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# CULTURAL TIMES

SPRING 2019

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NEWSLETTER OF THE MULTICULTURAL CENTER



## WHO WE ARE

**The MultiCultural Center (MCC)** is one of the four Cultural Centers for Academic Excellence. We are a dynamic and inclusive learning community that supports students in their academic and personal journeys at HSU. We do this by creating community, a home away from home and a safe place to Explore, Experience, Express, Empower and Engage. We are a student-centered program that fosters acceptance and respect of all people.

## OUR FAMILY

The Cultural Centers for Academic Excellence also include the African American Center (AACAE), Latinx Center (LCAE) and Native American Center (ITEPP).

The MultiCultural Center currently houses the Women's Resource Center and Scholars Without Borders. The MCC works closely with the Asian Desi and Pacific Islander Collective (ADPIC).

## OUR STAFF

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*Student Leader Organizer*



**From Fall 2018**, we wanted to acknowledge Cheryl Seidner for her brief role as the Interim Coordinator of the MCC. Cheryl was brought in part-way through the semester, and quickly became a loved member of the team.

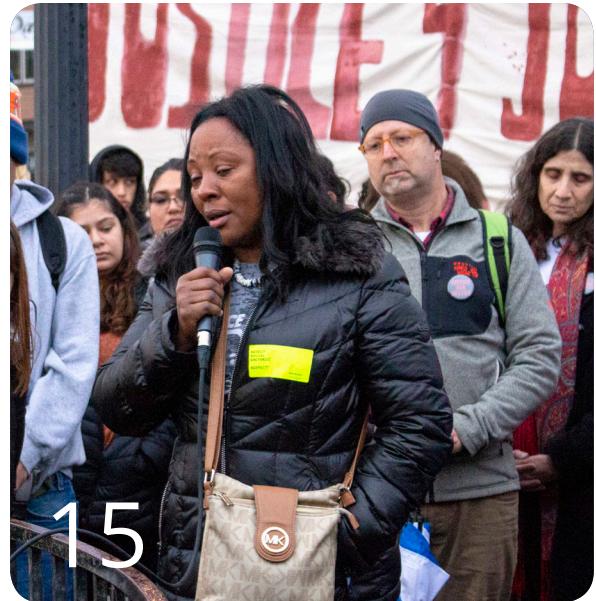
While with us, she helped facilitate multiple projects and Center events, including Diwali and Campus Dialogue on Race. She also brought a lot of food (like yummy homemade soup!) to the Center, because she felt it was important to have food available to students. It was easy for all of us to connect with her, and she stood out to us as being down-to-earth, compassionate, and incredibly funny. We all really miss having her in the MCC!





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photo by Amber Mathieu-Morales

## Letter From the Editor

**T**he 2018-2019 academic year marked a big moment for the MultiCultural Center, as it reached it's 25th year on campus. In putting the Spring issue of *Cultural Times* together, my publications team and I wanted to focus on a theme that celebrated not only how far the MCC has come, but also the progress of the students it serves. We ultimately arrived at "The Journey," which reflects on the moments that have shaped us, and also contemplates the road ahead.

Our 25th Anniversary Gala event story (pg. 10) is our main tribute to the journey of the MCC, and features the voices of former and current MCC staff. Testimonies from 2019 graduates (pg. 18) who have worked at different Cultural Centers on campus share how far each student has come in their time at HSU, and their hopes for the future. A student essay by Tammy Phrakonkham (pg. 20-21) shares what it's like to grieve after losing a parent, and explores some of the challenges faced and lessons learned.

Many thanks to all the students who helped make this issue happen by sending in stories, photos and artwork— your contributions are invaluable! And of course, thank you to my publications team, Celeste Alvarez, who designed our killer cover art, and Mona Mazzotti, my amazing publications advisor/mentor.

Enjoy!

**Cara Peters**  
Publications Editor



# HSU Celebrates the Year of the Pig

by Freddy Brewster

**Beating drums, crashing cymbals** and dancing lions marked the Lunar New Year celebration in the Kate Buchanan Room on Feb. 5.

The celebration welcomed in the Year of the Earth Pig, which symbolizes compassion, optimism, generosity and a strong sense of justice. The event was put on by the MultiCultural Center and the Asian, Desi, and Pacific Islander Club (ADPIC).

Nikki Xiong is the president of ADPIC and said that the event was put on so that people can come together to celebrate their traditions and beliefs.

"It's important to have these events, because there is a community here that celebrates it," Xiong said. "It's good to have diversity. We live in a community that is largely white and it is great to represent [Asian cultures] equally."

The new year celebration featured dancers from Eastern Ways Martial Arts, based out of the Sacramento area, where they teach the practices of Kung Fu.

One of the rituals for the students is to take part in lion dances, which help build strength and endurance.

The story behind the lion dance is one that features a legendary beast that came into villages to eat livestock and children. To scare the beast away, festival-goers wear the color red and light fireworks. The lion dance was also used to drive the beast out of the village.

Another performance during the event included MuYan Hou who played the ruan, an instrument similar to a guitar. Hou, a sophomore international from northern

China, said she came to HSU about a year ago to study international business and to perfect her English.

"In China, they make dumplings, get together with family and take time off of work," Hou said.

Caylyn Picl also presented during the festival, where she outlined some of the taboos that surround the Lunar New Year. Picl said that according to Chinese customs, people are supposed to clean the day before and not break anything during the festival. People should dress in black and not shower the day of to avoid washing away good luck.

