

19th Annual J. Paul Taylor Social Justice Symposium

Transformative Leadership: Women, Gender Diversity, and Social Justice Commemorating 35 Years of NMSU Gender & Sexuality Studies

Wednesday April 10, 2024

NMSU Corbett Center Auditorium

<https://genders.nmsu.edu/jpt19.html>

- 8:30-8:45 am** Tortugas Pueblo Blessing Ceremony (Felicia Nevarez and members of the Pueblo) Corbett Center Auditorium Outdoor Area
- 8:30-9:00 am** Coffee, Corbett Center Auditorium Lobby
- 9:00-9:05 am** Welcome by Symposium Planning Committee
- 9:05-9:10 am** Welcome Video by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham

- 9:10-10:15 am** Commemorating 35 Years of NMSU Gender & Sexuality Studies:
Panel 1: Histories

Panel Speakers:

Honor Beeson, Graduate Student, G&SS Oral History Project
Dr. Diana Bustamante, Executive Director, Colonias Development Council, founding member G&SS committee and former Sociology Professor
Dr. Martha Loustaunau, Retired Sociology Professor from Sociology/Anthropology Department
Prof. Mary Benanti, Associate College Track Professor Emeritus in G&SS and Interdisciplinary Studies Department. First faculty member hired as G&SS program faculty in 2007.

Moderator: Dr. Liz Schirmer, Department of English, Department Head

- 10:15-10:30 am** Break

- 10:30-11:45 am** Commemorating 35 Years of NMSU Gender & Sexuality Studies:
Panel 2: Futures

Panel Speakers:

Dr. Michèle Shuster, Associate Dean of Research, College of Arts and Sciences
Dr. Dylan McCarthy Blackston, Assistant Professor of G&SS
Prof. Dae Romero, College Assistant Professor of Communication Studies
Kayla Myers, Innovation Coordinator and Educator, The New America Charter High School

Moderator: Juan "Ricky" Araiza, MA, English and G&SS Instructor

- 11:45-1:00 pm** Luncheon Corbett Center East Ballroom

- 1:15-2:15 pm** Feminist Border Arts and J. Paul Taylor Social Justice Symposium
Collaboration: Zines in Schools – Participatory Media Project with J. Paul Taylor Academy and the New America School

Panel Speakers:

Dr. L. Anh Williams, Associate Professor and Academic Director of G&SS,

Co-Founding Director of FBA
Monica Kiser, Art Educator, J. Paul Taylor Academy
Kayla Myers, Innovation Coordinator and Educator, The New America Charter
High School

New America School students:

Cinthia Razo-Gonzalez

Elisa Sanchez

Roxanne Caffaro

Alex Monares

Oscar Zapeda

Moderator: Dr. M. C. Jonet, Associate Professor of G&SS, Co-Founding and Executive
Director of FBA

2:15-2:30 pm Break

2:30-3:45 pm Empowering Change: State and Local Political Leadership

Panel Speakers:

Carrie Hamblen, NM State Senator

Becky Corran, Las Cruces District 5 City Councilor

Doreen Gallegos, NM State Representative

Johana Bencomo, Las Cruces District 4 City Councilor and Mayor Pro Tem

Rebecca Roose, Senior Infrastructure Advisor to Governor Lujan Grisham

Moderator: Kim Lopez-Gallagher, Professor of Philosophy, Government, U.S. History,
NMSU-Alamogordo

3:45-4:00 pm Break with Coffee and snacks

4:00-5:15 pm Transforming Communities: Access and Belonging for All

Panel Speakers:

Dr. Michelle Adames, CEO *Jardín de los Niños*

Dr. Charles Townley, CFSNM Rainbow Committee and Professor Emeritus

School of Teacher Preparation, Administration and Leadership (HEST), Former

Dean of NMSU Library

Erika Contreras, Assistant Director, Colonias Development Council

Ryan Steinmetz, Las Cruces PFLAG

Moderator: Amber Pérez, Executive Director, Borderland Rainbow Center

5:15-5:30 pm Break

5:30-5:45 pm Social Justice Awards

Government Social Justice Award Recipient

Prof. Dae Romero, College Assistant Professor of Communication Studies

Introduced by Dr. Neil Harvey, Government Department Head

J. Paul Taylor Social Justice Community Award Recipients:

Rose Garcia, Executive Director of Tierra del Sol

Dana Hopkins, Community Activist and Advocate

Introduced by Mary Helen Taylor Ratje, J. Paul Taylor Academy educator and J.

