

# Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice: Annual Activities Report 2024-2025

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## Message from the CRISJ Director

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Over the past 9 years, the Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice (CRISJ) has actively and impactfully engaged with Sacramento State and larger community along the mission of educational empowerment and human well-being for all, particularly for historically underserved and marginalized students and their communities (please see <https://www.csus.edu/center/race-immigration-social-justice/spotlights/annual-activities-reports.html>).

Traumatically, during these fascist times critical voices/services are attacked for not aligning with the "exceptionalist" fantasies of supremacy in the nation; and CRISJ, as a critical voice at the university, is a *water spring of hope and courage* for creating critical knowledge not ignorance, inclusiveness not nativism, compassion not hate, peace not violence, and a people's democracy not authoritarianism. The need to connect with students, staff, faculty and other community partners and form bridges of affirmation and support for social and environmental justice is supremely urgent.

CRISJ was created after the 2008 Great Recession (2016) because the university disproportionately reduced the representation of historically under-represented faculty, hurting learning and teaching conditions that result from student-faculty diversity gaps and related cultural-work taxation on faculty and staff of color. Importantly, no other unit within Academic Affairs or university provides an explicit mission on knowledge production and civic engagement from a social justice perspective. CRISJ is the only one to this date, while the university does have designations as Asian American & Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution, Hispanic Serving Institution, and most recently Black Serving Institution. In

addition, CRISJ works on *building bridges* across groups for social justice and community empowerment so as to combat coloniality's divide and conquer method of domination—e.g., you are more deserving and you are more American. Thus, CRISJ's foundational mission situates intersecting systems of oppression—inhumane social constructs—in the history of coloniality. These systems, logics, norms, and practices are not universal or sustainable, and through a social justice education and civic engagement we work for a more just and healthy future for all.

On behalf of CRISJ, I ask for your support to more effectively operate the Center. Join us in the collaborative and exciting work we do. Please also consider contributing a donation to the CRISJ Foundation Fund that will allow the Center to continue its essential services of mentoring students (mentorship program, scholarship), community engagement (Youth Literacy Empowerment Project, Building Bridges, Community Empowerment Faire), and academic programming (Building Justice Podcast, Forums, Conferences). The funds that CRISJ receives go directly to the academic and confidence empowerment of underserved students and their communities. The Academic Year 2024/2025 was very productive as shown in the Annual Activities Report. In solidarity and friendship,

Manuel Barajas, Ph.D.  
Professor and Co-founder of CRISJ  
[crisj@csus.edu](mailto:crisj@csus.edu)



## Spotlights

CRISJ is a network of professors, students, community partners, and artists in the Sacramento Region that collaborate to implement the mission and vision of the Center. In this annual report, we highlight some of the exemplar programming for student and community empowerment.

## CRISJ Research Mentorship Program



CRISJ Research Mentees, third cohort, 2024/2025.

### **Dr. Elvia Ramirez CRISJ Mentoring Coordinator**

#### **Supporting Student Success: A Report on the CRISJ Research Mentorship Program**

During the 2024-25 academic year, the Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice (CRISJ) hosted the annual CRISJ Research Mentorship Program (RMP). The objective of the RMP is to offer comprehensive research training, mentorship, and support to undergraduate students at Sacramento State. Participants

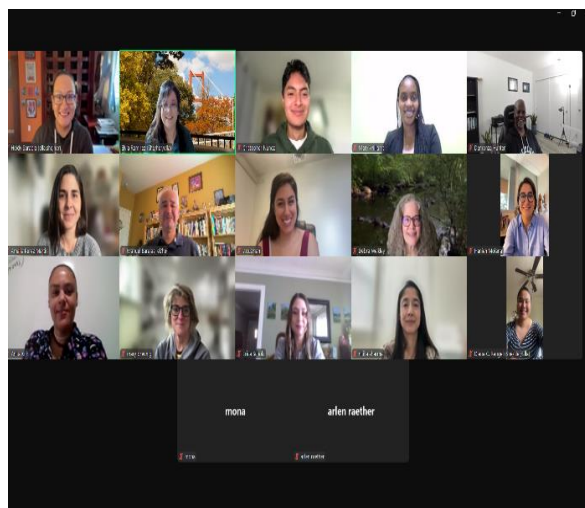
are required to commit to the program for one year. During fall 2024 semester, students engaged in regular mentoring sessions with Dr. Elvia Ramirez, the CRISJ Mentoring Coordinator. During spring 2025 semester, student participants received guidance, supervision, and mentorship from their assigned CRISJ faculty mentor. The overarching aim of the CRISJ RMP program is to foster the development of scholars and social justice advocates while preparing students for graduate studies.

The original 2024-25 cohort of the CRISJ RMP consisted of 15 CRISJ student scholars and 15 CRISJ faculty mentors. The student cohort was comprised of students from various majors, including sociology, ethnic studies, business, graphic design, journalism, nutrition, international relations, and fashion merchandising. The 2024-25 cohort of CRISJ RMP faculty mentors was comprised of faculty from various academic programs and departments, including psychology, sociology, philosophy, recreation, parks, & tourism, education, anthropology, ethnic studies, geography, business, and criminal justice. CRISJ's RMP adopts an interdisciplinary approach, founded on the principles of equity, social justice, and community empowerment.

On May 12, 2025, several CRISJ RMP student mentees and their faculty mentors presented their research at the annual CRISJ RMP conference. The event marked a significant milestone in the CRISJ mentoring program. The research presented by students and faculty mentors examined contemporary issues and offered critical, timely, and insightful perspectives. Mary Williams and Dr. Hanieh Molana presented their research on underrepresented college students and food choices; Erica Scholz and Dr. Vanessa Guzman presented research on violence and injury experienced by migrants along the U.S.-Mexico border; Anita Kirk and Dr. Mary Breunig presented research on the benefits of community gardening on mental health; Demonza Hunter and Dr. Amalia Perez-Martin examined oral histories of ex-felons and their experiences with jury disenfranchisement; and Christopher Nuñez and Dr. Heidy Sarabia presented research on first-generation Latinx students finding home and empowerment in sociology.

