

The Undergraduate Historical and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies Journal at UC Merced

Volume 9, Special Issue: Afro-Mexico



History and CRES students and faculty viewing “Muerte de Las Culturas” at the Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City in November 2023. This mural was produced by the artist collective Raiz de la Ceiba. (Photo credit: Dr. Sabrina Smith)

**THE UNDERGRADUATE
HISTORICAL AND
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ETHNIC STUDIES
JOURNAL AT UC
MERCED**

Volume 9, Special Issue: Afro-Mexico
(Spring 2024)

**The Undergraduate Historical and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
Journal at the University of California, Merced**

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Letter from the Editor in Chief

This special issue centers Afro-Latinx history by combining the values of both History and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies; wherein the authors in this journal draw on the contemporary expressions of ethnic studies through art and preserve the systemically silenced history of the African diaspora in Latin America.

It is imperative that the H-CRES Undergraduate Journal upholds the principles that reflect and uplift the communities that are underserved and marginalized. The contributors this semester reflect on the historical experiences for Black populations in Latin America and illustrate the challenges these communities face due to the history of colonialism and oppression. The wonderful contributors shed light on joy and liberation through art, because revolutionary changes cannot be made without joyful movement.

The Spring 2024 Editorial Board was staffed with the most determined and remarkable individuals, including Devon Antonio, Dalila Barragan, Jose Perez, Jady Douglas, Billy Mejia, and Carlos Morales. On behalf of the editorial board I would like to thank our faculty advisor Dr. Myles Ali for his support and kindness towards the editors, and for his passion towards reviving the H-CRES Undergraduate Journal. I would also like to thank Dr. Sabrina Smith, whose research and role as an educator has served as a source of inspiration for this semester's issue!

Kayle Fox
Editor in Chief

Faculty Forward

It is a great pleasure to present the Spring 2024 special issue of the HCRES Undergraduate Journal. This issue, which focuses on the theme of Afro-Mexico, is a testament to the hard work, collegiality, and creativity of History and CRES undergraduates at UC Merced, especially our intrepid Student Editorial Board. After a period of inactivity in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the production of this special issue was part of a new wave of community building and research excellence among History and CRES students during the 2023-2024 academic year. The Student Editorial Board's enthusiasm was infectious and HCRES student authors were eager to transform their term papers and independent research projects into publishable essays for the Journal. Given that this was a new experience for all members of the Student Editorial Board (and the Faculty Lead!), I am so proud of the team's impressive rigor, teamwork, and dedication.

Our chosen theme of "Afro-Mexico" originates from the Editorial Board's shared experience in the upper-division seminar, The African Diaspora in Latin America (HIST/CRES 141). Their instructor, HCRES's Dr. Sabrina Smith, incorporated a week-long research trip to Mexico City for the entire class during the Fall 2023 semester. Sponsored by the UC Alianza MX Mobility Program, HIST/CRES 141 students learned about the present-day and historical experiences of Black populations in Mexico through archival research, interdisciplinary workshops, and academic conferences at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) and Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). This immersive program was designed, according to Dr. Smith, to inspire a new generation of student scholars "who may investigate and develop solutions to pressing issues affecting Latinx populations in Mexico, Latin America, and the United States." Moved by their collective experiences in Mexico City, from viewing centuries-old Spanish Inquisition records in the AGN to chartering an excursion to Teotihuacan, several of the HIST/CRES 141 students volunteered for the Journal's Student Editorial Board with the goal of producing this special issue on African descended people in Mexico and broadly, Latin America.

This special issue is the fruition of the Editorial Board's many months of hard work. It contains a total of eight contributions by UC Merced undergraduates that collectively capture new and enduring trends and approaches in both the disciplines of History and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. Ranging from interviews, personal reflections, and artistic interpretations to historical demography, quantitative analysis, and comparative history, the pieces published in this issue are representative of the diverse and shared scholarly interests, backgrounds, and experiences of the combined History and CRES student body at UC Merced. I am thankful for the leadership of our Editor-in-Chief, Kayle Fox, and the work of our Editors: Devon Antonio, Dalila Barragan, Jady Douglas, Carlos Morales, Jose Perez, and Billy Mejia.

I hope you enjoy reading this special issue as much as I enjoyed working with such an incredible group of student scholars!

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