



REHR Center Newsletter

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Our Mission

The mission of the Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Human Rights is to provide space and resources for students and faculty of Soka University of America to engage in inquiry, research, and constructive dialogue related to race, ethnicity, human rights, and their intersections.

Our Values

Racial and ethnic discrimination are commonly embedded in legal, economic, and social institutions in countries across the world of the 21st century. In many instances, discrimination is a consequence of a history of slavery, colonialism, or ethnocentrism. In others, the origins of present-day discrimination predate the colonial experience, or are the prod-

uct of religious belief systems. Whatever the context, institutionalized racism and personal prejudice remain significant obstacles to the full realization of the inherent dignity of all human beings, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent UN Conventions.

Linguistic Diversity in the Spanish Classroom

by Pablo Camus-Oyarzun, PhD

The United States is the second largest Spanish speaking country in the world by number of speakers. In this land, the population who traces their heritage to Latin America is around 19%, and in California this percentage raises rises to a staggering 39%. In Orange County alone, the Latino population accounts for 1.07M people

(around the 33.8%). By 2050, the Pew Research Center predicts that the Hispanic Population will reach around 50 million (1 in 4 Americans). With these numbers, it is not a surprise that domestic students from these backgrounds are and will continue to increase at SUA.

For these students the Spanish language plays a central role in their lives. In most

cases, they learned Spanish at home and in their communities, and they learned English at school. Even those who did not learn Spanish (or who have a limited amount of proficiency in it) will likely claim that the Spanish language and culture is part of their background and identity. These students are called heritage speakers of Spanish. It is not a surprise then, that

many of these students are coming to Spanish classroom with the goals to reconnect and learn more about the language and cultures of their families. Universities across the US are taking notice of these trends, and Spanish programs are increasingly adapting to meet the needs of both heritage and L2 (those who did not learn the target language at home) speakers of Spanish.

These demographics shifts pose many challenges to the teaching Spanish in the US and SUA. First, can we really continue speaking of Spanish as a “foreign” language? With these numbers in hand, it would be like calling French a foreign language in Switzerland or calling Cantonese a foreign language in China. And just as Swiss French history, culture and language are taught in Swiss schools, US Spanish speaking cultures should be part the curriculum in K12 and college. What we teach is important. Fortunately, SUA is not behind. We do have a wide selection of classes (in programs and concentrations) that covers topics of Latin American studies, cultures, immigration, or Chicanos studies.

But what about how we teach Spanish? Spanish classroom instruction has generally had the implicit goal to develop separate abilities in their second language, conceptualizing bilingualism as an all-or-nothing category (i.e., either you



speak Spanish the same way you speak English or you're not bilingual at all). This is obviously unrealistic for any L2 speakers (you can be bilingual without knowing every nuance of the subjunctive), but for heritage speakers it is completely divorced from their linguistic realities. Heritage speakers struggle in the Spanish classrooms simply because they're not made for them. Their linguistic abilities vary greatly, are fluid and continuous, they switch back and forth between English and Spanish (i.e., Spanglish) and use each language in different spheres of life. They often do not know formal Spanish, and in a typical class, they might struggle in some areas regarding academic writing and reading, while at the same time outperforming their peer in oral or listening abilities. This will likely create insecurities in their Spanish. Most importantly, their different linguistic abilities in each language are not an exception, and their English Spanish codeswitching is not an anomaly, but it is the

norm of virtually every bilingual community across the world (just ask any student from India, Ghana, Philippines, etc.).

Thanks to the REHR center support, I've been able to develop a class to address these issues. It's a Spanish class that seeks to tackle the linguistic needs of both heritage and second language speakers. Rather than stigmatizing, this course will welcome the diverse varieties of languages and experiences that students bring to the classroom. This class will also focus on the realities of US Spanish-speaking communities, a topic often neglected in Spanish programs. It is my hope that all students will feel welcome in this class. Traditional second language students will benefit from learning about the communities that will likely encounter in their own neighborhoods and communities and learn to appreciate US Spanish as just another variety of Spanish, like the ones spoken in Madrid or

Buenos Aires. Likewise, heritage speakers will learn about their own communities, and will contribute to the curriculum by sharing their own lived experiences. By the end, students will understand, in the words of Doctor Lourdes Ortega, that “there is no clear line between what constitutes bilingual versus monolingual experience. Multilingualism is continuous, gradient, and probabilistic”.