Overall, CRISJ's RMP is a transformative experience for both student participants and their faculty mentors. Students obtain faculty mentorship and develop critical research skills and experiences, while faculty gain an invaluable opportunity to mentor students on campus and provide service to the campus and broader community. It is also important to note that CRISJ's RMP program is strongly aligned with and directly supports Sacramento State's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, particularly campus imperatives that aim to elevate: (a) learning and student success, (b) teaching, scholarship, and creative activity, (c) justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and (d) dedicated community involvement.

Unfortunately, CRISJ will not host the RMP in 2025-26 due to budget cuts. However, CRISJ remains committed to supporting the professional development of students and faculty. CRISJ welcomes the support and participation of faculty and community members as we strive to empower our diverse student population!



CRISJ Student Scholars Present Research with their faculty mentors, May 12, 2025



## CRISJ Youth Literacy Empowerment Project



Elk Grove High School Students enjoying the CRISJ Youth Literacy Empowerment Project (YLEP), November 1, 2024.

### Dr. Araceli Feliz CRISJ Youth Literacy Empowerment Coordinator

The CRISJ Literacy Project chaired by Dr. Araceli Feliz and committee members held its second Youth Literacy Empowerment Day on November 1, 2024. Over 50 high school students from the Elk Grove Unified School District and chaperones visited the Sac State campus for a carefully curated day of workshops focused on multi-modal literacy highlighting cultural wealth. The workshops were titled 1) Mi Corrido/My Story/My Rap facilitated by Dr. Manuel Barajas (Sociology Professor/CRISJ Director) 2) Humanity through our Lens, a photography workshop facilitated by Kachiside Madu (activist/counselor/photographer) and 3) Indigenous Texts “Codices” by Luis Garcia-Campos (Artist/ Sol Collective). Students participated in two workshops of their choice. Students pre-registered for the event and ranked the three workshops in order of interest since time would only allow for participation in two of the three offerings. Mr. Madu’s workshop participants posed for [photos](#) and also produced [a video message by the students](#) for younger students in their district. You can view both by clicking the links that will take you to Mr. Madu’s professional website. The photos are displayed at the top and you can view the video by scrolling to the bottom of the page.

After the workshop, students and chaperones along with volunteers were treated to a boxed lunch under the new library outdoor seating area. A group picture was taken, and the students were on their way back to their high school campuses. We would like to extend our sincere

appreciation to the event volunteers, Mr. Luis Covarrubias and the rest of the Elk Grove Unified Equity Department leadership and staff, the workshop facilitators, CRISJ associates, and Ms. Ana Gutierrez whose hard work is essential in making this program a success. The exit survey data revealed that students enjoyed being on campus and they were engaged with the workshop offerings.

The CRISJ Youth Literacy Empowerment Day will take a hiatus this year (AY 2025/26) and the committee hopes to resume planning for a 2027 event next fall.

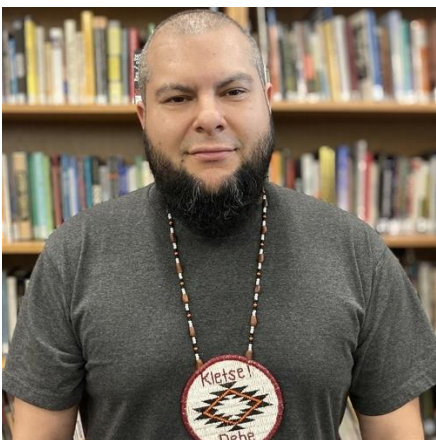


The collaborative team that made the event possible also had great fun, November 1, 2024.

## CRISJ Student Empowerment Scholarship

### 2025 Scholarship Recipients

The Empowerment Scholarship recognizes students who exemplify the CRISJ mission, while demonstrating academic excellence, civic engagement, and community service. Dr. Kristina Victor, Dr. Brenda Romero, and Ana Gutierrez (ASCI Administrative Coordinator) have been generous with their time and have made this scholarship possible. In 2025, the recipients of this scholarship were Anthony Flores, Hanna Timchenko, Tooba Ishaq, and Jeremiah Kennedy. As their profiles below show, these students represent the CRISJ spirit by empowering voices from the margins, building healthy relationships in the community, and challenging structures of oppression that harm society. If you want to support CRISJ's efforts in empowering students, please go to the [CRISJ Empowerment Scholarship donation page](#) and add your voice to others who have committed to making a difference.



#### Anthony Flores

Anthony is a first-generation college student from the Sacramento region, and a single parent, who returned to school after more than 10 years. He attended community college, and is now majoring in Ethnic Studies with a concentration in Native American Studies and a minor in history. He hopes to use his education to empower indigenous communities and other marginalized ones, through education, culture, and advocacy. He has worked in tribal cultural resource management for 15 years, and also did an internship with the Roberts Family Development Center at Sacramento State, empowering Black students with culturally relevant programming.



#### Hanna Timchenko

Hanna (Any) is a first-generation and re-entry student that has overcome adversity, and is currently pursuing a Bachelor's in Public Health Administration, and also planning to earn a Master's in Social Work. She earned an AA at Sierra College with GPA of 4.0, while she also worked for EOP and the Undocumented Students Center, learning to become a more effective advocate and leader. She is compassionate, innovative, and persistent, as exemplified in her finding funding for a program serving students with autism. This experience reinforced her commitment in creating equitable opportunities for all. She enjoys leading by serving.



**Tooba Ishaq**

Tooba is legally blind, and majors in social work. Her lived experiences with disability, gender inequity and abuse at home, homelessness, and human traffic victim, she felt a passion for social justice. Her perseverance and sense of dignity have driven her to build a better life for herself and others facing unfair and oppressive circumstances. Through her pursuit of a Master's in Social Work she hopes to make a difference. She has interned for International Rescue Committee and for Mutual Housing California, where she organizes educational and confidence development programming for children from low-income backgrounds. Her goal is to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker to serve immigrant, refugee, individuals with disabilities, and survivors of abuse. She is empathetic, patient, and empowering.

