued Geography at HSU, where I was instilled with countless opportunities to transition my skill set into the field professionally. I can only begin to relate how geographic studies have enabled me to appreciate the dynamics of this planet and the human experience of which we are all a part.”

“HSU Geography taught me to pursue my passion and never stop exploring. The professors encouraged me to work for the National Park Service and provided me with advice, recommendations, and support for my future career. Being a park ranger and wilderness steward in a country I wasn’t born in is a privilege. I am forever thankful for the HSU Geography community, for all the fun field trips we went on, and the opportunities that were given to me to succeed.”

“Humboldt Geography provided me with many opportunities to learn and grow. The program recognizes students’ varied interests and potentials, enabling them to blossom as geographers and critical thinkers. The knowledge and the qualitative and quantitative skills that I garnered at HSU from the teachings and mentorship of Geography faculty greatly aided me while taking on projects in the Peace Corps and continues to aid me in my career. I am extremely grateful for my time in the Geography program and for all of the support and encouragement from the HSU Geography family.”
ALUMNI UPDATES

BLENNA KIROS (2018)  
CARTOGRAPHER/GIS ANALYST  
Southern Region  
US Forest Service  
Atlanta, GA

“Take a course in HSU Geography and fall in love! The faculty are as varied and interesting as the classes they teach. I wanted to understand the world I live in, they offered me exactly that! I work for the Southern Region of US Forest Service as a cartographer/GIS analyst. I am responsible for creating data that identifies different types of lands within the Jefferson National forest. This will serve as a platform for generating habitat protection programs throughout National Recreation areas in Virginia. I love my ability to apply the theoretical knowledge and technical skills I learned from studying Geography and GIS.”

ISABELLA KNORI (2017)  
GIS/CADAstral TECHNICIAN  
Salt Lake County Recorder’s Office  
Salt Lake City, UT

“Majoring in Geography was one of the best decisions I have ever made. The program was engaging, fun, and multidisciplinary. Studying GIS helped me land my current position. GIS is such a sought-after skill that really complemented my degree. My favorite part about being in Geography hands-down was real-world exploration. Many of my classes featured field trips that took us into the landscapes we studied and talked about in class.”

DR. TIMOTHY KARAS (1992)  
PRESIDENT  
Mendocino College  
Ukiah, CA

“The HSU Geography program provides the opportunity for you to understand the complex connectivity of people and places, explore relationships between the physical environment and society, and visualize the spatial organization of humanity. Geography will ground you in any field or career you choose to pursue.”

AMANDA KAMLET (2020)  
MASTER'S STUDENT  
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education  
UC Santa Barbara  
Santa Barbara, CA

“Entering college, I knew very little about Geography. But taking Human Geography at HSU inspired me to be a Geography major because, as I learned, Geography is so much more than place-name memorization. The environment and professors that make up this program welcome all aspects of learning and are truly an amazing community. Being a part of this program has made me a better student. And it will make me a better educator. I am happy to be a member of this department’s alumni.”

MASSIMO LAMBERT (2018)  
CONSULTANT  
Sebastopol, CA

“HSU Geography taught me the importance of community, in academics and life. Having such a tight-knit group of hardworking peers and knowledgeable professors at Humboldt State has defined the way I approach political organizing work with San Francisco Rising and the Sunrise Movement Bay Area, as well as the storytelling workshops I facilitate with Storycenter. My GIS and cartography skills have translated into permaculture designs for Black-owned farms in rural Mississippi. I have found that my education continues to define the way I see the world and my passion to make positive change.”
Alumni & Careers

KIM REDDING (2002)
ACCOUNTANT
Portland, OR

“After taking Cultural Geography at HSU, I quickly changed my major to learn about different people around the world. My geographic education changed the way I see the world and how I see myself in it. I was fortunate enough to take part in the Tibet/China Field Studies Program in 2001, learning the invaluable skill of how to be a traveler. I developed a global perspective, experienced diversity like never before, and gained a bold curiosity and confidence about travel that will always be with me. Whether traveling with family or solo, the skills I learned and the experiences I had with HSU Geography sparked a life-long love of travel.”