Race and the Brazilian Elections

by Ian Read, PhD

On Nov. 3, former Todd Chapman, former U.S. Ambassador to Brazil (2020-2021), visited SUA's campus. He participated in an event called "Is Brazil's Democracy at Stake" which brought together the ambassador and Dr. Paulo Nogueira Batista Jr., an author, professor, and economist. They dis-



cussed the presidential elections that had led to a victory for Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva only three days before. The incoming President, "Lula," already served two terms as President from 2003-2010 and will return to the office after defeating the right-leaning incumbent Jair Bolsonaro. It was a divisive election campaign reflecting deep political polarization in Brazil.

Chapman and Batista entered into a lively debate about Brazilian politics and its relation with the United States in the wake of the divisive Brazilian elections.

At one point in their conversation about environmental policies, Amb. Chapman paused and said, "we have to be able to engage in respectful political discourse and say, 'this is an issue on which reasonable people can disagree.'" In these gestures, Amb. Chapman and Dr. Batista wonderfully demonstrated how two rea-

sonable people might disagree in a way that opens understanding. Nelson Mandela wrote that "the best weapon is to sit down and talk," an expression now inscribed on a magnificent U-shaped bench and art installation in front of the United Nations Headquarters.

Chapman and Batista had much to talk about in the ninety-minute dialogue in the Athenaeum, but one topic was never mentioned: race and racism in Brazilian politics. As the event's moderator, I feel responsible for not bringing up this topic. Race and racism are

an area of research and interest in my work and a focus of the REHR Center. Our silence reminds me that race relations are most fundamentally power relations, and this power is sometimes best expressed through its ability to quiet discourse on race. One common way this happens is by calling any discussion of race "racist," even in response to any representation or enunciation of the lived experience of racism in Brazil. Such claims can be made despite clear proof that Black people have long had lower levels of wealth, poorer educational provision and achievement, and greater burdens of health disparities in Brazil. Such counter-accusations against any revelation of prejudice are especially important in that nation, where a notion of cordiality among different racial groups have defined Portuguese and Brazilian nativism and nationalism for centuries. Robin Sheriff writes, "Brazil's race relations, both past and present, have been publicly constructed through the ideology of *democracia racial*, or racial democracy, a set of beliefs and discourses that maintain that racialized prejudice and discrimination are especially mild or even nonexistent in Brazil."

"Amb. Chapman and Dr. Batista wonderfully demonstrated how two reasonable people might disagree in a way that opens understanding."

Race relations as power relations infuse almost every aspect of life in Brazil, and are especially important to politics. Well before Bolsonaro became a candidate and President, he was known for his inflammatory speech. In 2017, when he was a Congressman, he said that residents of *quilombos*—communities descended from enslaved people who had escaped slavery—"do nothing." He added that they "are not even good at procreating," a clearly racist insult toward Black men and women whose great-grandparents had suffered the brutality of enslavement. Despite comments like this, Bolsonaro still attracted many voters who identify as *negro* or *preto* (Black) or *pardo* (Black or mixed race). Why? There are at least three reasons. First, Bolsonaro called for a "*mano dura*," or tough-on-crime approach, replete with a gun-pointing hand gesture that he used in many rallies and televised appearances. Communities of color have been ravaged by gun violence, with *pardos* suffering the most from homicides. Second, most evangelicals

are probably mostly preto and pardo, and Bolsonaro social conservatism appealed to this group. Finally, after years of political scandals and evidence of corruption, especially within the Workers Party, many people of color were willing to vote for the “unorthodox” candidate. Unorthodox as he was, Bolsonaro often failed to deliver what he had promised over his four years in the President’s office, especially to Brazil’s poorest groups. Not coincidentally, these groups are disproportionately Black and Indigenous.

Although the data are scarce, Bolsonaro’s loss to Lula this October may be partly because his image dimmed sufficiently among non-white voters, especially among pardos. For example, Lula won so many votes in the Brazilian

Northeast that he could eke out a one percent national victory over Bolsonaro even though he did not get a majority of votes in any other region. Among the residents of the Northeast, 53 percent self-declare their race as pardo (and another 8 percent as preto).