Paul Taylor family representative & Carrie Tafoya, English College Assistant Professor

5:45-6:45 pm Reception Corbett Center Auditorium Lobby

7:00-8:30 pm Keynote: A Dialogue on Transformative Leadership

Panel Speakers:

Chancellor Sherry Kollmann, NMSU Global Campus

Chancellor Monica Torres, Doña Ana Community College

Moderator: Julia Brown, Esq., National Board Chairperson of the American Association of University Women

Free & Open to the Public

English to Spanish Translation Available

Panelists, Moderators, and Planning Committee Members



Michelle S. Adames

Dr. Michelle S. Adames is the Chief Executive Officer at Jardin de los Niños. A nonprofit organization that serves homeless/near homeless children and their families in a five-star early childhood education setting with a Trauma-Informed Care designation. She has spent twenty years working with children, families, educators, and administrators across the P-20 education pipeline. She is the Principal Investigator for numerous programs that provide a foundation to break the cycle of poverty. She championed Jardin's expansion into the Hatch Valley

Community. Dr. Adames believes in holistic, strengths-based, and trauma-informed practices that empower children, youth, and families to experience personal growth and success.



Juan "Ricky" Araiza

Juan "Ricky" Araiza (he/him), is an artist and educator from Las Cruces, NM who has been a member of New Mexico State University's community since 2014. As an artist, his work aims to raise questions on identity, the body, and borders both material and metaphorical. As a teacher, his courses (ranging from film studies to masculinities to comics as literature) seek to help students develop critical awareness on issues related

to the field of women, gender, and sexuality studies through the use of interdisciplinary pedagogical practices that combine the personal, the political, and the creative.



Honor Beeson

Honor Beeson is from the Imperial Valley, California and did her undergraduate degree in History at UC Riverside. She is a Public History MA student. She has become a novice oral and digital historian. She works on several oral history projects including Mesquite's Mis Memorias project with Las Esperanzas which is an oral history project and Murals of the Frontier originally the Murals of Las Cruces which is a digital and oral history project. She is learning practices that center humanization.



Cynthia Bejarano

Cynthia Bejarano is a Regents Professor and the Stan Fulton College of Arts and Sciences Endowed Chair at NMSU. Her research and advocacy focus on embodied border experiences with violence, immigration, migration, and gender-based violence and feminicidios at the U.S.-Mexico border. She authored, *Qué Onda: Urban Youth Culture and Border Identity*, and co-

edited, *Terrorizing Women: Femicide in the Américas*. Her co-edited book with Cristina Morales, *Frontera Madre(hood): Brown Mothers Challenging Oppression and Transborder Violence at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (University of Arizona Press) will be published in 2024. Bejarano is also the Principal Investigator for the NMSU College Assistance Migrant Program.



Mary A. Benanti

After a 20-year career in journalism and covering politics in Texas, Colorado and Washington DC, Prof Benanti returned to New Mexico State University. With a Master of Arts in Government, and a thesis “Women, Politics and Media,” she was hired as the first fulltime College Professor of the evolving Women’s Studies dept. Her class based on her thesis research was co-taught with then N.M. Lieut. Gov. Diane Denish. After retiring as

Associate Professor, Benanti continued to teach at NMSU part time and continues at the University of Texas at El Paso in the Osher Lifelong Learning program with classes on her specialty: The Politics of Sex, Gender and Sexualities.



Johana Bencomo

Johana currently serves as Mayor Pro Tem on the Las Cruces City Council. MPT Bencomo has focused on policy priorities that aim at addressing systemic inequities. MPT Bencomo currently works with Women’s Democracy Lab, where she gets to support other Women of Color in elected office. Prior to this she served as the Executive Director for NM CAFé. Johana has committed to a career in social justice and building power with historically excluded communities. Johana migrated to the United States with her family when she was 8 years old. She earned her BA in Government and a MSW from NMSU.



