



Spring 2023

## Scholar shares stories about immigrants' rich lives

When in a new country, a place where you can have a meal of familiar food among people who speak encouraging words in your mother tongue can make you feel welcome and safe. That's exactly the kind of place Doña Natalia Barraza created after she immigrated to Los Angeles from Mexico. Opened in Echo Park in 1951, the Nayarit was a local landmark, popular with Hollywood stars and restaurant workers from across the city and beloved for its fresh, traditionally prepared Mexican food. It was also a place where ethnic Mexicans and other Latinx residents could step into the fullness of their lives, nourishing themselves and one another—a place where they belonged.

In her most recent book, *A Place at the Nayarit: How a Mexican Restaurant in Los Angeles Nourished a Community*, Natalia Molina tells the stories of restaurant workers as they moved from the kitchen and the front of the house, across borders and

through the decades. The Nayarit, owned by Molina's grandmother, became an urban anchor and a gathering space where ethnic Mexican workers and customers connected with their *patria chica* (small country). While Molina was able to unearth much about immigrant life in the Los Angeles of the 1950s and 60s—how and why people migrated, where they worked, lived, and recreated—in government and community archives, immigrant workers tend to have little presence in their new homeland. They are what we might call the “under-documented.”



Molina will share the strategies that she and other historians have used to tell their stories in her talk, “A Place in the Narrative: Telling Under-documented Stories” on Tuesday, April 18 at 5:30 p.m. in the Ford Alumni Center Giustina Ballroom as the Oregon Humanities Center's 2022–23 Cressman Lecturer.

Where do we find immigrants' traces outside official archives? How can we use an archive to tell stories it was not designed to tell? When we understand that oral histories, photographs, menus, family lore, and memories hold clues to marginalized peoples in the

*continues on page 3*

## Civil rights and disability justice attorney speaks about intersectionality in social movements

Many people associate shared group identities, experiences of oppression, political ideologies, or goals with a sense of greater social cohesion and belonging to a cause. While that is often the case, there are also many examples—both historical and contemporary—where members of otherwise seemingly aligned groups have navigated tension based on differences in perspective, approach, and even objectives. In some instances, these differences have led to strategic advantages and the development of specified

roles in social justice spaces. In others, they have not.



In her talk “Down for the Cause: Grace, Space, and Belonging in Social Movements” on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. in 175 Knight Law Center, civil rights lawyer and disability rights advocate Britney Wilson will explore the meaning, nature, and limitations of alignment in the context of social movements and advocacy, including whether and when alignment coincides with shared personal identity or experience and when it does

not. She will also consider how and why members of marginalized groups may seek to protect and maintain self-determination over their own experiences and the impact of the concept of “belonging” on quests for external support. In doing so, Wilson will evaluate whether and how societal structures, including but not limited to, racism and ableism, affect strategy and positioning within social justice causes and potentially challenge the sense of “belonging” often believed to be inherent in such spaces.

Britney Wilson is an associate professor of Law and Director of the Civil Rights and Disability Justice Clinic at New York Law School. Prior to NYLS, Wilson was a staff attorney at the National Center for Law and Economic Justice, a Bertha Justice Fellow at the Center for

*continues on page 3*

## Humanities students gain career skills through internship

In 2022 the OHC, in collaboration with UO Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA), created the [Humanities Undergraduate Program for Archival Studies and Practice](#). Maggie Dobson and Bryanna Hensley began their fellowship in winter term. Their internship begins in spring. Jena Turner, Associate Director of the OHC, asked about their experiences. *(Edited for clarity and space. Complete interview at [ohc.uoregon.edu](http://ohc.uoregon.edu))*

**What have you learned during winter term studying with David DeLorenzo (Director of SCUA) and your orientation into SCUA?**

**Maggie:** A big thing that we've heard from everyone is the challenge of not having enough funding and how creative everyone is with that, and how much work is getting done even with those challenges. I think this will stick with me going forward. Also, everyone is big into education and always continuing their education. Archives is such a progressive profession. There is a lot of change. David talks about how different this was in the 80's.

**Bryanna:** I've learned a sense of where to focus my own career path. We've talked a lot about how complicated it is moving into the digital age, and how archivists do that. That made me think about what impact I want to have in this field.