**Jeremiah Kennedy**

Jeremiah Kennedy is a local student from Sacramento, attending high school, community college, and then transferred to Sacramento State, with distinguished recognitions of a 4.0 GPA and four AA degrees, Social Sciences, Anthropology, History, and Theatre. He is currently double majoring in History and Anthropology, and intends to pursue a PH.D. in History in UC Santa Barbara. He is currently a CSUS College Corps Fellow, and works in the River District organizing community events, cleanups, "tactical urbanism" that welcomes community members, and solutions to the "food apartheid" in the area. He and his wife grow a garden and share as much as 300 pounds of free produce with their neighbors in need.



## Make Your Vote Count with Ranked Choice Voting

On September 26, 2024, CRISJ hosted the panel “Make Your Vote Count with Ranked Choice Voting”. Going into elections in November, the event sought to strengthen democratic processes, to improve participation of diverse communities, and to increase electability of marginalized groups.

Among the participants we had Jose M. Navarro serves as the President of the Latino Democratic Club of Sacramento County and Executive Board Member for Sacramento *Poderosas*. Jose is a proud Sacramento State alumnus with a major in Computer Science and also attended the University of California, Berkeley with a major in Earth and Planetary Science, Geophysics. Jose was a candidate for School Board in Sacramento City Unified School District, Area 3.

Another participant was Josh Rosa who teaches Collaborative Governance at Sacramento State and has lectured at UC Davis, drawing from a professional background in politics, government, and collaborative policy. He has also worked for Sacramento's City Council, managed political campaigns, served on boards and commissions of the City and County of Sacramento, and represented Sacramento in

the League of California Cities. Josh holds a Master's degree in Public Policy and Administration from Sacramento State. Josh volunteers for "Better Ballot Sacramento" because Ranked Choice Voting promises greater equity and representation to Sacramento's local elections.

The panel event packed the Foothill Suite in the University Union, and was eloquently moderated by Professor Kristina Victor from Political Science. In ranked choice voting, voters rank the candidates in order of preference (first, second, third choices) rather than just one. All the votes are counted, and if one candidate receives 50% or more, they win; those with the fewest votes are eliminated. Among the advantages are the following: winners typically have a majority of voter support; spoiler effects are reduced (3<sup>rd</sup> party candidates run without helping a less favored candidate); positive campaigns are encouraged because candidates want to improve their ranking; more diverse candidates participate; and it saves money. The process can present complexity and confusion at first, and the voter process does take a little longer.



After panel, students with panelists Josh Rosa and Jose Navarro and moderator Dr. Kristina Victor, September 26, 2024.

## Building Bridges for Social Justice & Global Peace

On October 10, 2024, CRISJ celebrated Indigenous People's Day and the struggle for a more just world aligned with a culture that values and practices healthy relationships with all life forms. Along these anti-colonial commitments, CRISJ seeks to build bridges between diverse groups to empower the most disadvantaged students and their communities. We invited agents of social change that through their artistic expressions, work, and advocacy exemplify the values and practices that advance community empowerment and social/environmental justice. We celebrate their efforts to break down barriers, borders, and walls, as a way of dismantling the logics of colonialism and intersecting systems racial, class, and gender inequalities that keep our communities at the bottom of society. Among the keynote speakers we had Ruth Ibarra, Katie Valenzuela and Dr. Flo Coffer's Senior Advisor for her Mayoral Campaign, J.T. Ghim.

*Ruth Ibarra was raised in farmworker family in Marysville, California.* She graduated from California State University, Sacramento, with a BA in Social Science and a teaching credential. Ruth has worked for the California Department of Housing and Community Development, and *has been* a core member of NorCal Resist organizing for human rights; a Chief Steward for SEIU Local 1000; a committee member for the Northern California Poor People's Campaign; and a President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, CA, Capital Chapter. Ruth has received the Sacramento Activist Award, honoring her transformational advocacy for marginalized communities in the region and beyond.

Katie Valenzuela was elected to the Sacramento City Council representing District 4 in 2020, and her integrity for social justice has distinguished her service. Her fundamental belief in bottom-up democracy has guided her for over twenty years in community organizing and policy advocacy, including working for a civil rights law firm and organizing for housing and economic justice. She was the first Sacramento appointee to California's AB 32 Environmental Justice Advisory Committee and started a consulting firm to support state-level and local groups fighting to achieve environmental justice. Katie was born and raised in Oildale, California, and holds a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Community Development from the University of California, Davis.

Dr. Flojaune Cofer is originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, moved to Sacramento 20 years ago for a public health fellowship and decided to make her home in the city. Flo worked for the state's public health department and later became a senior public policy director for a public health non-profit and also served on several city committees before she decided to run for Mayor. Flo is a progressive public health expert running for elected office for the first time, and has pledged to reject corporate donations, and support funding in favor of workers trained to deal with issues such as mental health and tackle the city's homelessness crisis. Flo is an epidemiologist who would be the first Black woman elected as Sacramento mayor, and she won the most votes of any candidate in the primary with an almost 8% lead over her closest competitor. The day before the event, J.T. Ghim, Senior Advisor to Dr. Flo's Mayoral Campaign, reached out to let us know that Flo had been drawn to a debate with other mayoral candidates at the same time. Therefore, we were fortunate to have J.T. Ghim cover Flo.

The Building Bridges celebration was energized with spirit and determination for actions and collaborations that transform society. The Harper Alumni Center got packed with over one hundred attendees, as well as with visual and musical artists. Sister Brenda-Joyce Newman, CRISJ Associate and Sac State Alumni, co-moderated the event. Among the artists was Desirae Harp, Indigenous

Woman whose voice connects heaven and earth; Auburn Hip-Hop integrates students, teachers, and artists in powerful musical beats from the heart for Peace and a more just world ([Video Peace](#)); the visual artists included Kachiside Madu, a social justice photographer, who captures the humanity and beauty of those discarded by the inhumanity of coloniality; Jose Guerrero paints those at the margins with a social justice brush theorizing with clarity, heart and soul; Jessica Pham Nguyen, a young poet, read verses from the heart, “we all share this earth;” along with more visual artists Nina Butterfly, Emily Vargas, Isabel Martinez, Louie Charles Frutos Jr., Natalie and Rocky Zapata, Nanzi Muro, Violeta Medina, Zuri K. Colbert. The impact was spiritual as the inspiration continued after its conclusion.