Is Lula’s victory also a victory for its non-white population? It is much too early to tell. Lula is most famous for expanding social welfare programs like Bolsa Familia that greatly aided Brazil’s Black and Indigenous populations. Still, he did this during his first two terms using billions of dollars gained through a commodity boom that mostly funneled Brazilian resources to China. That boom has long ended. Addi-



tionally, Lula or its ministers have already made mistakes. A picture of Lula’s Transition Cabinet before the election showed a large group of what appeared to be nearly all older white men. Just this month (December), one of Lula’s incoming Ministers of State allegedly said that Brazil has a “pacific [race] mixture,” returning us to the old myth

of racial democracy that has long denied that racial prejudice exists in Brazil. Nonetheless, within days of winning the election, Lula declared “racism is a disease,” to which he committed his government to fight. If anyone has a shot at improving the lives and opportunities of Brazil’s people of color, it is Lula.

“Art as Activism” December 10, 2022 - Opening Remarks

by Michael Weiner, PhD



We are here today to acknowledge and to celebrate the intimate relationship between the Arts and Human Rights Both are concerned with questions of what is, and what is not, of humanity and the dignity of life, empathy, visions of the future, and the transformation of the individual and of human communities. And both are

universally applicable.

Human rights and the Arts occupy parallel spaces because of the expressive nature that defines both. The Arts question or shape the contours to what it is to be human, while Human Rights empower people to be who they are. Through recognition and protection of the right to be creative and unpredictable, Human Rights facilitate the

creation of spaces in which artists engage and the arts flourish.

Human Rights provide the protection needed to challenge entrenched dogma, advancing new ways of understanding ourselves, others, and the world we inhabit. The Arts challenge privileged perspectives and narratives, and invite us to consider, to reflect, to respond, and to participate. The Arts also dignify human experience, giving voice to thoughts and feelings that stimulates both recognition of our own humanity and contemplation of a collective humanity.

All those involved in the Arts possess Human Rights, whether in the creation, the composition, the distribution, the dissemination, or the display of art. There are several UNESCO instruments that are particularly relevant to the rights of artists; the UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist (1980), and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). Attacks on sites of cultural significance, or cultural artefacts, are now recognized as war crimes in international criminal law.

And yet, the world today is witnessing the displacement of human populations on an unprecedented scale, religious extremism, xeno-

phobic nationalisms, ever greater wealth disparities, and the devastating effects of global climate change. This has been accompanied by a crisis of confidence, a heightened loss of trust in the institutions of government, established political parties, religious institutions, and the media. In this environment, the spirit and substance of Human Rights are also under assault. Its message is not reaching the disinterested or the antagonistic. It may be that the language of rights has become too technical, too legalistic, and distant from the lives of too many.

It is here that the role of art takes center stage. We do not only think, therefore we are, but we also feel, therefore we are. Indeed, perception is often more powerful than facts, especially now, when society's acceptance of facts is so fractured.

Art is all about perception, even sometimes visceral representations of, and reactions to horrific events. Storytelling and music are often more potent mediums than formal texts. By transcending the barriers of

politics and language, the Arts chronicle Human Rights abuses and provides unique forms of witnessing, naming, shaming, and accountability. Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) is a devastating indictment of the aerial bombardment of civilians during the Spanish Civil War. Bob Dylan's *Hurricane* (1975) raised public awareness of systemic racism in the US criminal justice system, while the Arts were in the

vanguard in promoting public awareness of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s often in the face of official indifference, or even worse. A decade later, during the siege of Sarajevo, Vedran Smailović, the "Cellist of Sarajevo", played his instrument outdoors in defiance of the carnage that surrounded him. He played at the sites of civilian deaths to honor

Presented by the United Nations Association of The United States of America, OC Chapter in partnership with Soka University of America's Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Human Rights

Human Rights Day 2022 Event

ARTS *AS* ACTIVISM

Saturday, December 10 | 1pm-4pm

Founders Hall, 2nd Floor Art Gallery

Soka University of America

1 University Drive | Aliso Viejo, CA 92565

Satellite Event: 7pm-9pm

Laguna Beach Cultural Arts Center

235 Forest Avenue, Laguna Beach, CA 92651

Join Orange County humanitarian organizations and visual & performing artists for a day of art, advocacy, & action. The event will include special presentations about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the works of art gifted to the United Nations by member states, and a special appearance by internationally renowned activist artist of INTERCULTURAL, Sheinina Lolita Raj.