**Maggie:** David has talked about how our generation's role in the profession is to bring the archives into the digital age. That made me think about what graduate school is going to look like.

**Bryanna:** We've met many of the SCUA staff in meetings and they have discussed what they do. We've taken tours of the different centers and the basement that holds a lot of the collections. And, we've met the people who are working here, which I think is

valuable because not only do we see the kind of positions that we could potentially have in the future but get to understand the university in more depth.

**Maggie:** With David we've gone in-depth on a lot of the theory behind archives, but in working with both him and the rest of the members of staff, we've learned about every step in the process. We've learned (which I didn't know before this) that the archival field is not a monolith. Everybody has different jobs that are very niche. I like being able to explore that to see if I would be more interested in [one area over another].

**Bryanna:** When I decided to go into library science I didn't think there were a lot of options. I thought, "Oh, I will be a librarian." So it is cool to see the options. And learning about everyone's past experiences in their field as well.

**Maggie:** Yeah, this is one of those fields where you can go in a lot of different

directions and for me the big thing about this internship has inspired me to go get my graduate degree in info sciences and library sciences. Hearing about everyone's paths has made me see myself doing this as a career.

**What will you be working on during spring term?**

**Bryanna:** We will be processing the John F. Finerty papers, his case notes and other working papers. He was a civil rights lawyer.

**Maggie:** We will be writing and publishing a finding guide. It will be amazing to have this for our resumé and to have experience writing a finding guide. It will teach us more about the process of accessioning, how the public finds things, public access, and what our role is in helping people with their research. We will also have to do our own research to be able to process the collection.



*Maggie Dobson*

*Bryanna Hensley*

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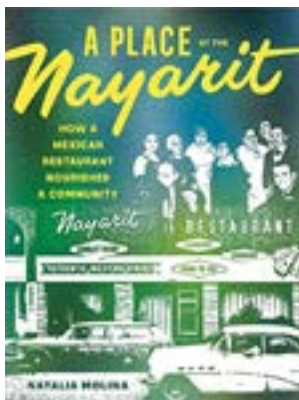
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## Molina *continued from page 1*

past, we can better imagine them as part of our future. “I conducted interviews with all the former workers from the Nayarit I could locate, as well as some former Nayarit customers and the residents of Echo Park,” writes Molina. “Oral histories helped fill in the details, the vibrancy, and the texture of my subjects’ lives.”

Natalia Molina is a Distinguished Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California’s Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences. Her research explores



the intertwined histories of race, place, gender, culture, and citizenship. She is the author of the award-winning books, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (2014) and *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879–1940* (2006). *A Place at the Nayarit: How a Mexican Restaurant Nourished*

*a Community* was published in 2022. She co-edited *Relational Formations of Race: Theory, Method, and Practice* (2019), and is at work on a new book *The Silent Hands*

*that Shaped the Huntington: A History of Its Mexican Workers*. In addition to publishing widely in scholarly journals, she has also written for the *LA Times*, *Washington Post*, and *San Diego Union-Tribune* among others. Molina serves on The Huntington’s Board of Governors and was a 2020 MacArthur Fellow.

Molina’s talk, part of the Oregon Humanities Center’s 2022–23 Belonging series, is free and open to the public. It will be livestreamed and ASL interpreted. For information and to register go to [ohc.uoregon.edu](https://ohc.uoregon.edu)

## Wilson *cont’d from page 1*

Constitutional Rights, and a Marvin M. Karparkin Fellow in the Racial Justice Program at the American Civil Liberties Union. Born with Cerebral Palsy, Wilson has written and spoken extensively about disability and the intersection of race and disability for various media outlets, including *The Nation*, *Longreads*, and *This American Life*. She has also testified about issues facing people with disabilities before both local and international governing bodies, including the New York City Council and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Also an accomplished writer and artist, Wilson has published and performed short stories, creative nonfiction essays, and poetry, including on the HBO series *Brave New Voices*.