Speakers with Plaques: Ruth Ibarra (Nor Cal Resist), Katie Valenzuela (City Council Member); Dr. Flo Cofer's Senior Advisor J.T. Ghim (Candidate for Sacramento Mayor) and Artists/Musicians, including Desirae Harp and Auburn Hip-Hop.



Sister Brenda-Joyce Newman introduces local and Sac State artists at the Annual Building Bridges event, at the Harper Alumni Center, October 10, 2024.





Kachiside Madu's photography captures the authentic beauty of the human spirit seeking equity and dignity.



Desirae Harp's songs connect heaven and earth at the Annual Building Bridges event, October 10, 2024.

## Together We Rise: Immigrants in America in the Wake of a New Trump Administration

On February 26, 2025, CRISJ hosted the forum, “Together We Rise: Immigrants in America in the Wake of a New Trump Administration.” The keynote speaker was Mark Tuschman, photographer and author, and then was followed by distinguished panel of organizers and scholar activists: Marcos Lopez, Irene de Barraicua, and David Bacon. We concluded the event with a reception with the participants, students, and community partners at the CRISJ Office Library 67. Here’s a brief report from the participants on their motivations and messages.



**TOGETHER WE RISE**  
Immigrants in America in  
the Wake of a New Trump Administration

Protecting immigrant rights in a new political era

**Keynote Speaker:** Mark Tuschman, photographer and author of “Together We Rise: Immigrants in America in the Wake of a New Trump Administration”

**Panel:**

- Irene De Barraicua, *Lideres Campesinas*
- Marcos Lopez, UC Davis Labor Studies Center
- David Bacon, photojournalist and author

**REGISTER HERE**

**Foothill Suite (3rd floor) | University Union**  
**Wednesday February 26, 2025**  
**Keynote: 12:00 - 1:15pm**  
**Panel: 1:30-2:45pm**

CENTER ON RACE,  
IMMIGRATION  
& SOCIAL JUSTICE

### Keynote Speaker

#### Mark Tuschman

I was honored to present work from my book, *Together We Rise: Immigrants in America*—a photo-documentary book that pairs portraits with the lived stories of people whose labor and ingenuity are responsible for contributing to our well-being. I organized the talk around three places where immigrants’ impact is unmistakable: our food, our health, and our economy.

We began with the people who plant, harvest, pack, and deliver our food—the hands that feed us. From there, we turned to health care: immigrant professionals focusing

on physicians, nurses, researchers and health care workers that sustain the system; many major institutions could not keep their doors open without them, and shortages in home-care workers would mean needless suffering for countless families. Finally, we looked at the economy, where immigrants contribute at every level—from janitors to high-tech entrepreneurs. Consider just one measure: 219 Fortune 500 companies have immigrant roots—102 founded by immigrants and 117 by their children—together contributing over \$7 trillion to the U.S. economy.

Midway through, I opened the floor for questions, and the room came alive. We grappled with a media environment that profits from division and with immigration policies whose design and impact are, at their core, racist. The consensus was clear: if we want a nation that welcomes immigrants, we must do the hard work of speaking across political lines—even with people we would rather avoid—because only then can we build understanding and support.

Since that conversation, the government’s actions have grown more ruthless and cruel—indeed, openly authoritarian in character. My hope is that more Americans will recognize the inherent brutality of these policies and understand that in such a regime **any one of us** can be targeted. Our task is to resist, to widen the circle of empathy, and to stand up for a country that truly rises together.

**Panelists****Irene de Barraicua**

We are a nation sustained primarily by agriculture. It is what has laid the foundation of this great nation. Women farmworkers tend to be the backbone of the household in terms of caring for the children and family and they also make up our powerful statewide network of Lideres Campesinas in California. While being amongst the most vulnerable they continue to work on the frontlines in order to survive and keep us all fed and nourished. Lideres Campesinas Director of Policy and Communications, Irene de Barraicua was honored to be

able to engage with students from Sacramento State about the work Lideres Campesinas does and to be able to present alongside some wonderful leaders, scholars and photographers in the farmworker movement. The presentation was aimed towards giving an overview of the various issues and programs the organization focuses on to address longstanding inequities and injustices that farmworker women and their families face in relation to health, gender violence, labor and environmental issues, immigration and much more.



The participants front right to left: Marcos Lopez, David Bacon, Irene de Barraicua, Mark Tuschman, and students, faculty, and friends.

**Marcos Lopez and David Bacon**

Marcos Lopez, the Director of Research and Education at the UC Davis Labor and Community Center, presented findings based on a project that examines the growth of the H-2A visa program in California. Agricultural employers use the H-2A visa to fill positions with farmworkers, typically from Mexico,

when they are unable to recruit workers in the U.S. Use of the visa has grown tremendously in California. Lopez showed how the agricultural industry employed just above 4,500 H-2A farmworkers in 2013. In 2023, it employed 40,758 farmworkers, an increase of 807%. Building on these findings, Lopez shared that under the current administration, the H-2A visa is being



promoted to replace undocumented farmworkers. However, the visa tethers visa-holders to their employer sponsor, thus leading to systemic workplace labor violations and worker suppression.

Lastly, we were joined by David Bacon, an accomplished photojournalist and author of low-wage worker struggles in California.

Bacon shared his stunning photos that provide dignity and humanity to farmworkers, showing them laboring in the fields, living in their homes, and demanding justice. Accompanying this photo, he provided a historical narrative reminding us that the struggles of low-income people have always existed. We have fought for the justice and dignity owed to us, and continue to persevere.