Registration is encouraged at www.una-oc.org



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Orange County Chapter



SOKA UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR RACE, ETHNICITY,
AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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the victims, to bring hope and beauty to the survivors, and as a reminder of how music can become a form of resistance. Similarly, the sculpture by Dumile Feni that graces the entrance to the Constitutional Court of South Africa invokes both the dehumanizing history of apartheid and an acknowledgement of the equality and human dignity of all

South Africans.

Art can also help to heal the wounds caused by Human Rights abuses. Art programs can help to alleviate the suffering of people in refugee camps or in prison. These reflect the hope that humankind remains capable of humanity. But the potential power of the Arts must also not be overestimated. Art may be better at eluci-

dating the important questions rather than offering answers. While art can provide comfort to victims, and even to the perpetrators themselves it cannot undo acts of genocide. The wonder and purpose of art is not to save the world. Art has no strictly defined purpose or justification, and this is its power.

In closing I would like to express our appreciation to

those who have tirelessly worked to create this event, to our honored guests, and to the artists whose creativity, compassion, and imaginations we celebrate today.

On behalf of Soka University of America I thank you all.

Human Rights Day 2022

by Lisa MacLeod, PhD

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. In 1950, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 423 to recognize December 10th as Human Rights Day as a way of bringing attention to both the accomplishments and ongoing challenges to the realization of human rights in the daily lives of all people. Soka University of America – in partnership with Soka’s Center for Race, Ethnicity and Human Rights (REHR Center), and the United Nations Association of Orange County (UNA-OC) -- hosted its inaugural Human Rights Day Celebration on December 10, 2022.

The Founder’s Hall Art Gallery and Meeting Room were the perfect venue for an afternoon devoted to the theme, “Art as Activ-

ism.” Attendees were welcomed by Soka’s Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs, Michael Weiner, and UNA-OC’s President, Dave Rice. In addition to a brief history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the formal program featured three speakers: Joanne Tawfilis, founder of the Art Miles Mural Project shared her experiences of creating and sharing art with children to advance a culture of peace. Dr. Kathleen Montgomery of the Human Rights Special Interest Group shared slides and discussed some of the many pieces of art donated to the UN by member states. Artist and activist Sheinina Lolita Raj spoke to the ways in

**UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**
Orange County Chapter

**We will be celebrating
Human Rights Day
in Orange County, CA
Saturday, December 10th
and we need YOU!**

- **human rights organizations**
- **artists/musicians**
- **sponsors**

For more information or if you are interested in participating, please respond to this post or email:
UNAOEvents@gmail.com

For more information about Human Rights Day:
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/human-rights-day>
About the UNA-OC: <https://www.una-oc.org/>



Honiball Joseph and vocalist Casden Simonson performing “Baraye,” which has become the song

which her family history of enslavement and her own search for identity as a multi-racial woman has informed her work, especially her award-winning “INTERCULTURAL Worldwide,” which has been invited to exhibit at the United Nations in Geneva in honor of the 75th anniversary of the UDHR. The program concluded with pianist

of protests in Iran and around the world following the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman arrested by Iran’s Guidance Patrol for “inappropriately” wearing her hijab.

The second component of the day’s events brought together local humanitarian organizations as well as visual and performing artists.

This unusual combination was the brainchild of Jayne Herring, UNA-OC’s Ambassador of Human Rights and Chair of the Human Right’s Day Planning Committee. She believes that art can heighten empathy and raise awareness for human rights issues, while local humanitarian organizations provide opportunities to channel that empathy into socially beneficial action. “The inspiration was originally for my capstone project when finishing a degree from Southern Methodist University’s Human Rights Program in the spring of 2020. The project was derailed because of the

pandemic, but I hoped that one day I could do some version of it. I’m honored to have the support of the UNA-OC and the REHR Center to bring it to life, and overjoyed at the responses from ‘artists’ in our region who were eager to participate. My sincere hope is there are many more collaborations to come.”

The REHR Center looks forward to celebrating Human Rights Day 2023, the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If you are interested in helping to plan next year’s festivities, please contact the REHR Center.