Picl is an international studies major and said her favorite part of Chinese culture is that it is based around family gatherings.

"This event is important because it is so underrepresented," Picl said. "My favorite part is being together with everyone, seeing people from other backgrounds, races and cultures."

Tammy Phrakonkham is the coordinator responsible for planning the festival. She has helped plan the Moon Festival, Diwali and others.

Phrakonkham came to HSU from College of the Redwoods, where she started a branch of ADPIC to help students get situated more easily.

"Out here in Humboldt we are isolated," Phrakonkham said. "I like how these events bring people together."



photo by Freddy Brewster





# MCC Hosts 25th Social Justice Summit

by Freddy Brewster

**T**his year's Social Justice Summit was titled "Break That Wall," and was centered around the idea of tearing down walls and borders both literally and figuratively. Students Adrienne Bahn and Deema Hindawi planned the week long event, which kicked off Feb. 25.

"We were thinking about how the world is so fragile and about the Berlin wall, the Mexican wall, the wall with Palestine and the walls within us and within our societies," Hindawi said.

Hindawi and Bahn are the coordinators of the Summit, and worked on the event since Aug. 2018. The Summit featured a number of speakers and workshops all aimed at bringing awareness to social justice.

The keynote speaker this year was Kim Davalos. Bahn attended a previous speech by Davalos and was so moved by it that she decided to invite her to this year's summit.

"I was inspired and intrigued by her powerful rhetoric," Bahn said. "It was about embracing our own identity despite the hardships that we have to endure. With every hardship, there is beauty too."

Davalos led a discussion on Feb. 25 about the book "Alice in Wonderland" and the "intersections of her identity and life," as well as hosting a workshop titled "Heartwork: love letters and languages." The workshop focused on the five "love languages," which include words of affirmation, gifts, and physical touch.

"We show love differently, romantically and platonically," Bahn said. "It was about how we can have a conversation with our partners and ourselves."

For Bahn, meeting Davalos was the highlight of the event because it helped to solidify her own feelings about what it means to help a community. Ever since she was a child Bahn wanted to volunteer and help her community, but didn't know what that meant until she got to HSU.

"I became more aware of our political climate, so I decided to actually do something," Bahn said. "It takes a village and there are times I feel hopeless. However, bringing the events together with people evoked a feeling of empowerment."

One of the anticipated events during this year's Summit was "The Other Side of Murder Mountain." The workshop featured a panel discussion about the 2018 Netflix docu-drama that took place primarily in



graphic by Celeste Alvarez

southern Humboldt.

The series paints an image of Humboldt County as a place where "vigilante justice and outlaw culture" reign. Deidre Pike, journalism professor at HSU, was one of the panelists.

"'The other side of Murder Mountain' is about telling a different narrative about the series on Netflix," Pike said. "People have been calling us and asking if it's real. As storytellers, we have the ability to change the world, and the folks at Netflix have wide reaching opportunities."

Pike said that the series pushes a narrative that doesn't fit reality in Humboldt.

"I have been thinking about the narrative and how it almost celebrates violence," Pike said. "One of the counter narratives is, if you shine a light on Murder Mountain, people realize that the things they do can end up on Netflix."

The last featured speaker of the Summit was Barbara Curiel, who gave a presentation titled "Border Walls and Borderland Identities" on Friday, March 1.

Bahn said that she was excited for the final presentation and that the main message of the Summit is to bring awareness to injustice.

"We are here to dismantle all forms of oppression," Bahn said. "We can't end sexism without ending racism as well. If we can show real empathy and unconditional love, we can overcome anything."



## Art Show Celebrates ITEPP and Historic Protests

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by Jett Williams  
originally published in *The Lumberjack*

**I**n the 70s and 80s, local Native American tribes fought to protect their sacred religious sites from western expansion in the form of a road between the towns of Gasquet and Orleans.

This fight is immortalized alongside 50 years of the Indian Tribal & Educational Personnel Program's history in a new exhibit open until May 18th in the Goudi'ni Native American Arts Gallery, located on the ground floor of the BSS.

The exhibit, named "Ikyav, Pikyav" (or Making, Re-Making), pays homage and celebrates some of the ways that indigenous peoples have reclaimed their sovereignty and power in the modern world.

Brittany Sheldon is the gallery director, she said the exhibit is important because it highlights the constant work that Native groups have done and are doing and also teaches people who were previously unaware of these efforts.

"A lot of the students here come from all over California, and I would guess that they don't know much about this history," Sheldon said. "We have a really powerful presence with the Native American Studies (NAS) department and ITEPP, and there's a really important history of all the things that have gone on with Native

American peoples."

The first half of the exhibit celebrates ITEPP's 50th anniversary as an organization. The group started as a grassroots organization focused on helping Native students who wished to become teachers, but slowly expanded to include students from a wide variety of interests.

Interactive photo murals are on display with a binder where former students and members can share memories about the photos. Several sashes decorated with traditional artwork and worn by graduating ITEPP members hang on stands, separating the two halves of the exhibit.

Alumni Kathleen Brewer thought that the show was important given that HSU is built on native Wiyot land.

"My favorite part was the ribbons, they were so intricate and beautiful," Brewer said. "It's great to see ITEPP get recognized."