Jose R. Guerrero paints Guestworkers (H2A) illuminating modern expressions of slavery in agribusiness at the Building Bridges event, October 10, 2024.

## The Evolution of Chicano Teatro: A Historical and Personal Perspective



On April 22, 2025, CRISJ hosted the forum: "The Evolution of Chicano Teatro: A Historical and Personal Perspective" (see [Teatro video](#)). It was co-sponsored by the Chicana/Latina Studies Program, the Serna Center, and the Department of Theatre/Dance. During the era of Civil Rights, the Chicano Movement gave rise and purpose to Chicano/Latino artists in all forms of expression, especially Chicano Teatro. Four members—Carolina Flores, Nicole Limon, Ana Olivarez-Levinson, and Manuel Pickett—from four different Teatro companies shared their story about its evolution, its struggles, and its impact on the community. Significantly, their work helps narrow the historical gaps in artistic representation that are so consequential in humanizing the beauty of the Chicano communities.

In the first part, a panel of Teatro artists shared their experiences advancing and empowering the stories, cultures, and hopes of the Chicano Community, as defined by their indigenous ancestry, its diversity, and survival of over 500 years of colonial abuse. Their transformational artistic work reflects a powerful spirit of survival, dignity, and human and environmental justice.

In the second part, a short film by Ana Bertha Campa García titled, "*La Vida es su Teatro*." [Life is a Theatre] is a tribute honoring Jose Saucedo as a director and co-founder of El Teatro de la Esperanza. After the film, there was an exhibit of photos/posters and information on these groups and how you may get involved. Brief biographies of the panelists follow below.



Panelists: Nicole Limon, Carolina Flores, Ana Olivarez-Levinson, and Manuel Pickett.

Ana Olivarez-Levinson is a retired Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and was a former member of El Teatro de la Esperanza, from 1980 - 1984. She always believed that Teatro could be used as a consciousness raising and organizing tool in the Chicana community. She contributed her Teatro historical archives towards the making of the documentary *'Su Vida Es Su Teatro'* by Ana Bertha Campa Garcia. This documentary is one of the few capturing the era. Ana was also active with Teatros Nacionales de Aztlan (TENAZ), forming a network of theatre groups advancing the aesthetic and political growth of Chicano theatrical expression across the Americas. In her words, "The need for cultural identity and Teatro, validated the need for positive images of our communities."

Carolina Flores earned a Master's of Social Work, and is a former member of Teatro Mestizo, 1973-1978, Teatro Huipil/TENAZ from 1982-1984, and she also co-founded Women in Teatro (WIT). For about 50 years, Carolina has been a powerful voice and mobilizer for those at the intersections of

marginalization. She is currently the Director of Communications for the Benito Juarez Foundation. This is a civic engagement organization for indigenous and campesino families in North Sacramento. In her words, "Teatro molded me into the Chicana political leader that I am today. My struggles are my armor wherever I go to help Raza."

Dr. Manuel Pickett is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Theater at Sacramento State, he was a member of Teatro Campesino, 1968 -1972, and founded Teatro Espejo, 1975 - present. Manuel grew up in West Fresno to a farmworker family, and became a social activist at a very young age, who was recruited by Teatro Campesino to serve as their troupe's musical director, and then into acting. He discovered the power of community theatre for social justice, and through Teatro Espejo continued this mission. In 2025 Teatro Espejo celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary. Congratulations! His words of wisdom, "Be creative, insistent, and inclusive. Political change should never be about just you."

Nicole C. Limón is MFA - Faculty at CSUS Department of Theatre & Dance. She is the founder & Artistic Director of Matriarchy Theater. Nicole is a multidisciplinary artist: an actor/director/dramaturg/playwright and theatre faculty at California State University, Sacramento. She is founder of Matriarchy Theatre and Associate Artistic Director of Teatro Espejo. Her production of *SWEAT* by Lynn Nottage won six national awards at the 2021 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, including awards for overall production, ensemble collaboration, and directing. Her artistic work inspires hope for a healthier and more just future for everyone.



## CRISJ FLC: "Advancing Critical AI Literacy @ Sac State and Beyond"

Dr. Diego Bonilla

During AY 2024–2025, the CRISJ-led Faculty Learning Community (FLC) consolidated Sacramento State’s position as a regional leader in **critical AI literacy**. Building on earlier cohorts (Fall 2023, Spring 2024), this year’s program integrated **AI News Social**—a Creative Commons, AI-powered weekly publication—and a suite of **custom ChatGPTs** available in the Sac State EDU environment. The result was a flipped, practice-forward model that asked faculty to arrive with artifacts in hand, then used our meetings to verify, critique, and improve. CRISJ’s approach foregrounded equity, transparency, and human rights while delivering immediately usable classroom practices.

### Origins and Rationale

The FLC was launched in response to the accelerating impact of generative AI on teaching, research, and academic integrity. CRISJ convened a cross-disciplinary community around a simple proposition: **effective adoption must be critical, grounded, and equitable**. To that end, we paired theory (media and information literacy, bias and classification, privacy and accessibility) with hands-on workflows that could be implemented the same week in real courses.

### Custom ChatGPTs Inside the Sac State EDU Environment

CRISJ piloted a set of **institutionally accessible custom GPTs** that faculty could use immediately and learn to build themselves:

- **AI News Social – CRISJ**: a weekly gateway to curated higher-ed AI content, analyses, and podcasts.
- **Critical Thinking Assistant**: applies elements/standards of reasoning and identifies fallacies and statistical pitfalls to improve academic prompts, policies, and assignments.
- **Generalization Finder**: detects universal claims and stereotypes, explains their impact, and prompts neutral, precise wording.
- **AI Literacy – Targeted Persuasion**: demonstrates how value-framed messaging works, enabling ethical discussions of audience targeting and disclosure.