SUA MLK Event by the REHR Center

by Kevin Moncrief, PhD

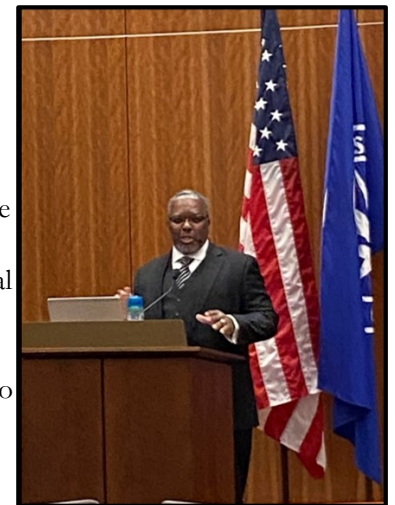
20 people attended a Commemorative Event Celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Currie Hall Room 200 on Tuesday, January 17, 2023.

Reverend Reginald E. Bachus has been the pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in the city of Chicago. He is a community leader and activist who has acted based on his faith and devotion. Rev. Bachus has helped many in the Chicago community, including those challenged by gun violence, poverty, injustice, and home-

lessness. He approaches these difficult issues with inspiration, faith, and hope, all founded on the example of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Rev. Bachus recognizes that community building often must include the government, law enforcement, neighborhood businesses, churches, and schools that come together in dialogue, coalition building, and problem-solving. He shared his experience and advice for expanding these efforts worldwide.

One inspirational example is Rev. Bachus’ leadership in

the organization Austin Coming Together (ACT). Austin is a subsection of the Chicago metropolitan area and home to dozens of local organizations that aim to improve conditions for the less fortunate in the Chicago area. It was one of the first places that King campaigned outside of the U.S. south. One important activity involves hundreds of volunteers who stood on troubled street corners on Wednesday evenings to provide a safe and crime-free environment for the community. After the communi-



The Reverend Dr. Reginald E. Bachus

ty boldly gathered in this way on Wednesday nights, gang members threatened to confront him at his church. Rev. Bachus responded not with fear or silence but with an

invitation. He asked for those gang leaders to come to his church so he could talk with them. The Rev. Bachus has befriended many gang members due to his kindness and character.


Rev. Bachus graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration in 1994 from Washburn University of Topeka. On June 4, 2011, he received his Master of Divinity from The Northern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also received a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching and Congregational Leadership there on June 13, 2015.

Rev. Bachus has served as Board Vice Chairman, Executive Director, and Steering Community member of Austin Coming Together (Chicago). In 2022, Austin Coming Together won the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN) Nonprofit of the Year Award. It supports over 50 nonprofit, faith-based, public, and private


organizations. Austin, Chicago has developed a community plan including quality early learning, safe neighborhoods, living wage careers, and stable housing markets. Pastor Bachus founded the Austin-based Friendship Community Development Corporation. The South Coalition Community Council awarded him the Community Service Award in November 2010. He represents 100 Churches on 100 Blocks in the 15th District of the Chicago Police Department. He has served as the Faith-Based Chair of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (15th District).

Reverend Bachus mentioned his positive impressions following a tour of Heritage Hall on campus. He described how Martin

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Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' - Martin Luther King, Jr.




TUESDAY JAN 17 | 5 PM | Curie 200
The Reverend Dr. Reginald E. Bachus

'Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope.'
 Reverend Reginald E. Bachus, pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Chicago, has applied Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s principle of "out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope" to his personal life and community. An experienced community leader and activist, Rev. Bachus uses dialogue and coalition building to work with government, law enforcement, businesses, educators, and others to find solutions for those facing the greatest challenges in his Chicago community. He attributes his success to his inspiration, faith, and hope founded on the example of Dr. King. He will share his experiences and advice for expanding these efforts worldwide and answer questions about his work. Soka students, faculty, and staff welcome. FREE with RSVP.



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For more information contact Carin Rodgers Bronstein at crogersbronstein@soka.edu

Luther King's ethos of peacebuilding connected Soka Education and peacebuilding. His final words were for our students, urging them to work hard and self-

lessly for a better world. In this, we find an echo of King's famous statement: "Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope."