The second half of the show was a collaborative effort with the special collection at the HSU library and several NAS classes over the last year to make the G-O Road story more publicly available.

Audio interviews, old newspapers, pamphlets and journals from local activists

and artists tell the story of the Karuk, Yurok and Tolowa tribes working together to protect their sacred lands.

One standout visual piece from this part of the exhibit is a large banner created in the 1990s by local artist and activist Julian Lang. The banner says "Fixing the Earth" in bright red letters with the names of many native tribes collaged around the words. The banner was also used by local native groups in multiple protests and demonstrations.

In the end, the road was blocked by the 1984 California Wilderness Act. An earlier Supreme Court decision, however, set the precedent that native lands could not be considered religious grounds, making the victory bittersweet.

The exhibit is equal parts art show and educational experience centered around the efforts by native groups to reclaim their power and uplift those who seek an education at HSU.

"It's not like we're going to reach this point where everything is perfect and amazing. It's not the idea of a utopia," Sheldon said. "It's the idea of the constant regular work involved in claiming and reclaiming spaces and sovereignty."



# California Indian Big Time & Social Gathering



by Cassandra Caudillo

**O**n Saturday, April 6, Humboldt State University's American Indian community hosted their annual California Indian Big Time and Social Gathering event.

For over ten years, HSU has hosted this event to connect students and community members with Native American ties.

Although the event is geared towards Native American peoples, everyone was welcome to join in on the activities. Paula D. Tripp-Allen, the academic advisor at ITEPP, shared a few things about the event.

"We have six dance groups coming in from Northern and Central California," said Tripp-Allen. "We have vendors, a couple different food booths, we have people sharing arts and cultural demonstrations, there's just multiple things happening throughout the day."

The term "Big Time" is a loose translation of what many tribes say in their own dialects. Vincent Feliz, a lecturer in the Department of Social Work, works closely with ITEPP and was able to give a brief history of the event.

"The term Big Time comes from Northern Central California, they have gatherings and it's described more in their native language, but the English way to say it is Big Time," said Feliz. "Dances that go in a big round house that they have and they gather and sing at hours and hours at a time, sometimes the whole weekend. Ceremonial items will be brought out in public that have been in families for a long time."

Along with all the activities and events, there were also about 70 vendors there. Among the things for sale were hand-woven baskets, apparel, and arts and crafts. Traditional hand games and basket weaving were demonstrated and taught. There were also activities just for children to participate in.

"We have special activities for youth, kindergarten through sixth grade," said Tripp-Allen. "We have our animal tales adventure, so they get to go with the Social Work Club and visit the Wildlife Center. They go to the fish hatchery, and they do some activities in the art gallery. They're going to get to explore the campus, and we think that's a great opportunity for potential future HSU students to check out campus."

For the past few years, hundreds of people have made it a point to attend the event. There are families that come and perform every year

at the event, and it's a time that brings so many others from different backgrounds together. It's a day that celebrates the Native American culture and revels in the surrounding community.

"This Big Time is an expected thing," said Feliz. "If we didn't have the Big Time, I'm sure a lot of people would miss it."



photo by Cassandra Caudillo





# The MultiCultural Center Celebrates 25 Year Journey

•

by Cara Peters  
photo and graphic by Celeste Alvarez



**S**tudents, staff and local community members gathered in the KBR April 16 to celebrate the MultiCultural Center's 25th anniversary.

The Center opened in 1993 as a place where students of color could build community and express themselves. It was the first cultural center on campus to serve students of color from all backgrounds.

The event opened with a speech by Cheryl Seidner, who worked for the Educational Opportunities Program for more than 28 years, and served as MCC Interim Coordinator in the Fall 2018 semester. Seidner also lead a land acknowledgement and gave a blessing to the Center through Wiyot prayer.

According to Seidner, the idea for the MCC came from a student she'd known, who believed that students like himself needed a space they could go to to decompress. When that student left HSU, other students fulfilled his vision by demanding and ultimately securing the MCC.

"The Center was a student idea, it didn't come from faculty or staff" Seidner said. "Tonight we thank the students who had

continues to keep striving forth and keep being a great place."

One of the last speakers of the night was retired MCC Director Marylyn Paik-Nicely, who served in the position from 1997 to 2014 and was a major pioneer in facilitating the center's success. Paik-Nicely touched on the MCC's importance.

"The MCC is not just a program, it's a place of safety, a place of being yourself," she said. "It's also a place to talk about and dream about change, and I really think that a lot of our students have thought about what they can do to make an impact in the world."

Paik-Nicely said she's proud of past MCC students who left the Center to do impactful work. She encouraged current students to go out and do the same.

"Keep working for inclusion, social justice and equity," she told MCC staff. "Keep your voices loud, keep your energy high and give yourself big hugs for all that you bring to HSU."

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it's a place of safety, a place of  
being yourself. It's also a  
place to talk about and dream  
about change. "**

forethought about bringing the Center into existence."

Several musical performances were held throughout the night, including Gary Ronne, who performed a Japanese-style drumming, and Tatiana Robinson, whose Hawaiian music performance was accompanied by a hula dancing group.

Student Leader Organizer of the MCC, Nikki Xiong, presented a brief timeline of some of the Center's key moments, including the inception of its Diversity Conference in 1995—now called Social Justice Summit—and the creation of the MCC's staircase mural in 2001.