Dylan McCarthy Blackston

Dr. Dylan McCarthy Blackston received his Ph.D. in Gender and Women's Studies from the University of Arizona, an MA in Women's Studies from Georgia State University, and a BFA in Photography with a minor in Women's Studies from the University of Georgia. His research and teaching are in the areas of trans studies, trans ecologies, feminist studies, critical life and animal studies, sexuality studies, and visual culture studies. He is co-editor of the recently published collection, *The Transgender Studies Reader Remix* (Routledge 2022), and is currently working on his first monograph, *Trans*plantations of Life: How Capital Makes and Changes Kinds*.



Julia T. Brown

Julia is a graduate of Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma, College of Law, where she was law class President. Ms. Brown is a Regional Rep for the New Mexico State Economic Development Department. Julia's other work experience includes having served as City Manager for Sunland Park, NM; County Manager for Dona Ana County, NM; and Vice President and CRA Officer for Charles Schwab Bank. Julia served both as an enlisted soldier and an Army Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG) Officer and retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Currently she is national Board Chair for AAUW.



Diana A. Bustamante

Dr. Bustamante is the Executive Director of the Colonias Development Council, a position she has held for almost 27 years. She retired as Doña Ana County Probate Judge in December 2022, having served two terms. She was a faculty member of NMSU and co-founder of the original Women's Studies Program in the early 1990's. She spent her formative adolescent years working in agricultural labor in the Yuma, Arizona, area, as well as making the annual treks to work in California in the summers. Her work has

been focused on issues of immigration, environmental justice, early childhood education, housing, community and economic development for the CDC. tan TAN.



Erika Contreras

Ms. Contreras is originally from the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. She has her degree in Accounting from NMSU and is the current Assistant Director of the Colonias Development Council. She is also the Director of the Integrated Services for Immigrant Families (ISIF), which she has overseen for the last 12 years. She is an accredited legal representative for the ISIF program and oversees over 14 employees who address a multiplicity of immigration services, including the legal services office, the promotoras de Apoyo familiar, and

the citizenship preparation classes. She also functions as the primary chief financial officer for the organization.



Becky Corran

Becky is a Professor of Public Health at DACC and a City Councilor for Las Cruces. Her courses and policy focus on community health and infrastructure that promotes the health of people and the environment. She serves on the EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee and has consulted with the CDC on Project Firstline. With twenty

years of experience in health and education, Becky has worked with diverse communities and focused on justice, access and equity. Specifically, she's worked on LGBTQ+ advocacy; animal rescue; and farmworker health. She currently serves on the Board for Roadrunner Food Bank of New Mexico.



Doreen Gallegos

Doreen was first elected to New Mexico House of Representatives 2012-current. She has served in several leadership positions in her role as a Legislator and as an Executive Director. She is the Chair of the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee, a Member of the House Taxation & Revenue Committee, a Member of the House Rules & Order of Business Committee, and a Designee on the Legislative Finance Committee. She also served as House Majority Whip from 2018 to 2022. She has served as

the Executive Director of Mesilla Valley CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) since 1999. She holds a BSW and MSW in Social Work from New Mexico State University. She is dedicated and passionate about advocacy and being a public servant. Doreen is married to Scott Scanland, has a son, Nicolas Gallegos, and two dogs, Sophie & Truman.



Rose Garcia

Rose Garcia is the Executive Director of Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, a New Mexico nonprofit corporation and a leading regional affordable housing and community development organization. She has served in that role for over forty years.



Carrie Hamblen

Carrie is originally from El Paso, Texas where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Texas at El Paso. She earned a Master's Degree in Communication Studies and a Masters of Public Administration from NMSU. For 20 years, Carrie was the Morning Edition host and Operations Manager for KRWG, the NPR affiliate at NMSU. She has served as President of PFLAG Las

Cruces, Co-Chair of Southern NM PRIDE, and Board President of the Mesilla Valley Community of Hope. She is the CEO/President of the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce. In 2020, Carrie was elected to serve as State Senator for District 38.