Anti-Regime Protests Continue in Iran

by *Fatima Rhman, PhD*

For the past three months, the world's attention has been consumed by the events unfolding in Iran. Protests began in September in the Kurdish region of Iran after the death of a Kurdish Iranian woman

Mahsa Amini who died in police custody after being arrested and detained for not wearing the hijab or headscarf properly in accordance with Iran's strict dress code. The protests continued and have spread throughout

Iran, cutting across age, class, religiosity, and ethnic lines. The old Kurdish phrase Jin, Jiyan, Azadi which translates to Women, Life, and Freedom has become the slogan of these anti-regime protests.

"While this is by far the greatest threat the regime has experienced since its 40 plus year existence, there are certain factors at play which make a regime change, particularly in the near future, seemingly challenging."

Iran's hijab policy is a central tenet of the Iranian regime's political ideology which exploits religion to maintain a hold on the Iranian population. The Guidance Patrol, also known as the Morality Police, is the branch of law enforcement which enforces the dress code, and has the authority to arrest and detain civilians for breaking any laws pertaining to the dress or social behavior code.

Mahsa Amini's actual Kurdish name was Jina Amini. Because Kurdish names are not legally permitted in Iran due to the long-standing persecution of the ethnic minority group, her legal Persian name under Iranian law was Mahsa. The Kurdish minority in Iran is estimated to be about 15% of the Iranian population, with the majority living in the western part of the country. The Kurdish people have been subjected

to a long history of persecution in Iran, both by the current Islamic Republic of Iran as well as the previous secular regime of the Shah. The death of Mahsa Amini tragically highlights this persecution. While many Iranians of Persian ethnicity violate the dress code on a daily basis without being arrested, Mahsa Amini was targeted because of her Kurdish ethnicity.

The protests have been met with a harsh crackdown by the regime, as expected of an authoritarian regime, with an estimated 14,000 Iranians arrested. Human rights organizations throughout the world as well as the United Nations

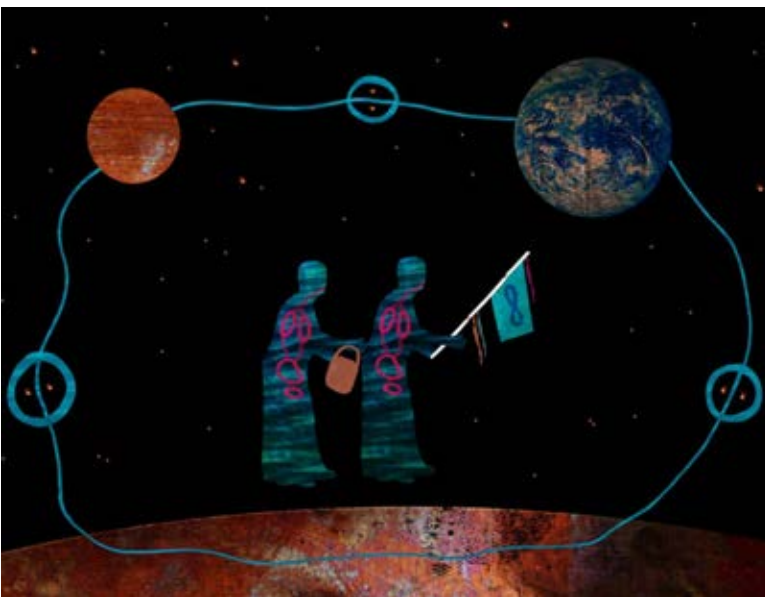


have condemned the regime's actions.

While the protests continue, it is yet to be determined whether there will be a long-term reform or regime change. While this is by far the greatest threat the regime has experienced since its 40 plus year existence, there are certain factors at play which make a regime change, particularly in the near future, seemingly challenging. The

security apparatus, most notably the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, has a vested interest in ensuring that the regime stays in power. Additionally, the protests while widespread and unabating, lack central organization, leadership, and a strategic game plan. Taken together, these factors may have a far-reaching impact on the outcome of the protests.

Afro and Indigenous Futurism



by *Quetzal Ramirez*

Afrofuturism was coined in 1993 by Mark Dery to describe the intersection of culture with a philosophy of science and history that envisions black futures. It is defined by

Elizabeth LaPensée, *Our Grandmothers Carry Water from the Other World* (2016).

Ingrid LaFleur as “a way of imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens”. This term focuses on the African diaspora whereas African futurism focuses on movements and community building living in Africa.

Indigenous Futurism pivots off the movement and sentiments of Afrofuturism but with Indigenous lives at the center. It can be defined as a new way of storytelling using today's technologies to

unearth the traditional ways that have been erased from colonial history, all the while telling new narratives of the future.