Xiong said he's grateful to be a part of such an influential community.

"The MCC has helped me and, I can assure you, a whole host of other students," Xiong said. "Now it's journey



Marylyn Paik-Nicely



# Soul Fitness Series Features Kemetic Yoga

•

by Sylvia Alfonso  
*originally published in The Lumberjack*

**M**ost people think that yoga comes from Asia. Kemetic yoga, however, is one of the original practices of yoga originating from ancient Egypt, the proper name being Kemet. What differentiates Kemetic yoga from other types is that it's a series of geometric postures, almost like there's math in every movement.

The African American Center for Academic Excellence (AACAE) hosted a Kemetic yoga class taught by Dionna Fletcher as part of Black History Month. This was Fletcher's first time directing a Kemetic yoga class after completing her training in Jamaica last month.

We sat in a circle as she directed us through each posture. All were welcome, and students trickled in and joined the circle. Kemetic yoga has a breathing pattern to implement purposeful breathing: inhale, pause, exhale, pause.

Each of the movements were done three times, following the geometric theme of the activity. Many of the names of the poses were slightly different from what we're used to hearing. For example, the normal sitting pose is called 'sesh.'

"It's a black practice that needs to be spread," Fletcher said. "It offers something to the POC community that Asian or Indian yoga does not."

Fletcher has been part of a series of fitness sessions going on around campus and town. The series was compiled by Chryste Johnson, interim coordinator for the AACAE.

Johnson named the series Soul Fitness as a way of representing people of color during

Black History Month, and intended to bring in new forms of movement that people haven't heard of.

It is a month long compilation of different forms of movement. Johnson explained that there's been hip-hop cardio, there will be a steppin' class and it's the same series that made Love Ya' Self Queen.

HSU student DiOria Woods was one of the students who attended the series.

"I'm a dancer, I've never heard of this kind of yoga and I like to try new things," Woods said. "I'm part of the Culture Center and I wanted to actually interact with these kinds of events."

The class was a relaxing thing to get into after the stress of the day. Fletcher made everyone feel welcomed and comfortable. Even at the intermediate level, the people in the class

felt comfortable to do the poses no matter how hard it seemed.

Nicole Lamperti was another student that joined in on the Kemetic yoga class.

"I'm in a world cultures class and was curious about this kind of yoga," Lamperti said.

The lights were off, allowing natural light come in from the sun setting through the windows. This created a more relaxed feel to the class. In the background, Fletcher played music by people of color, supporting the idea of loving yourself and putting yourself first.

Kemetic yoga brings a new form of movement to a common type of activity. Yoga is done all over the world but can be done in different forms. Kemetic yoga reminds us to be purposeful in our movements and reminds us about the different places we come from.



photo by Sylvia Alfonso





# Café Con Chisme at the LCAE

•

by Sylvia Alfonso  
*originally published in The Lumberjack*

**A**s Spanish music played softly in the background, the aura at the Latinx Center for Academic Excellence (LCAE) was comfortable and cozy.

There were drinks and snacks available, and the table at the center felt welcoming to anyone who came in. The purpose of having an event like “Cafe con Chisme” is to create a safe space for students.

Cafe con Chisme is a weekly event at the LCAE. There is never a set topic for discussion and the space is 100 percent free speech. It’s these kinds of spaces that make students feel the most comfortable on campus.

A plate of pan dulce was placed at the center of the table and more food was served along the back wall. Students sat at the round table and started their discussion of the week.

Business major Melissa Pallares, attends Cafe con Chisme weekly.

“I love feeling comfortable enough to express ourselves and I love the respect in the room,” Pallares said.

The discussions tend to have no particular format. People are encouraged to open up about anything they are willing to talk about, this can vary from lighter topics to very heartfelt and deep discussions.

Samantha Garcia, an environmental studies major and frequent attendee of Cafe con Chisme, likes the community building aspect of Cafe con Chisme.

“I think that when you come together and see that you share experiences with



graphic by Steve Trbovich

some people that you never would’ve thought, there’s something super valuable in that,” Garcia said.

Psychology and journalism major Victoria Nazario enjoys having a place on campus where students can be open with one another.

“I think it’s cool to provide this safe

space where people feel comfortable to communicate,” Nazario said.

Cafe con Chisme takes place every Friday at 3 p.m., allowing students to easily meet together after classes are done.



Armando Peña



Dylan Anderson



Colton Trent

# MCC Hires Environmental Sustainability Coordinators



by Dylan Anderson, Colton Trent, & Armando Peña  
photos by Celeste Alvarez

**This semester, an Environmental Sustainability Coordinator (ESC)** position was added to the MultiCultural Center (MCC), and filled by students: Dylan Anderson, Colton Trent, and Armando Peña.

The ESC is tasked with aligning the values of the MCC with a coherent vision of the future of our world, finding the intersections of responsibility in environmental and social practices, and educating the campus on the importance of these issues.

Dylan Anderson, an Environmental Science major with a concentration in Energy and Climate, is primarily working on reducing the carbon emissions from energy use at the MCC. So far, he's looked at the electricity use of Center appliances and identified appliances and practices that need to be changed.

He discovered that the most major greenhouse gas emission from the MCC is the use of natural gas heating, on the order of 4.5 metric tons of carbon per year, equivalent to driving an average car 12,000 miles.

Though the Center is one building on

campus, he believes the building can one day serve as a model of change for other departments and offices on campus and in the community.

