

Faculty Commons Graduate Student Research Conference

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Presentation Abstracts

“Environments / Communities” Panel

Grecia Perez, Anthropology (Latinx and Latin American Studies)

Antiblackness flowing down the river in Mexico's Costa Chica region

Abstract: This paper discusses citizenship and antiblackness through both structured positions of being and the conceptions of changing landscapes in the Costa Chica region of the Mexican Pacific. This work is an examination of how Mexico's Afro-descendants and their upstream mestizo neighbors conceptualize their environments through different politics of environmental justice and/or environmental racism. I use data from in-depth interviews and participatory mapping methods, conducted in 2014, 2015, and 2019, in order to gain more insight into local African descendant and mestizo perspectives on the future of fishing and farming in times of climate change and green capitalism. By analyzing data and paying attention to specific historical contexts and paradigms of racial formation and antiblackness theory, my hypothesis is that antiblackness flows down the Rio Verde through a Black and nonblack relationship. My goal is to contribute significant ideas relevant to understanding Blackness in Mexico.

Alán Malfavon, History (Latinx and Latin American Studies)

Kin of the Leeward Port: Afro-Mexicans in Veracruz in the Making of State Formation, Contested Spaces, and Regional Development, 1770-1830

Abstract: My research explores the lives of Afro-Mexicans who lived in the Port-City of Veracruz and its hinterland, known as Sotavento (Leeward), during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It focuses on the understudied Afro-Mexican population of Veracruz and uses it to reframe the historical and historiographical transition between the colonial and national period. It argues how Afro-Mexicans facilitated, complicated, and participated in multiple socio-political processes that reshaped Veracruz and its Atlantic and inland borderlands. The interventions of my research are twofold. First, *Kin of the Leeward Port* resituates Mexico's socio-political, cultural, and economic networks with the Atlantic World and the Greater Caribbean; and second, it dissects and problematizes those networks by centering the Black and Afro-Mexican experience.

My research centers Afro-Mexicans to do more than recover lives and stories often excluded from the Mexican national narrative; it seeks to reframe the larger history of liberal politics in nineteenth-century Mexico. It seeks to do so by tracing the long, intellectual, ideological, and political traditions of Afro-descendants in Veracruz and connects them to the Black Diaspora. Through vast primary source research, including notarial records, censuses, episcopal formal visitations, Inquisition files, cartography, trade records, travel accounts, and correspondence, both personal and military, my research interrogates and subverts archival silences that have sought to

erase Black and Afro-Mexican agency from narratives of identity and nation-state formation, seeking to diversify these narratives by foregrounding the voices, perspectives, and actions of Afro-descendants.

Sara Bruene, Sociology (Inequities in Health)

The Relation of Grocery Delivery Services to Food Insecure Neighborhoods: A GIS approach to Californian food deserts

Abstract: Low-income, urban areas with limited access to nutritious foods are referred to as "food deserts" and are commonly found in communities of color. Supermarkets are absent from these neighborhoods, mostly due to the residual effects left from the practice of redlining common during the 1950s. Convenience stores, fast food restaurants, and liquor stores fill the void of and compound the health disparities within these neighborhoods. Alternative food institutions, such as farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA), and urban gardens, attempt but fail to adequately address the problems of food deserts. Grocery delivery services (GDS) reflect another attempt to address the problems of food deserts. Companies like Amazon Fresh, Instacart, and Walmart Pickup & Delivery are becoming more popular. It is not known whether GDS improves access to nutritious foods for residents living in food deserts. Framed in Critical Race Theory to address racial disparities, this study utilizes geographical information systems (GIS) to map the spatial service areas of GDS and the neighborhoods defined as food deserts in California.

Sahar Foruzan, Anthropology (Inequities in Health)

Cultural politics in restoration, water, and particulate matter

Abstract: My research examines natural resource management in US operations pertaining to land and water use. It draws on existing research in critical and environmental justice scholarship (Harrison 2014; Lawrence 2019) to examine government and corporate conceptualization of land use as it pertains to not only environmental degradation but also community health and wellbeing. I focus on the Salton Sea, in arid southeastern California, which is a dying lake that is exposing communities to toxic dust storms. This growing issue is being addressed, directly and indirectly, by various development and restoration projects proposed by corporations and the state government. As people are grappling with the possibilities of addressing water scarcity and particulate matter pollution in the region, it is important to draw attention to the way key agencies conceptualize the environment and produce specific human-environmental relations. My research examines how corporations and state government perceive the Salton Sea through the use of contemporary documents from government sources, media archives, and research reports to understand how land and justice are being conceptualized in comparison to a critical environmental justice perspective.