Neil Harvey

Neil Harvey is the NMSU Government department head, whose main areas of interest are politics in Mexico and Latin America, particularly the role of social movements in the struggle for democracy and new forms of political representation. He studied the causes of the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas in 1994 as well as its subsequent development. He is the principal investigator of the National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Site Program on Immigration Policy

and Border Communities that trains undergraduates students in Community-Based Participatory Research methods.



Dana Hopkins

Known as a “helpy person” in the Queer and Trans community in the Bay Area as well as Las Cruces, Dana followed her New Mexico roots and moved to this area just over two years ago. Here she’s continued her life as a boots-on-the-ground activist who listens, supports, shelters, and offers resources for queer, trans, and transitioning youth. Coming from life on the street beginning at a young age, she understands the needs of marginalized youth in moments of crisis and risk. She does much to help where help is needed, offering information on reducing the potential for harm, connecting people with local

resources, and going so far as to open her home to marginalized others in need of a safe place.



M. C. Jonet

Dr. M. C. Jonet, Associate Professor of Gender & Sexuality Studies, is the founding co-Director/Executive of Feminist Border Arts (FBA), a groundbreaking public scholarship initiative the humanities-arts, featuring the Feminist Border Arts Film Festival. FBA employs research-creation to generate and disseminate new knowledge through practice-based strategies. Jonet's scholarship focuses on transmedia queer and feminist cultural production, pedagogies, and FBA. As a digital media filmmaker and designer, Jonet's work has been showcased in prestigious festivals worldwide, including Festival Filministe in Montréal and /'fu:bar/: Festival and Exhibition in Croatia as well as

Experiments in Cinema Film Festival in Albuquerque.



Monica Kiser

My name is Monica Kiser, and I am the art teacher at J. Paul Taylor Academy. I’ve worked with children for most of my life. At NMSU, I received my BFA with an emphasis in oil painting, followed by a M.Ed at USW. It has been my mission to help students grow and understand themselves and the world around them, emphasizing empathy and compassion for self and others. As an educator, I find it is more important than ever to teach our future leaders to be kind, be loving, and be certain of their power of voice through art!



Sherry Kollmann

Sherry Kollmann is the Chancellor of NMSU Global. She formerly served as the Vice Provost for digital learning initiatives at NMSU. Dr. Kollmann holds a bachelor's degree from Bethel University, where she majored in management. She holds a master's degree in organizational management from Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota, and a master's degree in education and a Ph.D. in instructional psychology and technology from the University of Oklahoma.



Kim Lopez-Gallagher

Tenured professor Kim Lopez-Gallagher has taught government, U.S. history, and philosophy at NMSU Alamogordo full time since 2005. In 2023, Kim received the NMSU Donald C. Roush Award for Teaching Excellence representing the system's community colleges. Kim has received the NISOD Excellence Award as well as a National Endowment for the Humanities travel grant to study the Civil Rights Movement in Jackson, Mississippi. Kim has had articles published in the *Alamogordo Daily News* and in *The Pioneer*, the journal of the Tularosa Basin Historical Society. In her spare time, Kim runs for pleasure and has participated in numerous races.



Martha Oehmke Loustaunau

Dr. Martha Oehmke Loustaunau graduated from the University of Illinois in 1960 and received her Ph.D. from UNM in 1973. Shortly after, she began teaching at NMSU in the Department of Sociology and even after her retirement in 2000. She remains actively involved in Women's Studies, healthcare, and U.S.-Mexico border issues, including medical ethics. She was appointed to a term as Chair of the New Mexico Health Systems Agency Governing Body and served on the State Committee on Health Planning and Development. She was also a member of the State and National Women's Political Caucus. She is a published author of books/articles on aging, multicultural health care, and medical ethics.