The work that Colton Trent is doing focuses on waste reduction and management within the MCC. Trent, also an Environmental Science and Management major, is actively monitoring the use of disposable materials such as printing paper, cleaning supplies, and other things regularly used throughout the Center.

His project includes education of proper disposal techniques of materials; this is as simple as "green bin or blue bin," but plays an important role in the overall health of our planet and community spaces. He also monitors non-daily material usage, such as fliers and T-shirts for events, and is trying to promote a more sustainable set of practices.

Armando Peña's focus is on social justice and restorative justice work as it pertains to leadership development and education. Peña will engage with students and serve as a bridge between the qualitative and quantitative data that is collected by the sustainability

coordinators.

He's also planning to facilitate collaborative efforts across campus to participate in Earth Week by leading a discussion on traditional ecological knowledge.

Peña believes the integration of Indigenous history and knowledge into environmental sustainability is crucial to the long term survival of the indigenous lands we exist on.

All of the Environmental Sustainability Coordinators have been working together outside their individual projects on community outreach and involvement. They have planned events within the MCC and around campus trying to open up discussion about sustainability and its relationship to community and social equity.

The coordinators currently have an event planned for Earth Week discussing traditional ecological knowledge and the power it has to change social relationships to the environment.



# Two Years and Still No Justice for Josiah



by Freddy Brewster  
*originally published in The Lumberjack*

**D**avid Josiah Lawson was a son, student and athlete that loved football and skateboarding. Josiah Lawson, or as his mother Charmaine calls him, DJ, was murdered on April 15, 2017.

It is a crime that is still unsolved and one that has brought some in the Humboldt community together to demand justice for him and his mother.

On April 15, a group of about 40 people, mostly students and members of Justice 4 Josiah (J4J), gathered at the Great Hall on HSU's campus to commemorate the life of Josiah. Groups sat around the room chatting, laughing and sharing memories of Josiah.

Charmaine Lawson and Tay Triggs called out trivia questions about Josiah's life. His favorite Disney movie was the Lion King, his first job was at Dollar Tree, he taught himself to play the guitar, he lived for a year abroad in Germany and absolutely loved skateboarding. There was also a raffle and the main prize was a skateboard.

After the raffle, the students and members of J4J took to the streets and began their march to the Arcata Plaza. Two large banners were carried by students, one of which was so large it needed three people to carry it.

The message was painted in red, Josiah's favorite color, and said "JUSTICE 4 JOSIAH, 2 YRS NO JUSTICE." The other banner called for the recall of District Attorney Maggie Fleming.

"To hear her say that there is not enough evidence [to prosecute] is a load of crap," Charmaine Lawson said about the March 13 grand jury decision not to bring charges. "[The prosecutor] presented a self-defense case and that is a load of crap. The evidence is there, but they chose to present it in a way that demanded self-defense."

Chants of "justice for Josiah" rang out across the town and echoed off the buildings. The J4J marchers met in the Arcata Plaza with flowers, candles and nearly 100 people.

Renee Saucedo, volunteer organizer with Centro del Pueblo, was the first to speak and stood on the raised flower bed in the center of the plaza where a statue of former president William McKinley once was.

"This is the people's platform now," Saucedo said to the crowd. "We will not stop fighting until we receive justice. This County is not capable of handling a fair and just trial."

Colleen Robinson lives in Arcata and brought her daughter Alana to the vigil. Robinson said that it is important for her daughter to be there and that the entire Humboldt community should be more involved in



demanding justice for families of murder victims.

"I think it is unbelievable that it has been two years and no one has been held accountable," Robinson said.

Light mist blew in as the vigil neared its end. In the distance, Arcata Police Chief Brian Ahearn stood and looked on during the event. Ahearn has attended many of the vigils and has vowed to continue to fight for justice, but he needs more witnesses to come forward.

As the mist turned to a light rain, Charmaine Lawson led a group of J4J members over to Ahearn to ask him about the outcome of the grand jury decision.

Charmaine Lawson asked Ahearn about a witness she said was used to assassinate the character of Josiah. Ahearn said he did not know who the witnesses were that came to testify, and that he stood by the actions of the District Attorney's office.

"You are the chief of police...how did you not know this?" Charmaine Lawson asked. "Now that you do know this, are you going to have this conversation with [DA Fleming]? Do you see why the Department of Justice needs to take this case over? Do you see that there is no way that my son will get a fair trial here if we have a DA like that?"

Ahearn responded that his goal is to provide more information to the District Attorney's office.

"That is not good enough," Charmaine Lawson said. "That is not good enough. Two years today. It has been two years."





photo by Celeste Alvarez

## MCC Gets a New Coordinator

by Jovanny Gutiérrez  
originally published in *El Leñador*

**O**ver the past two years, a number of interim coordinators have come and gone from the MultiCultural Center. Now, however, students and faculty are finally working alongside a new permanent hire.

Francisco Herrera joined Humboldt State University on Jan. 17. As the new coordinator of the MCC, Herrera aims to bring more cultural, environmental and sustainability awareness to campus. He also wants to focus on social justice issues, and motivate students and staff to push these aspects in positive directions.

“[One of my goals is] supporting each and every single person here that needs support and doesn’t feel like their voice is being heard,” Herrera said. “At the MCC and on campus.”