JOSHUA SHINDELBOWER (2018)
GIS MAPPING TECHNICIAN
Green Diamond Resource Company
Korbel, CA

“The high-quality practical learning experience afforded to each student of Humboldt State’s Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis is a true blessing. Each instructor has a wealth of knowledge across an amazing variety of subjects, and they will share it with anyone who is willing to seek it. I apply knowledge and skills gained while attending HSU every day in my professional and personal life. Take advantage of the resources offered by the program... and share them with the rest of the world.”

DAVID PAYTON (2014)
CLIENT SUCCESS MANAGER
Procore
San Diego, CA

“HSU Geography is built upon a legacy of passionate contributors that invest in their students and their community which makes campus my second home. My career is based on my ability to solve complex problems the construction industry faces when adopting new technologies. My work has taken me from projects in Seattle to construction sites in Costa Rica and across Latin America. HSU geospatial sciences played a huge part in my ability to dive into my career while following my passion!”

DR. DENIELLE PERRY (2006)
WATER RESOURCE GEOGRAPHER
School of Earth and Sustainability
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, AZ

“Like so many others, I didn’t know I was a geographer until I took a class in Human Geography. HSU Geography professors provided me with the inspiration and education I needed to pursue my long-term career goals. As a geographer, you will be uniquely positioned to think in systematic ways across scales to solve some of the most pressing social and environmental problems of our times.”
Ever wondered what you can do with a bachelor’s degree in Geography? Well, as it turns out, you have a lot of options! During the fall 2020 semester, I managed to interview three HSU Geography alumni pursuing meaningful careers in strikingly diverging fields, including Isabella Knori (2017), Geographic Information System (GIS)/Cadastral (CAD) Technician for the Salt Lake County Recorder’s Office in Salt Lake City (see her update on Page 56), and Sara Matthews (2014), Program Coordinator at the Tahoe Resource Conservation District in South Lake Tahoe (see her update in 2020’s Humboldt Geographic). Look for those full interviews next year.

The 2021 Alumni in Focus interview, however, features a person whose path to and from HSU Geography really stands out: KIERON SLAUGHTER (1999). Born in Berkeley, he has lived—in addition to Humboldt!—in various parts of the East Bay. Having earned a master’s degree in Geography with an emphasis in Urban Planning in addition to his BA in Geography, Kieron works as Chief Development Officer in his birth city’s Office of Economic Development. In addition to his current employment, Kieron can boast an impressive body of experience that includes involvement in local non-profit organizations, including the Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, the 100 Black Men of the Bay Area, the Coalition of Black Excellence, the Trust for Public Land, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and numerous others.

Due to pandemic-related restrictions prohibiting in-person interviews, my discussion with Kieron was conducted remotely via Google Meets.

Cassandra: What attracted you to HSU Geography?
Kieron: Well, I started in Engineering at Hampton University [historically Black university in Virginia], then switched to Environmental Science. Then I returned home and met an awesome Geography professor at the College of Alameda who inspired me to study Geography. That led me to refocus on my academics as well as intercollegiate athletics. After two years, I was ultimately recruited to play on the basketball team at HSU. I fell in love with the

Kieron Slaughter (1999)
draws on his HSU Geography education in successfully pursuing a career in the Office of Economic Development for the City of Berkeley.
location—the campus, the redwoods, the ocean, the North Coast vibe. It felt like the right fit.

**Cassandra: Did you know that you were going into Geography and Urban Planning as an undergraduate?**

Kieron: No. Like most students, I changed my major a couple times during my educational journey, eventually landing in Geography. Initially, I didn't know what I was going to do with that degree. I anticipated teaching at the community college level to give back and support students like me. It wasn't until I did an internship as an undergraduate with Transform in Oakland that I really fell in love with land use, city planning, equitable transportation, city planning, and the built environment.