### What We Built and Accomplished

An essential pillar this year was **AI News Social** (<https://ainews.social/>), which processes ~1,200 items weekly (academic articles, news, and university pages) and publishes **eight critical analyses, eight podcasts, and an interactive chatbot in English and Spanish**, with coverage spanning North and South America and Europe. On **February 21, 2025**, the **California Education Learning Lab** spotlighted AI News Social as an **AI-powered open educational resource (OER)** ([Spotlight](#))—an external validation of its rigor and public value. AI News Social also appears under the “Fundamentals” resources of Sacramento State’s **National Institute for AI in Society (NIAI)**, reinforcing its role as shared academic infrastructure.

With that foundation, the FLC executed a four-session sequence—**Introduction & Best Practices; Working with Documents, Data, and Media; Critical Use in Higher Education; AI’s Adoption in Society**—each beginning with a “what changed this month” brief drawn from the latest AI News Social issue.

These tools supported **flipped learning**: faculty completed small, verifiable tasks before each session, then used our meetings to **stress-test** outputs, compare approaches, and align practices with CRISJ's social-justice mission.

### Recognition and Institutional Impact

The **Learning Lab spotlight** affirmed the FLC's public-interest orientation and the value of open, bilingual, multi-modal resources. Being listed by **NIAI** expanded visibility and made it easier for colleagues across colleges to discover and adopt our materials. Importantly, CRISJ framed all technical practice within a **rights-based lens**—equity, due process, and auditability—so that adoption strengthens, rather than weakens, student protections.

**CSU System-Wide Presentation (Chancellor's Office):** On April 17, 2025, CRISJ received an invitation from the CSU Office of the Chancellor to speak in the series "AI Across the CSU: Innovations and Insights." We participated in the panel "AI in Different Modalities: Panel Presentation on Approaches for In-Person Learning, Online Synchronous and Online Asynchronous Learning" on April 23, 2025 (12:00–1:00 PM PDT). The series ran March 26–May 7, 2025. This system-wide event—organized directly by the Chancellor's Office, with follow-up and reminder messages on April 22–23—spotlighted the same applied, critical workflows developed in the FLC.

### Looking Ahead: ChatGPT EDU and GPT-5 at Sacramento State

With **ChatGPT EDU** and **GPT-5** available within the Sac State ecosystem, the next iteration will scale what worked while tightening guardrails:

1. **Privacy-aware access at scale:** institution-managed accounts lower friction while reinforcing FERPA-safe norms and consistent attribution/disclosure language in syllabi and assignments.
2. **Build-your-own, safely:** step-wise templates will help faculty assemble course-specific assistants (e.g., a "Policy Coach GPT" for drafting/maintaining AI policies; a "Civic Hearing GPT" for governance simulations) with retrieval limited to instructor-provided OER.
3. **Verification by design:** every workflow will embed cite-and-check, provenance capture, and a principled refusal path. Faculty will red-team their own prompts to surface failure modes.
4. **Accessibility by default:** artifacts must include alt-text, captions/transcripts, and license metadata; exemplars will be included in the shared repository.
5. **Equity metrics we can track:** CRISJ will pilot lightweight, privacy-respecting indicators (e.g., disclosure rates, use of accessible formats, frequency of verified citations) to evaluate practice rather than surveillance of individuals.

### Conclusion

AY 2024–2025 confirmed that **critical AI literacy is a shared scholarly practice**, not a one-time training. CRISJ's leadership—pairing rigorous critique with usable workflows—enabled faculty to adopt AI in ways that **advance learning, protect students, and uphold social justice values**. With AI News Social as our continuously updated backbone, custom GPTs in the Sac State EDU environment, and campus-wide access to ChatGPT EDU and GPT-5, we are poised to deepen this work in AY 2025–2026. CRISJ will continue to convene, curate, and coach—ensuring Sacramento State remains both **thoughtful** and **capable** in the face of rapid technological change. *Prepared by the Center for Race, Immigration, and Social Justice (CRISJ). For more information or to participate in the upcoming cohort, visit <https://ainews.social/AI-LiteracyFLC.html> or contact Dr. Heidy Sarabia and Dr. Diego Bonilla.*

## CRISJ Building Justice Podcast

The Building Justice podcast explores critical issues affecting our communities with the hopes of creating a healthier and more just world. The in-depth conversations between the Sacramento State community and regional partners strengthen and humanize connections, amplify marginalized voices, and aim to spark understandings, empathies, and motivation to join the struggle for a better future for all. In the Academic Year 2024/2025, the Building Justice Podcast Committee was led by co-chairs Dr. Marie L. Mallare-Jimenez, Dr. Lina Rincon, and alumni Victor Rodriguez Tafoya, producing timely and meaningful conversations. The committee included faculty Dr. Elvia Ramirez, Dr. Danielle Slakoff, Librarian Melissa Cardenas-Dow, and also students Gregorio Gonzalez, Moon Martinez, Maya Taylor.

### Season 4 (Academic Year 2024-2025)

#	<a href="#">Listen</a>	Title	Description
1	<a href="#">Listen</a>	Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire Stereotypes: Intersectional Stereotyping and Voter Bias	Listen in as Associate Professor of Political Science Danielle Joesten Martin talks with Rana McReynolds, Sac State alum and Assistant Professor of African American Studies at San Jose State, about her research on how mass media stereotypes of Black women shape evaluations of Black women candidates in the United States. They discuss Rana's academic journey, her intersectional research, and the implications of her research for the 2024 presidential election in which one of the major party candidates is a Black, Asian American woman. <a href="#">Transcript</a>
2	<a href="#">Listen</a>	Woman Leaders! A Platica with the Leaders of the Serna Center and Dreamer Resource Center	The Serna Center and Dreamer Resource Center at Sacramento State are home to various resources for Chicana/Latina students. In this episode, we speak with Juana Zaragoza and Kimberly Gomez, program directors of the Serna Center and Dreamer Resource Center, respectively. <a href="#">Transcript</a>
3	<a href="#">Listen</a>	Life after prison: Empathy and context can help a healing heart	Listen in as Anthony Jones, Ari Uzzle, and Victor Rodriguez Tafoya discuss the critical topics of social justice, activism, and criminal justice. Communities of color experience unique challenges within the criminal justice system. For instance, Black communities in California face incarceration rates 9.5 times higher than those of white individuals. This podcast follows the journey of an individual who transitioned from adolescence to adulthood while incarcerated and shares his experiences adapting to society.
4	<a href="#">Listen</a>	Coach Paul Casey, a life after prison	In this episode, Victor Rodriguez Tafoya interviews Coach Paul Casey, the owner of Better You Fitness in Hayward, California, who has transformed his own life after spending time in prison. Coach Paul is dedicated to helping others—particularly moms—develop strong mindsets, boost metabolism, and build healthier bodies so they can create better environments for their families. Join us as we explore Coach Paul's mission and the impactful work he is doing to transform lives, one client at a time.
5	<a href="#">Listen</a>	Project Rebound & Underground Scholars	Listen in as Victor Rodriguez Tafoya shares a conversation with Joshua "Gunner" Johnson, Director of the Underground Scholars Program at UC Davis and a key founder of Project Rebound at Sacramento State. Project Rebound provides critical educational