The last MCC coordinator, Amy Salinas Westmoreland, left HSU in 2016. Since then, there have been three interims and one temporary staff person overseeing the MCC, according to HSU staff. Herrera graduated from San Diego State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies and obtained his masters’ with an emphasis in Teaching English

to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at the University of San Diego.

“When I left high school I was still unable to read beyond the third-grade level so it was tough. The educational experience was difficult,” Herrera said. “My mom was also illiterate. I was considered semi-literate. My dad didn’t finish high school until later, really couldn’t write either.”

After graduating high school, the Accessibility Resource Center at Grossmont College evaluated him as semi-illiterate for having a third-grade reading and writing level.

“I think you realize later that wow you learn a lot even without formal education,” Herrera said. “It doesn’t mean that you’re not smart, just means that you have different skills.”

Even though Herrera failed most of his classes in the 10 years that he attended Cuyamaca College and Grossmont Community College, with the help and resources from the Accessibility Resource Center, he gained skills to succeed in the academic environment.

While working at an English tutoring

**“I’m really grateful to be here. It feels like a big family. The people here are very supportive.”**

program at Cuyamaca College, Herrera helped many students, including refugees from Iraq and undocumented immigrants from Mexico. He was also involved in the International Rescue Committee, which helps people around the world whose lives are found in a humanitarian crisis.

Herrera said he has so far enjoyed being at HSU, as it no longer takes him an hour to drive home from work, compared to the San Diego traffic.

“I’m really grateful to be here. It feels like a big family,” Herrera said. “The people here are very supportive. I mean, it’s amazing how everyone is socially connected.”





# The ERC Provides a Safe Space for the LGBTQ+ Community

•

by Maia Wood  
*originally published in The Lumberjack*

**T**he Eric Rofes Multicultural Queer Resource Center (ERC) in the Warren House, room 53 provides a safe space, support and information for all students who are members of the LGBTQ+ communities.

The ERC was founded 10 years ago in honor of late HIV activist and professor Eric Rofes. Student and ERC Event Coordinator Kelsey Young said the Center got its inspiration for its name from Rofes.

The ERC is an Associated Student-funded organization that relies on the dedication of students to put on the events and activities for the LGBTQ+ students on campus.

"We have this because of students," Tai Parker, the ERC's volunteer resource director said.

The Center is running as a club with hours that are centered around the student directors' schedules.

"We are very student-driven," Young said. "The university is slow on what LGBT needs are."

HSU doesn't provide enough resources for LGBTQ+ students because there isn't an accurate numerical representation in the school.

While people can label their sexuality, there is not one set scale because sexuality is a spectrum. There's also the issue of safety. Not every student can express themselves openly because of the dangerous world we live in.

"We get many people who come to our events," Parker said. "But we can't force people to sign things because of safety and privacy of the participants."

Despite limited resources, the student directors work with other programs on campus

and in the community like the Open Door Clinic, the health center and the cultural centers to provide the most resources and support possible.

One event co-hosted by the ERC is the Queer Fest, also called Q-fest. It's a week-long festival that highlights and celebrates everything Queer. ERC plans to kick off this years Q-Fest April 22.

"Originally Q-Fest started as a film festival featuring different LGBTQ+ centered films," Wells said. "This year's focus is Taking Up Space, being queer folks and being comfortable in the spaces that we live in and building communities in those spaces."

During the week, students can participate in focused discussions and activities surrounding the topic of taking up space. There will also be art exhibits displaying work from LGBTQ+ artists.

The goal of Eric Rofes Multicultural Queer Resources Center is to create spaces for LGBTQ+ students and allies to be seen. The ERC hosts events and provides support groups, safe sex resources, information, a library, and a safe space for all students.

"Whenever the door is open anyone is welcome to come in and we will do whatever we can to help them," Young said.



ERC Student Board of Directors | photo by Maia Wood



## 2019 Cultural Center Graduates

**Victoria Nazario • LCAE**

Psychology Major, Journalism Minor

Leaving Los Angeles to attend HSU four years ago has been such a bittersweet experience. I have definitely faced many struggles and challenges, however, being the first person in my family to attend college, and taking advantage of the opportunities my parents never had, has been one of my biggest accomplishments. I have also had the opportunity to connect and meet some really great people, like my mentor Andrea Juarez, who constantly pushes me to do my best. As for the near future, I will be going back home to my family and continuing my education in Los Angeles.

**Tammy Phrakonkham • MCC**

Geology Major, Geospatial Analysis Minor

My time at HSU has been relatively short since I transferred in Fall 2018, but ever since I got here I've found refuge within the MCC, and as the ADPIC Club Vice President and API Coordinator. I've also spent a lot of time working with local high schools to enhance retention and graduation rates for first-generation Asian/Desi/Pacific Islander students and also advocating for homeless students at College of the Redwoods. After HSU, I plan on attending graduate school and hope to become a park ranger or work with organizations that bring underprivileged kids from the city to the outdoors.

**Luz D. Espinoza • MCC**

Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies Major,  
Multicultural Queer Studies Emphasis

I didn't really know what to expect coming from Los Angeles to HSU. I definitely had some culture shock, but I'm thankful that I was able to grow during my time here. I am also thankful to have the MCC as a safe space on campus, along with the rest of the cultural centers. The MCC, in specific, will always have a space in my heart because it is where I found my voice. I was hired as a shy, introverted freshman and this place really changed me because I found a community, friends, family, and a home away from home.