**Cassandra: You graduated HSU Geography in 1999. Did you land work experience right away that helped you develop the economic skills for a position like your current one?**

Kieron: Right after earning my bachelor's degree, I actually wasn't ready to jump right into my career yet. I experimented with web development for a couple years because it was really “hot” at the time. I was also still involved with basketball and supporting young men by coaching at the College of Alameda. While working on my graduate degree, I was a Recreation and Social Services Director for several years in West Oakland. I eventually transitioned into my career in city planning with the city of Richmond after attaining my master's.

**Cassandra: When you began your career, did your higher-ups expect you to arrive with all these skills? Or was it more like do on-the-job training?**

Kieron: To a certain extent, but I think a lot of it is just the basics that you learn at any career. Like time management, interpersonal relationships skills, and working with the community, for example. What definitely prepared me for being a planner was interacting with the public. Whether you're working at the front counter or handling applications, from a fence to a subdivision, you learn to work with the community to help them achieve their goals within the framework of the zoning ordinance and CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act]. You also learn the political levers that are pulled and the entire ecosystem of a city. While I was definitely prepared to qualify for city planning positions, every position still has a learning curve due to there being differences for each city, jurisdiction, or organization.

There are uniform standard practices in the planning discipline, but typically when you join an organization, most of the learning curve is adapting to how their systems work. Whether it's learning different programs, or software, or where to turn your time-sheet in. Being able to gain experience in creative placemaking through my public. Getting to learn the system about how they manage public places like sidewalks, plazas, and streets. I also learned to work with space managers in the private sector who partner with cities to create public activities such as street closures, street fairs, farmer markets, Sunday Streets, or parades for championship teams and schools. All those different things that occur in a city that most people don't consider have ties to geography and land use.

**Cassandra: Do you supervise other people in your current position?**

Kieron: We are a small division within the City Manager's office. However, I manage several boards and commissions, including our Loan Administration Board. In addition, I managed our emergency grant relief funding to businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19 and reviewed over 1,000 applications. We were only the third city in the United States to launch such a program, and it involved the management and coordination of numerous city staff members for a variety of departments to successfully complete the project. Ultimately, we provided over $1.8 million in grants to 700 business and non-profits in Berkeley.

**Cassandra: What does your typical work day look like?**

Kieron: Our roles are informed by what happens in real time and in the specific industries and business sectors we support. Things can include getting called or emailed at any time by business district leaders, council staff, or prospective entrepreneurs in need of funding. We also attend policy meetings to serve as a representative of the city and our best interests. It's different every single day, which is one of the exciting things about it.
Early Career Opportunities for Humboldt Geographers

Otto Schmitt

Twenty-two miles north of Arcata lies an often overlooked one-square-mile park of lush trees and cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Patrick’s Point State Park is on ancestral Yurok land—it is commonly referred to as “Sumêg” by the Yurok people—and is a great place for hiking, tide-pooling, and birdwatching. It is also a great place for early career experiences for Humboldt State geographers.

Geography major Kourtney Boone was hired as a seasonal worker at Patrick’s Point, starting her position on March 13, 2020, the day the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a national emergency. From the beginning of her seasonal work, park operations were altered due to state protocols. Kourtney had to adapt to fluid public health and safety measures while continuing to perform her job duties, which included working the kiosk, greeting visitors, and collecting entrance fees. She also assigned campground spots and was the primary contact person when visitors had any issues or questions.

Kourtney was the main closer for the majority of the season. She was in charge of finalizing everything for the day and preparing the park to open the following morning. Her favorite part of the day was after day-use visitors had left, when she would spend the remaining few hours of her shift alone listening to the California State Park radio scanner, finding amusement at what park rangers across the state encountered on a nightly basis.

The highlight of the job, Kourtney said, was interacting with visitors, the number of which many longer tenured co-workers told Kourtney seemingly had increased despite the pandemic. She took special joy interacting with children as they discovered the park’s unique ecosystem. Kourtney recalls one such interaction, when a little girl was playing “stump the ranger” with her and she had to guess what animal the girl had found in the park. “It was a banana slug,” Kourtney said. “It was just so fun to watch her get involved with the park, with nature, and ask me questions. She wanted to be a ranger when she grew up, and so it was really cool to see that appreciation for a natural environment and protecting it in someone so young and impressionable.”