Kayla Myers

Kayla Myers is a mother and educator with roots in Wyoming and New Mexico. She is currently teaching Ethnic and Gender Studies as well as leading a community-based internship program and a project-based credit recovery initiative. Her philosophy of creating inspiring spaces for students to be change agents in their education, life, and communities comes from her background as an organizer. She worked as a human rights accompanier in Guatemala and brought that work to the Borderlands during her Master's degree at New Mexico State

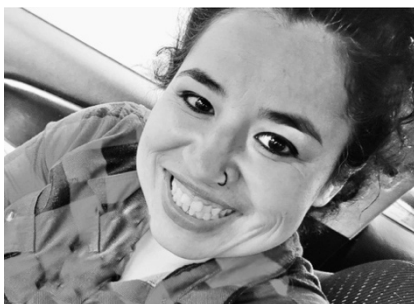
University. The social justice symposium is special to her because she was awarded the Social Justice Award in 2018 as a student!



Felicia Nevarez

Felicia Nevarez, M.Ed is the Clinical Team Lead with NM START within the Autism programs at the UNM Center for Development and Disability. NM START is a community crisis prevention & intervention services for individuals with intellectual, developmental disabilities and mental health needs. She earned her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction: Autism Spectrum Disorders from Arizona State University in 2015, and a graduate certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis from the University

of New Mexico in 2019. Prior to joining the NMSTART team, Felicia was an Education Consultant providing technical assistance to educational teams throughout the state of New Mexico and Arizona.



Amber Pérez

Amber, an El Paso native, is passionate about bringing access to development opportunities to our Queer community. After obtaining her master's in business, Amber went on to found her business, focused on breaking down obstacles to business for artists before joining the Borderland Rainbow Center's (the Center) board. She subsequently stepped into her current role as Executive Director of the Center and has thrown herself

into her work with our community. Focused on creating a holistic community center, her vision is one of inclusion, collaboration, and laughter. She believes in leaving the world a better place for having been here.



Mary Helen Taylor Ratje

Mary Helen Taylor Ratje is the daughter of John Paul Taylor and Mary Helen Daniels Taylor. Mary Helen grew up in the family home that will become the 8th New Mexico Historic Site. It will officially open to the public in November 2025. Mary Helen has been a long-time educator working as an elementary teacher, and gifted facilitator. She worked with the Las Cruces Public Schools and recently retired from the J.Paul Taylor Academy. She is currently serving on the Advisory Committee for the Taylor-Mesilla Historic Property and is an advisory member of the Taylor-Mesilla Friends Board.



Dae Romero

Dae Romero (they/them/elle) is a college assistant professor in the Communication Studies Department at NMSU. Their area of interest in communication studies is identity/intersectionality, how humans communicate (verbally and nonverbally) through and because of their identities and intersectionalities. As an educator, they advocate for the use of intersectional communication to understand the complexities of the human experience. In their role as Basic Course Director, they strive to educate through a critical lens to promote curiosity, unlearning, and empathy. They hope to promote the use of intersectional communication and an understanding of how important diverse voices, identities, and experiences are.



Rebecca Roose

As Senior Infrastructure Advisor for Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Rebecca Roose provides strategic leadership for federal and state infrastructure programs to support resilient communities. In her former role as Deputy Cabinet Secretary for the New Mexico Environment Department, Rebecca oversaw statewide environmental and public health initiatives. Prior to joining state government in 2019, Rebecca led national environmental programs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency where she also served for six years as a Special Emphasis Program Manager for LGBTQ+ employees. Rebecca has a law degree from the University of New Mexico and a B.A. from Valparaiso University and lives in Santa Fe with her wife Jackie and pup Sophie.



Liz Schirmer

Liz Schirmer is Professor of medieval literature and Head of the English Department, now the proud home of Gender and Sexuality Studies. She has been involved with Womens Studies/GSS for over twenty years, serving on the Steering Committee that shaped the original major and frequently cross-listing courses in the program (e.g., Medieval Women Reading the Bible; Sex and the Spirit in Early English Poetry). Liz's research focuses on intertwined models of gender and reading in medieval English texts. She is also interested in how medieval texts speak to students in our contemporary Borderlands, and what they might have to offer us as teachers.