These two terms are important for any movements and initiatives surrounding equity and inclusionary work that aims to address the harm that targets BIPOC communities. There is a lot of focus on racism in America, the violence of settler colonial-

ism, and the lack of financial distribution for the BIPOC working class. Although, It is important that these conversations continue to happen to address them at different stages of society; it is equally important to highlight and bear in mind the important strides forward that are simultaneously occurring at the time, such as the increase in Black and Indigenous actors within media, art, and aca-

demia.

Thus, both Afro- and Indigenous- futurism aim to “liberate” themselves from the oppression of colonialism and systemic racism throughout history by envisioning themselves in the future. This is a powerful statement because at various points throughout history, the dominant culture wanted to erase both the Black and Indigenous cultures or

assimilate them into the dominant culture. Therefore, the importance of envisioning the marginalized communities in the future is a message filled with hopefulness.

Research Being Conducted by the SUA REHR Center Student Fellows:

Christa Niyeze,
Class of 2023



“Creating Inclusive Spaces at SUA and beyond” o Soka University is home to many community members from a variety of backgrounds, which is why we need spaces where we can thrive to see and understand each other. How can we use the REHR Center’s mission as the foundation in the creation of

inclusive spaces that will allow us, students and faculty alike, to truly see each other? I intend to collect information on the works already done on campus to understand what conversations we are already having while also educating myself and other Fellows on what inclusive conversations look like and what workshops we can create for our diverse Soka community.

Pablo Zavala,
Class of 2023



“Economic Shocks among Ethnic Minorities in Ecuador” How does gasoline price affect standards of living in Ecuador? What groups seem to suffer the most from costs of living fluctuations in terms of real market-based consumption? Ethnic minorities usually suffer the most from eco-

conomic shocks, such as sudden price increases. I examine how gasoline price fluctuations have affected costs of living and, therefore, real consumption capabilities across ethnically distinct zones in Ecuador by using province-level panel data obtained from governmental sources, such as the National Institute of Statistics and Census and the Central Bank of Ecuador, to run regressions in which we estimate the significance of costs of living changes in real consumption.

Quetza Ramirez, Class of 2023



“Ethnic Studies and (or?) Global Citizenship Education” Quetza’s project is

focused primarily on Ethnic Studies but also includes an aspect of Global Citizenship Education. He explores the intersectionality of these two fields because their combined value can foster global leaders with the essential knowledge to create a better future. The research question “What are the SUA community’s views on Ethnic Studies?” serves as an entry point into this deep topic. I will send out

a survey with twelve questions, including demographic questions and questions about Ethnic Studies and Global Citizenship Education.



A Living Legacy

The REHR Center, founded in 2020, builds on a tradition at SUA to engage in inquiry, research, and constructive dialogue related to race, ethnicity, human rights, and their intersections. Notable guests like Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and José Ramos-Horta exemplify a living legacy.

Coretta Scott King



Oct. 12, 1995: The Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King

Coretta Scott King, a civil rights leader and the wife of Martin Luther King Jr., gave the Soka community a lecture titled “The Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King.” Mrs. King shared that while her husband is remembered as the leader of the civil

rights movement in the US, he also had a profound dream for the world—a world in which “bitter conflicts would be replaced by a new spirit of international brotherhood and sisterhood.” Dr. King believed that an organized nonviolent movement was the only way to bring such a global community into being. Mrs. King pointed out that the legacy of the civil rights movement has already transcended national boundaries to bring greater democracy around the world. In this context, she urged the students to become global citizens, “informed and motivated to support human rights and peace movements in every nation” and to live “the

dream in the spirit of nonviolence.”

Please see the REHR Center’s webpage, “A Living Legacy,” for more legendary moments that build a foundation upon which the REHR Center strives to build.

“to become global citizens informed and motivated to support human rights and peace movements in every nation” and to live “the dream in the spirit of nonviolence.”

The Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Human Rights

*Soka University of America
1 University Drive
Aliso Viejo, California 92656*

We are on the web!

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center-race-ethnicity-and-human-rights](https://www.soka.edu/academics/research/center-race-ethnicity-and-human-rights)



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Christa Niyzezi, *Class of 2023*

REHR Center Student Fellow

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