Asked what compelled her to apply for this position, Kourtney replied, “It sounded like something that aligned with my degree because it was based outdoors...
and recommended by a recently graduated Geography major, Sam King, who had worked at the park during his senior year at HSU.” Kourtney admitted nervousness when accepting this job, but she was determined, saying, “Let’s do it, let’s try a new challenge.”

In addition to forest hikes and sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean, Patrick’s Point also offers visitors opportunities for whale watching and viewing other sea mammals. The Humboldt coast lies along the migratory path for gray whales as they travel from the cold waters of Alaska to the warm waters of Baja California in the winter, then return to Alaska in the spring. When the whales migrate back to Alaska, visitors might see mother whales with their young calves close to the shoreline, seeking refuge from predators. The cliff at Patrick’s Point, surrounding shallow protected waters, is one of the best whale watching places on the West Coast. The peak time to observe the gray whale migration is September through January and March through June.

In her time working at Patrick’s Point, Kourtney became familiar with all areas of the park and gained proficiency in communicating clearly to visitors and using keywords to help build mental maps. She also learned much about Yurok culture. Within the park lies Sumêg Village, featuring examples of traditional family homes, a redwood canoe, and other Yurok landscape elements. Sumêg is used by local Yurok tribe members to help educate their youth and sharing their culture with park visitors.

When asked if she had any pointers for students who would may want to work at Patrick’s Point, Kourtney replied, “Absolutely! If you are interested in park work at all, just go for it. Reach out and I would be happy to help people if they have any questions.” There are many opportunities for geographers, foresters, GIS technicians, and people from other related fields to get involved.

For more information on these positions, visit parks.ca.gov/jobs

KIERON...Continued from Page 59.

Cassandra: What are some of your memorable moments from your career so far?
Kieron: We have regional meetings where we all meet and discuss topics, issues, and challenges to find solutions to common issues we face in our cities, and I really enjoy that. I also enjoy that it’s fast paced and that we can see the benefits of our work in real time, whether it’s providing a loan for a new Black-owned bakery or facilitating the first street to be named after an Asian-American in Berkeley (Kala Bagai Way). The work is broad, dynamic, and rewarding.

Cassandra: How did you get involved with the Black Panther Legacy?
Kieron: Growing up in the Bay Area, my family held prominent positions in the Black Panther Party. Their dedication to keeping the legacy of the Panthers alive was what drew me to the organization over 15 years ago. I’m also part of the 100 Black Men of the Bay Area that supports economic development in the Black community as well as mentorship for young boys in Oakland. This organization has helped with my professional development, networking and volunteerism in my community.

Cassandra: I am interviewing you during a pandemic, which has brought difficulties that impact many students, myself included. When you were an undergrad at HSU, what helped you stay motivated?
Kieron: For me, having a built-in network of the Lumberjack basketball team that supported me was crucial. The support from the coaches, trainers, teammates, fans, media, and faculty was integral part of my success at HSU. While not necessarily a fraternity or a group that’s based on something other than what you’re studying, it has those same characteristics. That was helpful for me, Lumberjack for life.

QUESTIONS FOR KIERON?

He invites you to contact him at kslaughter@cityofberkeley.info
Wildcrafting is the practice of foraging beneficial plants from their natural, wild habitat for edible or medicinal purposes. The forest, dunes, and pastures of Humboldt County are all filled with abundant and easily distinguishable plants to begin your practice of wildcrafting medicine.