**Nikki Zongger Xiong • MCC**  
Communication Major, Linguistics Minor

My arrival to HSU starts with a joke, but ends with a punchline I didn't think would be so serious. While in high school I made a joke to some friends about coming to HSU since it was the farthest from our home. I didn't think they would agree or even consider it an option. They did and now we are here. However, it was one of the best jokes I ever made because I have grown so much from it. The people I have met and the organizations I have been a part of have helped me grow into who I am today. It definitely was difficult, but I overcame it by getting involved. That's the big takeaway I got from college: get involved in things you find interesting. It helps you to find your community and better yourself personally and career-wise. My hope is for future students to see the potential they have in themselves and to recognize the power they hold. For myself, I will continue to grow, learn, and better myself.



**Celeste Alvarez • MCC**  
Business Major, Marketing Emphasis  
Psychology Minor

My time at HSU has been the most transformative period in my life. Throughout my four years being here, I have met some of the best people that push me to do better and genuinely want the best for me. The support systems I have been able to develop here would not have been possible if I had not been involved in various clubs and organizations. It has pushed me to better myself in my personal and professional endeavors. My hope is that future students can create these support systems of their own and find what inspires them to ultimately lead them to a promising and fulfilling future. I know I have found mine during my time here. Going into my professional career, I will contribute social awareness, different forms of sustainability, and other skills I have developed since my time here.



**Celyna Ramos • MCC**  
International Studies Major, Global Cultural Concentration

The experiences I've had at HSU and at the MCC have taught me that it's okay to make mistakes, to practice self-care, and to trust yourself in whatever decision you make. I'm glad I've made meaningful friendships that helped me get out of my shell and feel comfortable being the proud, Queer person I am today. I'm also grateful to have found love during my time at HSU. I hope to keep learning, keep changing the way I think, and to never be discouraged from participating in activism that will empower people. I also hope to eventually be in a career where I work within the LGBTQ+ community and empower others to feel proud of who they are.



## Student Essay



# How Losing My Mother Affected My Mental Health

•

by Tammy Phrakonkham

*Author's note: This may be triggering for those who have lost a loved one.*

**S**ince my mom died 4 months ago, I've come to realize that when someone you love dies, you don't just have to say goodbye to them at the time they pass away, but also at every crossroad.

As children, we look forward to firsts: the first day of school, the first time to ride a bike without training wheels, the first time to go on a date, the first time to drive a car.

Firsts seem happy and are something we treasure. But, somewhere along the line, we suffer a loss, and we have to adjust. And then the firsts that come can bring about a sadness that is hard to shake.

I've discovered that there are endless firsts and tough moments to get through. They aren't just obvious ones like holidays and big events, but many others that are equally, if not more challenging to struggle through under the heavy blanket of grief.

At my mother's funeral, my brother and I took our positions in the funeral home's family room and greeted hundreds of friends and family members who had come to pay their respects. Everything seemed as it had four months earlier at our cousin's funeral, who died by suicide—the

ubiquitous tissue boxes, the traditional robes that we have to wear at Buddhist funerals, the many hugs from family members you can't remember or don't really know. But this time, we were accepting condolences after the death of our mom, who stood next to us such a short time before.

Two days before my mom died, we celebrated our last Thanksgiving as a family as she was on a ventilator. Now, I realize that this year will be the first Mother's day without my mom. And so as my family and I travel through the forest of firsts and other challenging moments in the midst of our shock and our sadness, we are forced to let go, one finger at a time.

For me, the milestones have been hard, but some of the most difficult things to get past so far have been the ones I didn't see coming.

When I left my parents' house in the summer of 2018 to transfer to Humboldt State University, I couldn't believe it would be one of the last times I would see my mom.

I still replay voice messages frequently so that I can hear my mom's voice again. And each morning, I look at my mom's watch on my wrist, thinking it should be on





## **“Part of my journey with my mental health has been to accept who I am and love the parts of myself that it affects.”**

hers. The toughest of these flashback moments so far was walking into my parents' house the first time I'd been there after she wasn't.

During all of these moments, my mind is pulled back to another time. Sometimes it is to a happy, healthy time, but more often it's to darker days that let me know I am still heavily in the midst of grieving.

And then there are the stinging moments, those that rub salt into my wounds. The times when I am watching TV and the story line is one in which a character is dying or has cancer. The times when I close my eyes to go to sleep at night and all I can picture is the image of my mom's frailty at the end.

The times when I'm searching for a contact on my phone and her name automatically pops up. The time I checked my calendar just a couple of weeks after mom's passing and I saw my notes about the trip to the Oncology Clinic that we were supposed to be taking that week.

If anyone asks me in person, I will say differently, but I have not been well since mom died. I remember my first appointment with my psychiatrist after mom passed. He told me, "I cannot prescribe a pill to cure grief."

My heart sank at his words. It was only in that moment, just a week or so after mom died, that I realized this was grief, this was something only I could resolve with myself, that this was not a disorder to work on or something I can medicate to alleviate.

This was grief, it was real and it wasn't going anywhere.

The death of my mom, although horrible, was also a blessing in a very real way. It made my pain so severe that I could no longer

tolerate it. Before my mom died, I was anxious, I was unhappy, and I was not living up to my own expectations; but my pain was in the background. It was there, but it wasn't so intense that it consumed me. It wasn't overwhelming enough that I felt compelled to make a change.