Wilson’s talk is the Oregon Humanities Center’s 2022–23 Tzedek Lecture and is part of its 2022–23 Belonging series. The lecture is free and open to the public and will be livestreamed and ASL interpreted. Please register at [ohc.uoregon.edu](https://ohc.uoregon.edu)

## “Next Movement”: a collaboration

During the 2022 World Championships’s Riverfront Festival last summer, Orchestra Next and DanceAbility collaborated to create the performance, “Next Movement.” The creation of the piece was a unique process. Rather than starting with music or dance first, the two groups gathered and developed the 40-minute piece together. As a result they found a rich collaborative relationship, and a piece that brought out something new for each group.

A reprise of “Next Movement” will be presented on Friday, April 7, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. in the Dougherty Dance Theater in the Gerlinger Annex. This performance is cosponsored by the OHC’s Endowment for Public Outreach in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities.

For this show, Orchestra Next musicians include Idit Shner, saxophone; Torrey Newhart, keyboard; Avery Scanlon, guitar; Tyler Abbott, bass; and Ken Mastrogiovanni, drums. Brian McWhorter, founder and music director of Orchestra Next and Alito Alessi, founder and creative director of DanceAbility are the artistic co-directors for “Next Movement.”

[Orchestra Next](https://ohc.uoregon.edu) is a training orchestra and the resident orchestra for the Eugene Ballet Company. Since 2012, Orchestra Next has played every performance of Eugene

Ballet’s *The Nutcracker* and collaborated with the company on several other productions. Orchestra Next provides much-needed experience for aspiring professional musicians, resurrecting the traditional mentor-apprentice relationship.

[DanceAbility](https://ohc.uoregon.edu) is a unique dance method founded in 1987. DanceAbility uses improvisational dance to promote artistic expression and exploration between people with and without disabilities. DanceAbility’s vision is to use art as a means to change people’s preconceived ideas about disabilities through performances, workshops, educational programs, teacher training, and choreography in the U.S. and throughout the world.

For more information about this event, contact Brian McWhorter, [bjm@ohc.uoregon.edu](mailto:bjm@ohc.uoregon.edu)



Watch *UO Today* interviews with UO faculty and visiting artists and scholars.

[youtube.com/c/OregonHumanitiesCenter](https://youtube.com/c/OregonHumanitiesCenter)





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## Conference: centering the humanities in environmental inquiry

Since 1998, the Environmental Joint Campus Conference (JCC) has been an annual event that brings together graduate students and faculty from three programs: the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Oregon (UO), the Environmental Sciences Graduate Program at Oregon State University (OSU), and the Environmental Sciences and Management Program at Portland State University (PSU). The JCC provides an opportunity for graduate students and faculty from the three programs to present their diverse research. Posters and presentations given at the JCC generate discussions that span the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

This year's JCC, cosponsored by the OHC's Endowment for Public Outreach in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities, on the theme of "Celebrating Environmental Knowledges" will be held at the UO on May 18, 2023 in partnership with Environmental Studies, UO's Environment Initiative, UO Outdoors, the College of Arts and Sciences, and Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS). Indigenous scholar Dina Gilio-Whitaker will give a keynote titled "Identifying Challenges and Celebrating Impact in California Indian Coastal Conservation Spaces." Her talk will be livestreamed to PNW Tribal Climate Change Network members. Later that day, Gilio-Whitaker will attend NAIS's Culture and Community Night at the UO's Many Nations Longhouse, providing her with dedicated time

with NAIS faculty, staff, and students.

Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes) is a lecturer of American Indian Studies at California State University, San Marcos. She teaches courses on environmentalism and American Indians, traditional ecological knowledge, Native women's activism, and decolonization. Dina is co-author with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz of *"All the Real Indians Died Off": And 20 Other Myths About Native Americans* (2016). Her most recent book, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice from Colonization to Standing Rock* was published in 2019.



According to organizer Sarah Wald, "Hosting Gilio-Whitaker for the JCC communicates the centrality of environmental justice and Indigenous voices to the core work of environmental studies at UO at an event with regional visibility.

We believe this is one of the most exciting and distinctive aspects of Environmental Studies work at UO. One of our goals for the keynote and inclusion of UO environmental studies graduate students is to express the importance of centering the humanities in environmental inquiry. Additionally, we are excited for the ways this collaboration will continue to strengthen the relationship between Environmental Studies and Native American and Indigenous Studies at UO." Wald is an associate professor of Environmental Studies and English.