#	<a href="#">Listen</a>	Title	Description
			resources and support for formerly incarcerated individuals, offering counseling, mentoring, academic services, and career development to help them transform their lives. Gunner shares his personal journey, including his 18 years of incarceration and how that led him to his work helping formerly incarcerated students succeed in higher education. Join us as we learn about the growth of these vital programs and the profound impact they have on students navigating the challenges of reentering society.
6	<a href="#">Listen</a>	The Impact of Latino Voters During the 2024 Elections: A Plática with Chicana/Latina Faculty	Listen in as Dr. Araceli Feliz, Dr. Elvia Ramirez, and Dr. Heidy Sarabia, professors at Sacramento State, analyze the influence of Chicano/Latino voters in the 2024 election. The significance of Latino voters has become a highly debated yet frequently misunderstood topic in the context of the 2024 presidential elections. This discussion provides insights into Chicano/Latino demographics, voting patterns observed during the 2024 election, and the key issues that resonate with Chicano/Latino voters.
7	<a href="#">Listen</a>	State of Affairs: Reality or Fiction - Investigating the Blueprint of a Nation in Peril	In this special episode of <i>State of Affairs: Reality or Fiction</i> , host Dr. Marie L. Mallare-Jimenez welcomes Professor Emeritus Daniel Phil Gonzales for a gripping conversation on the far-reaching implications of the DT 2.0 administration's "Project 2025." From plans to revoke birthright citizenship and enforce mass deportations, to the controversial creation of DOGE under Elon Musk's influence—this episode dissects the dismantling of democratic institutions. Together, they explore how billionaires like Musk are reshaping education and labor by eliminating DEI initiatives and silencing dissent around Gaza and Palestinian advocacy. This is not just analysis—it's a call to awareness. Stay tuned through all three segments, brought to you by the CRISJ Building Justice podcast team.
8	<a href="#">Listen</a>	State of Affairs, Part II - Project 2025 and the Politics of Fear	What happens when democracy begins to unravel under the guise of nationalism and power? Join Dr. Marie L. Mallare-Jimenez and guest Professor Emeritus Daniel Phil Gonzales of SF State University as they delve deep into "Project 2025," a political playbook by the DT 2.0 administration that threatens to upend constitutional rights. In this special edition of <i>State of Affairs: Reality or Fiction, Part II</i> , they unpack the systematic dismantling of birthright citizenship, the chilling mobilization of mass deportation forces, and the erasure of DEI principles across America's institutions. With Elon Musk's DOGE looming large as a political and economic tool, and academic freedom under siege for those who voice support for Palestine, this conversation is as urgent as it is essential. Tune in for a powerful three-part episode, presented by the CRISJ Building Justice podcast team.

## Social Justice Advocacy (AY 2024/2025)

### Farmworker Housing Bill Passed

CRISJ's critical research and community engagement is transformational not only at Sacramento State, but in the state. CRISJ organizes panels on issues concerning social and environmental justice, and in one such event on November 14, 2023 (see [Annual Report for AY 23/24 page 9](#)) we hosted a panel/film discussing a farmworker housing rule that forced families to migrate at least 50 miles in order to qualify for affordable housing the following year. A very disruptive and hurtful rule fragmenting families' sense of belonging and children's education. After the panel, CRISJ collaborated as a co-sponsor with 4 other organizations (Human Agenda, Center for Farmworker Families, Cooperativa Campesina, Food Empowerment) and Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula in writing AB 2240, presenting it in the assembly/senate hearings and appropriations committees. This long process concluded in September 24, 2024 with the Governor Gavin Newsom signing the bill. This work was substantial and involved faculty, students, community partners, where we integrated critical research/knowledge and community engagement to advance social justice with concrete policy change. CRISJ's network of partners responded to the call to support AB 2240 to end the 50-mile rule and allow year-round housing to the hands that feed the nation and make California the richest state in the country. Importantly, we received an invitation to join Gov. Newsom in the signing of the bill. See photo: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2024/09/24/governor-newsom-signs-new-laws-to-expand-farmworker-housing-and-cut-red-tape/>. This is just one CRISJ event that significantly improved the lives of thousands of farmworker families.

Below, I share one of the last CRISJ letters in support of AB 2240, and three photos where CRISJ was invited to join educational/advocacy projects **challenging** modern expressions of slavery (H2As), attacks on birth-right citizenship, and the systemic/historic/continuous removals of people of indigenous ancestry/heritage (Mexican/Chicanx/Latinx). Please also see article "Natives to Aliens" (last image). We expect the university's support to make this Center the pride and jewel of the CSU system and beyond. It will be the Harvard University within the CSU system standing up to the fascism of the nation.



Governor Newsom signs new laws to expand farmworker housing and cut red tape | Governor of California - California Governor

FRESNO – Today, Governor Newsom expanded California's housing efforts for farmworkers, signing two bills: AB 2240 (Arambula) and AB 3035 (Pellerin). These measures improve access to affordable housing for agricultural workers and make it easier to build farmworker housing.