In the dune ecosystems near Manila and Samoa you can find yarrow, California poppy, primrose, goldenrod, pacific aster, coyote bush, chickweed, and bull thistle. The entire plant of the California poppy can be used to make a tincture that provides a gentle sedative and pain reliever. An oil made from yarrow flowers is great for cuts and cracked skin, and a hydrosol from coyote bush can capture the sweet and earthy scent of the dunes following the rain.
The redwood forests surrounding Humboldt are filled with medical plants. Elderberry, wild rose, nettles, Oregon grape, yerba buena, trillium, California spikenard, and wild ginger can be found in the Redwoods. Edible redwood sorrel, miner’s lettuce, and a variety of berries and mushrooms can also be found in the forest. A syrup from elderberries boosts immunity and a tea of wild ginger and yerba buena is good for digestion. Be mindful not to forage in state and national parks. Better to stick to trails deep in the Arcata and Eureka community forests.

The pastures, fields, and riparian areas in Humboldt also provide spaces to forage for medical plants. Look in these open spaces for gumweed, St. John’s wort, spearmint, angelica, self-heal, California mugwort, and valerian, and the spring leaf buds of maple, oak, and cottonwood trees. A tincture of gumweed is an effective remedy for cleaning the lungs of pollutants and smoke, while oil made from cottonwood buds is an anti-inflammatory and pain reliever.
Surviving the Apple Fire

Keegan Ibanez

Fire season in California comes every year, but much like the rest of 2020, last year’s fire season was record breaking. Living in southern California, I am fairly accustomed to fire creeping toward my family home. But it is something entirely different when the fire blazes right in your own backyard.

The Apple Fire was started in Oak Glen around 5 p.m. on July 31, 2020, by a vehicle that blew some burning carbon out of its tail pipe. Within two hours, the fire had grown to 350 acres and required immediate evacuations in the Cherry Valley area. By 9 p.m., my neighborhood was given the mandatory evacuations as the fire was burning out of control and heading straight for us.

My family and I decided to stick it out and wait until the last possible moment to leave. We had our horse trailer ready and I had taken our dogs and cats to a friend in case we had to make a rapid escape. By 11 p.m. on August 1, the fire made its way to the top of our neighborhood and was less than a mile away from our home. We could see the bulldozers at the crest of the hill laboring to keep the flames away from homes and other structures.

We woke up the next morning and saw the fire had been pushed north of our neighborhood thanks to the hard work of all the emergency personnel. Though narrowly missing our neighborhood, the Apple Fire grew to 13,000 acres overnight, making its way up the San Gorgonio Pass and into the San Bernardino National Forest. Firefighters faced difficulties combating the conflagration due to topography of the burn area and the red flag conditions.

(Photo courtesy of Brody Hessin)
By August 6, the Apple Fire surpassed 28,000 acres, but it was beginning to slow down thanks to the efforts of firefighters on the ground.

Around 3 p.m. on the day of the fire, I talked to my mom. We knew there was fire in the area, but assumed it wouldn’t directly impact us. Six hours later, while at a friend’s house 30 minutes away, I received a call about the mandatory evacuation for my neighborhood. I grabbed my keys and headed home, knowing it was going to be difficult to move against the flow of evacuation.

Just minutes from home, I encountered the police checkpoint and learned the road was closed. I frantically told them that my house is up the hill, that I needed to help my family evacuate. After a few anxious moments, they confirmed my information waived me through.

The drive up to my house was like a scene out of a terrifying movie. To the left of our narrow two-lane road, the canyon below was beginning to burn. It looked like a scene out of Mordor. But I could tell I still had time to get home and help my family. When I returned home, my mother was outside talking to the fire fighters, trying to figure out the next steps. We decided I would be responsible for our dogs and cats, electing to wait just a bit longer. We knew we would not be allowed back up to the house until the roads reopened, which could be up to a week or more.
Upon discovering the Apple Fire had missed our house, I felt an outpouring of relief. Thanks to the front line fire workers, the fire got pushed back and around the neighborhood. I knew their work was not finished, but were it not for them, my family home would have been literally toast.
The deepest and darkest parts of each night since my daughter was born some months ago I’ve spent startling from fleeting and sweaty sleep, hand darting out instinctively, holding my breath as I search for hers.

Finding that soft, round belly, I rest my palm and outstretched fingers there, cupped slightly, like an oyster shell, locating its rise and fall.