Maybe it's the worst thing that ever happened to me, but it was also the best thing that ever happened to me. It taught me to take responsibility for my life, because I finally



realized I had no other choice.

Sometimes I feel like I've taken years worth of therapy steps backwards. At the beginning of this year, I was actually even considering lowering my therapy appointments and weaning myself off antidepressants. After my mom died, however, I not only doubled the amount of therapy I was doing, but added on a daily medication to my list.

At face, I know this is OK, that living with depression is an adventure that ebbs and flows, and we will have bad and good moments, and that it isn't something to necessarily "cure."

I understand that anyone else in my situation would probably be going through similar issues. I get it. I understand that the steps I've taken make sense. But it doesn't ease the guilt I have over "losing" to my anxiety and depression.

Part of my journey with my mental health has been to accept who I am and love the parts of myself that it affects.

I am a deeply sensitive, emotional person, and while I have learned many techniques to keep these emotions from controlling my life, I have also learned to embrace them and understand it isn't always a negative. My ability for empathy and understanding is a positive in many ways.

I've recognized I have this unique ability to connect emotionally with people in a way most people are too uncomfortable or unfamiliar with to do. There's some solace in the idea that my parents will be together again. But that doesn't make this Mother's Day any easier. With all of these unexpected moments, I am left to wonder: Does it get easier when these firsts happen again as seconds, and then thirds, and then so on?

Do the shock and the pain lessen as the time when she was here gets further and further out, like a balloon floating in the sky? Could I have made more of my time with my parents? How I can live a life worthy of their legacy?

If I can be as kind and generous as they were, that will be a start.



## Opinion

# I Paved My Way Through

•

by Victoria Nazario  
*originally published in El Leñador*

**C**ollege is not easy. Being a woman in a male-dominated field of study, being a person of color in a predominantly white campus, or coming from a family who has no high school experience are all things that add layers to an already challenging college experience.

I am a first generation student of color and I had to pave my way to and through college.

I had no clue what I was doing. There was no guidance for me as a freshman. But I still moved over 600 miles away from home to pursue my education and take advantage of the opportunities my parents never had. It takes a 12 hour drive to get back to my family and support system.

I was scared and I struggled.

I had to face many obstacles in order to succeed and navigate my way through college.

I had to submit myself to debt before I learned that I had a financial aid advisor.

I had to fail my first exam to learn what office hours were.

I had to take the wrong courses to learn that I had an academic advisor.

I cried and struggled because I did not

have a support system at college like I did at home.

It wasn't until two years later that I found my community. It took me nearly half of my college career for me to find people that I could relate to.

And unfortunately, some people come to Humboldt State University and never find their community.

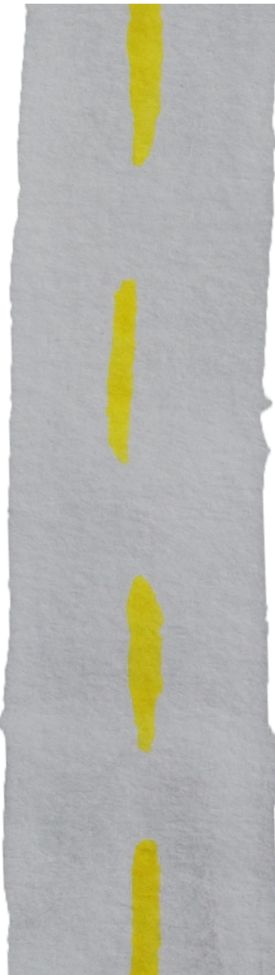
Some people come to HSU and do not realize that a piece of their college tuition goes to the resources on campus that they have not been taking advantage of.

It shouldn't be this way, HSU. We are recruiting these students in from hundreds of miles away and we are not serving them.

Now, I'm not saying that HSU does not have the support mechanisms in place, but if students are not using these resources then we are not serving our students.

We are letting our first generation students of color fall through the cracks and HSU needs to figure out how to reach them and accommodate them.

And as for students, don't suffer in silence. There is still time to take advantage of those resources that HSU has failed to get you to use.





## Student Art

### *Patricia*

“

This is from an image of my mom a couple months before she moved to the United States. At the time, I believe she was doing a show as a popular mariachi for a church fundraiser in her hometown. She was about 16 when she made her choice to move to the states. It wasn't out of spite-- she felt like it was necessary for her to try to find a way to help her family. Being far away from home has been hard. I can never imagine starting a whole new life in a new environment.

—Eloisa Garcia  
Art Studio Major



Image courtesy Eloisa Garcia



### *A Great Big World*

“

This photo was taken March 2018 in Amboy, CA near the Mojave Trails National Monument. There are some salt flats along the road, so we pulled over to let my friend's daughter explore the natural beauty of this planet. In these first few steps, you can see the wonder, innocence, and magic that was captured as she crossed over from the highway into another world.

—Amber Mathieu-Morales  
B.A. Social Work

# ***Want to contribute to the Fall 2019 Cultural Times?***

Submit artwork, photos,  
essays, or recipes to:  
[mcc@humboldt.edu](mailto:mcc@humboldt.edu)

Subject line:  
Cultural Times

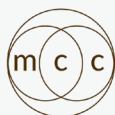
Deadline:  
November 15

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Arcata, CA 95521  
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