

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

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UC San Diego Professors Host Conference on Refugees and War

Weekend event held in City Heights includes local refugee communities



In September 2016, the 10,000th Syrian refugee resettled in the United States that year made his home in San Diego and, since 2012, more Syrian refugees have been settled in San Diego than in any other U.S. city.

To address issues faced by these and other refugees around the world displaced by fighting, hostility and war, University of California San Diego professors are hosting a conference with the goal to integrate scholarly, policy and artistic interests with refugees' everyday concerns.

The first "Militarism & Migration" academic conference will be presented in the City Heights neighborhood — historically serving as the home for the majority of resettled refugees in the city — April 21-23 at the East African Community and Cultural Center.

The conference includes 48 academic speakers from the UC San Diego divisions of Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities, institutions across the U.S. and several international visiting scholars. Conference chairs are Yen Le Espiritu of the Department of Ethnic Studies and Simeon Man of the Department of History.

The conference will include workshops, panels, discussions, film showings, art exhibits and performances exploring the connection between military action and migration, within the context of ongoing transnational struggles, the co-chairs said.



Yen Le Espiritu

“San Diego is home to a continually growing migrant and refugee population displaced by U.S. wars in Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Central America, and more recently by wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and other countries,” Espiritu said. “Additionally, San Diego’s vast defense and military industries make possible and fuel the wars and displacements of these populations. Our conference will emphasize how we can critically envision and work toward a demilitarized and decolonized future.”

A series of roundtable workshops will highlight academic research from graduate students and junior faculty. The discussions range from counterinsurgency and cyber resistance, border security, war and trauma, and militarism and migration, among others.

In addition to the 12 paper-presentation workshops, highlights of the three-day conference include:

- Panel with women recently resettled to San Diego from Syria, Sudan and the Congo (Friday, April 21, 6:30 p.m.)
- Community bazaar, with local organizations, artists and craft makers (Friday, April 21, 7:30 p.m.)
- Walking tour of City Heights, learning about the history of refugee resettlement in San Diego (Saturday, April 22, 12:30 p.m.)
- Art and activism workshop hosted by GABRIELA Los Angeles (Alliance of Filipina Women) (Saturday, April 22, 7 p.m.)

- “Take Back Our Education” panel with high-school students (Sunday, April 23, 10 a.m.)

The April 21 opening keynote will be given by Perse Hooper Lewis, a University of San Diego professor of practice and UC San Diego alumna, and Kalamaoka’ina Niheu, co-founder for ‘Aha Aloha and Hawaii representative to the United Nations as a member of the Pacific Caucus.

A former chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies, Espiritu is the recipient of a \$1.6 million grant as part of the University of California Office of the President’s Multicampus Research and Programs Initiative. This Critical Refugee Studies Collective (CRSC) is a four-year initiative (2017-2020) that seeks to make the University of California the premier institution for critical research, teaching, and public initiatives on refugees.

The complete program, including speaker list and topic, is available on the Militarism & Migration conference website. Follow conference updates with #mmconf2017 on Twitter at @migrationsconf and Militarism and Migration Conf 2017 on Facebook.

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