[www.gov.ca.gov](https://www.gov.ca.gov)

## Critical Research and Advocacy



September 2, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 2240 (Arambula) – Farmworker Housing (Sponsor) Request for Signature**

Dear Governor Newsom,

Hi my name is Manuel Barajas, and I am a professor of sociology and a co-founder of the Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice at Sacramento State (CRISJ). On behalf of CRISJ, I support AB 2240 because a harmful 50-mile rule forces unnecessary, stressful, and costly movement disrupting the overall health and futures of farmworker families.

I am a fourth generation farmworker with great uncles, grandparents, and parents who have labored in the California fields since the early twentieth century. Like those before them, my parents lived fragmented lives as a family for many years, and in 1973, they brought their four children and lived in a farmworker center in Stockton. When the camps closed in the fall, our community was forced to migrate to Michoacan, because local housing was/is very expensive; and at that time, farmworkers were denied Unemployment Insurance (excluded from the National Labor Relations Act of 1935).<sup>1</sup>

Significantly, farmworkers make agribusiness among the richest industry in the nation (\$56 billion in 2022).<sup>2</sup> California agriculture produces over half of the vegetables and fruits for the nation, and employs approximately 800,000 workers.<sup>3</sup> Farmworkers are the heart and wealth of California agriculture, so why are families forced to migrate? Responding to agribusiness' fears of a shortage of farmworkers when the Bracero Program ended in 1964, the Office of Migrant Services (OMS) was formed in 1965 to provide farmworkers with affordable, seasonal rental housing. Today, OMS operates 24 housing centers across California, serving about 7,000 people, only a very small number of the total farmworkers. At one point, an opposition to AB 2240 declared that there are existing housing resources for non-migratory farmworkers, and that farmworker housing should be for only those that are truly migratory. However, there is no longer an opposition. It made no sense to support forced migrations in the farmworker housing centers. Why not allow the current residents of the housing centers to stay year-round if over 80 percent would prefer to stay and less than 10 percent to migrate? Importantly, AB 2240 bill would ensure housing to those who choose to migrate. Both migrant and non-migrant farmworkers feel and see themselves at home in their current farmworker housing centers.

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THE CENTER ON RACE, IMMIGRATION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

At one point and no longer the case, the opposition claimed that it is not possible to offer both year-round and seasonal housing options. Importantly, this claim is not based on farmworkers' interests, but adheres to the existing 50-mile rule that forces families to migrate in order to qualify for the low-income housing the following year. Significantly, the logic of the 50-mile rule is rooted to values and practices that should have ended with slavery, sharecropping, and the Bracero Program because they keep essential workers extremely marginalized and exploitable to the interests of those who profit from migratory labor. Again, the AB 2240 has no major opposition among those who care for the dignity and health of farmworker families who enrich California with their essential labor.

In brief, a great majority of farmworkers include whole families with several generations who see California as their home. I come from a farmworker community that was fragmented for generations, not because we had a migratory culture, but because we were forced to migrate to survive. Providing the option of year-round housing, farmworker families can experience a non-fragmented sense of community and their children can experience year-round education allowing them to successfully graduate high school. For these reasons, I strongly recommend an AYE vote on AB 2240 (Arambula). If you have any questions, please contact [crisj@csus.edu](mailto:crisj@csus.edu) or [mbarajas@csus.edu](mailto:mbarajas@csus.edu). Thank you very much more your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Manuel Barajas*  
Manuel Barajas, PH.D.  
Professor  
Interim Director of CRISJ



cc: Assembly Committee on Housing & Community Development Members and Staff  
Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula, Author.

<sup>1</sup> See Lopez, Ann. 2007. *The Farmworkers' Journey*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
Barajas, Manuel. 2009. *The Xanipu Community Across Borders: Labor Migration, Community, and Family*. Notre Dame Press.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdfr.ca.gov/Statistics/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://farmworkerfamily.org/information>

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## CRISJ is invited to speak at various academic and community spaces on Social Justice



CRISJ was invited to a panel on Immigration and Racial Justice at UC Davis MLK Law School, April 3, 2025. Manuel Barajas with Raquel Aldana (UCD Law), Louis Lopez (ABA Hispanic Commission), Grace Zelphin (ACLU), and Jack Chin (UCD Law).

## ¡Si Se Puede!



CRISJ was invited to speak about “Braceros de Ayer y Hoy: Colonial Continuities” at Huron, California, a small farmworker town in the Central Valley (September 12, 2024). We concluded the event with indigenous purepecha food, e.g., uchepos, corundas and Churipio.



CRISJ was invited by Chicano/Latino Caucus, representing all assembly members/senators in California, to speak on the history of racist deportations (December 14, 2024).

By Manuel Barajas, Heidi Sarabia

# FROM NATIVES TO ALIENS

Over the past 25 years, Indigenous-ancestry immigrants in the U.S. have faced removals shaped by colonial history and identity—not just immigration status. This study reveals how Mexican and Latinx Indigenous peoples are labeled as “outsiders,” showing how race, gender, and class continue to influence deportations and belonging in America.




**STOP!**  
“ALIEN ENEMIES”  
TAKE NOTICE

TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS ARTICLE, SCANNING THE QR CODE

Mel Hirsch/Archives & Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana

<https://doi.org/10.1525/azt.2025.50.1.23>



**Join CRISJ!**

Join the CRISJ team and collaborate on building a more just world through critical knowledge production and civic engagement on campus and communities! To learn more about our upcoming programs, visit our website: [www.csus.edu/crisj](http://www.csus.edu/crisj)

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**Kristina Victor**, CRISJ Faculty Associate

We especially recognize **Ana R. Gutierrez**, Administrative Coordinator II ANTH, for her exceptional contributions and support to the CRISJ mission. Her expertise, dedication, and compassion were foundational to the success of all our work. We also recognize and deeply appreciate CRISJ student interns, Dani Perez and Nizar Youssef. Thank you from all CRISJ associates/partners!