Michèle Shuster

Michèle is the Associate Dean for Research in the College of Arts and Sciences at NMSU. She came to the Dean's office after 22 (!) years in the Biology Department, where she focused on biology teaching and learning. She has had several grants related to STEM education, and is the first author on an introductory textbook for non-science majors that is used by about 20,000 students across the U.S. She is currently the PI of NMSU-MÁS, an NSF grant to enhance undergraduate STEM education at NMSU, and runs the NIH-funded NM-INBRE student research experience program, providing research experiences to undergraduates across New Mexico.



Ryan Steinmetz

Ryan Steinmetz serves as the chapter president of PFLAG Las Cruces, an affiliate of PFLAG National, committed to the support of LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families, education on issues affecting the queer community, and advocacy on behalf of the queer community at the local, state, and national levels. He also has 15+ years of experience working in borderland non-profits addressing youth development, intimate partner violence prevention and community engagement. In addition, Ryan currently works as the Youth Services Administrator for the City of Las Cruces, providing needed services in the region pertaining to youth recreation, diversion, and development. Ryan earned master's degrees in both Public Administration and Counseling Psychology from NMSU.



Carrie Tafoya

Carrie Tafoya grew up in rural New Mexico and started at NMSU as an undergraduate in 2004. She received her MFA in creative writing and has worked at the English department for over a decade. She is now a College Asst Professor. She is invested in the invaluable work that the G&SS faculty does in the classroom and beyond, and she brings much of what she has learned in their courses into her own teaching. She believes in the importance of creating safe, accessible, and inclusive classroom for students at NMSU.



Mónica Torres

Dr. Mónica Torres has been at Doña Ana Community College for eleven years—first, as vice-president for academic affairs and, since 2018, as chancellor. Prior to that, she was an associate professor in the English department at New Mexico State University. Her work was focused on 20th century uses of word and image in both academic and popular cultures as they shaped our understanding of race/ethnicity, gender, and class in the United States. As DACC's chancellor, she is marshalling the college's efforts to ensure that residents in the region can not only access the services of the college but can benefit from their experience at the college. That work includes creating learning environments that are healthy and productive for members of the communities the college serves; developing and cultivating resources—at the college and in the local communities—that support student success; adopting technologies that deepen learning while students are in school and promise social mobility once graduates enter the workforce.



Charles T. Townley

Charles T. Townley, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus in the NMSU College of Health, Education and Social Transformation. As an instructor, he taught organization development and leadership. As a researcher, he published in the areas of organizational development and information technology. As an administrator, he served as Dean of the NMSU Library. As Dean he worked closely with J.Paul and Mary Taylor to increase access to historical records and manuscripts about colonial New Mexico. He has also worked for the National Indian Education Association and Penn State University. He holds graduate degrees from the Universities of Michigan, California, and Oklahoma.



L. Anh Williams

Dr. L. Anh Williams, Associate Professor and Academic Director of Gender & Sexuality Studies at NMSU, is a scholar in Vietnamese and Asian American cultural production. As Founding Co-Director of Feminist Border Arts, they disrupt traditional narratives and reshape scholarly approaches through research-based creative practice and public scholarship. Their work spans critical theory, media making, digital storytelling, and film curation. Dr. Williams's practice in comics and illustration, zine making, and other media arts contributes to her approach in advancing knowledge and advocacy through interdisciplinary Gender & Sexuality Studies. Their scholarship has appeared in journals such as *Feminist Studies* and *MELUS*.



Patti Wojahn

Dr. Patti Wojahn, emeritus professor of rhetoric and professional communication, has been involved in Gender and Sexuality Studies and a range of social justice issues since arriving at NMSU in 1999, taking part in the planning committee to move Women's Studies from a certificate program to a disciplinary major, and occasionally teaching in the program. She retired as department head of Interdisciplinary Studies, home to Gender and Sexuality Studies from 2015-2021. For many years, she played an active role in the Borderlands Writing Project, an outreach program bringing together our region's K-12+ teachers invested in supporting students and their learning environments in just and effective ways.