That sweetest, most kissable belly, protruding like the Buddha’s, bobbing like a buoy on calm sea, each wave of breath a gift given and returned: reciprocity in real time, source of all life, our birthright, this breath.

(invitation to breathe)

Watching her silhouette in the dark dim light illuminating pieces here and there, I marvel at this fullness of breath, uncensored roundness of belly – undisturbed embodiment – a liberation I lost long ago:

taught by patriarchy to take up less space at the expense of my breath, taught by capitalism to be productive at the expense of my breath, taught by modernity to disconnect from my body at the expense of my breath, this violent mind-body separation joining all those other power-laden fragmentations of modern supremacist culture:

reason severed from emotion / self from world / human from nature / men from women / white from Other / and on it goes, each false binary blurs realities of relations, each a breath-diminishing, life-dimming violence meeting at the roots of this dissociated culture.

(invitation to breathe)

My sleeping baby daughter, free but for collective trauma that lives in her bones – as in mine, as in yours – doesn’t know the ways this world will work to take her breath, or how her privileges will spare it, or that for this she owes a debt.

She doesn’t know of the ancestral land onto which she was born, of native breath stolen and marginalized, ongoing cultural genocide, or of the missing and murdered Indigenous women, breath snuffed out like candles in a storm.

(invitation to breathe)
She doesn’t know that as she turned just six months old
George Floyd cried out for breath and for his mother,
joining so many other Black Lives smothered
beneath the knee of state-sanctioned violence
and white supremacy:
breath withheld,
life stolen,
trauma perpetuated,
power upheld.

*(invitation to breathe)*

And my sleeping daughter doesn’t know
that before she lived just half a year
the world was brought to its knees
by a pandemic that preyed on our ability to breathe,
taking breath from BIPOC in particular, illuminating
intersecting injustices like a sky-opening crack
of lightning, no more hiding,
despite the masks we wear
these days.

She doesn’t know that long before Covid-19
oppressed peoples have struggled to breathe:
from proximity to poisons,
from stifling prisons and camps,
from sleeping in their own beds,
from preferences of pronouns,
from fear in public places
commemorating enslavement,
nervous systems frazzled
and fried, breath held in,
life dimmed.
And she doesn’t know that this virus was derived
from ecological devastation that deprives
human and more-than-human kin of their right
to breathe; or that this ongoing exploitation –
called the Anthropocene –
has ushered in sixth mass extinction,
global climate catastrophe,
applauded as progress by the powers
that be: smoke from its wildfires,
water from its floods fill lungs,
already full of the grief
that lives there.

And like us, the Earth can’t breathe.

And like us, ki grieves.

(invitation to breathe)

And when I teach my daughter this
I will teach her too that this grief,
thick and heavy as it may be, is a lifeboat
on this rocky sea, a common sacred ground,
a portal.

For we have swallowed the lie
that emotions should be stifled,
and as we stuff them down in dark
depths of bodies aching from things
left unfelt, we hold our breath:
afraid to let in,
afraid to let go.

But what if each inhale could open our hearts,
each exhale an act of surrender,
our great grief metabolized with breath,
in ritual, together?
What if in this sick and dying culture
gasping out its last stolen breath

we re-learned how to breathe,
and breathed deep?
What if we stitched back together
all that has been severed, precious breath
by precious breath, making space
for all beings to breathe?

What if breath were reconciliation?
reparations?
revolution?
renewal?

(invitation to breathe)

Here now in this deep dark night I marvel
at my baby’s breath, so full and free;
I have so much to teach her,
but she more to teach me –

like how to breathe with my whole body,
like how to live embodied and whole,
like how to make each wave of breath a gift
given and returned:

reciprocity in real time,
source of all life,
our birthright,
this Breath.

Ki and kin are pronouns
for the living world proposed
by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Artwork by Samantha Stone.
Find more on Instagram @abaloon

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Follow the Department of Geography, Environment, and Spatial Analysis on social media.

Question? Contact Department Chair Dr. Matthew Derrick at mad632@humboldt.edu

On the Way Down from Huangmaojian

Joben Penuliar