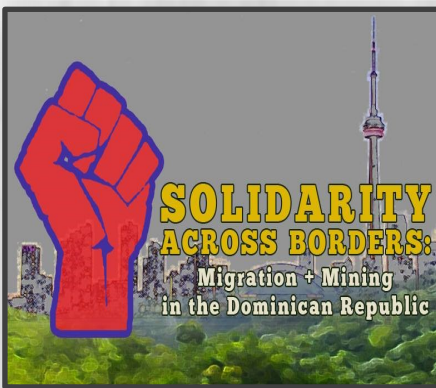


#WeAreEquity

2014 – 2015 Year in Review



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Zahra Vaid

**EQUITY STUDIES
STUDENT UNION**



**UNIVERSITY
OF TORONTO**

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Welcoming You!

The Equity Studies Students' Union (ESSU) recognizes itself as a critical juncture within academia, the student body, our communities and our identities, providing a space for marginalized bodies to assert their knowledges and experiences. ESSU seeks to bring knowledge from the Equity Studies classrooms into the organizing space of student politics, and actively shift the creation of knowledge so that the individuals we encounter are centred in discussions surrounding their communities. Although, many of our students are highly motivated, unlearning oppression and building equitable communities is often emotionally exhausting. ESSU seeks to combat this by expanding beyond the traditional role of a "union", and envisioning ourselves as a community for students within related programs and disciplines. This year we will seek to focus particularly on building spaces of healing and mourning, establishing community partnerships, and opening leadership roles for all students.

Finally, it is important that we allow room for celebration—the students, people, and bodies who despite a multitude of barriers study, build relationships and fight for a better community. We welcome and encourage all bodies to come to our events, send us an email, or drop by our office hours. Whether we resist, unlearn, or build, ESSU will ensure that we can accomplish these things together! Don't hesitate to contact us at uoft.essu@gmail.com.

In Solidarity With Kindness and Respect,

Your Equity Studies Students' Union

Hey, Your Outfit Is...

Reflections the Normalization of Cultural Appropriation

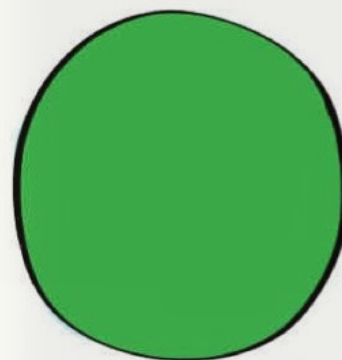


On Tuesday October 28th, the Equity Studies Student Union, Black Students' Association, and University of Toronto Students' Union, came together to present **Hey, Your Outfit Is...: Reflections on the Normalization of Cultural Appropriation, the Appropriation of Bodies + Voice in Western Pop Culture**. The evening began with a documentary screening of *This is a Stereotype* by **Cannupa Hanska Luger**, inspired by the vision of filmmaker Dylan McLaughlin and Ginger Dunnill. The film was a project motivated to address causes and effects of Native stereotypes. Stereotypes root from historical experiences and can affect political, social and economic outcomes. The film discussed the necessity of understanding such outcomes, and the ways we can overcome them through art.

Right before Halloween, the ESSU used the film to spark a critical dialogue around the appropriation of certain costumes, within First Nation communities and beyond. What is wrong with costumes such as Blackface, and Pocahontas? How do they represent certain bodies? A large group of individuals,

across areas of study, age and interest came together to discuss the ways appropriation is normalized in Western consumer culture. The event was organized as a conversation and allowed for dynamic engagement, where varying opinions were brought to the forefront and respectfully discussed in a way in which everyone was able to benefit, despite their social location!

People Who Can Wear Native American Feather Headdresses To Music Festivals



- Native American Chiefs
- Pharrell
- You

Remembering the Asian-Pacific War and Holocaust

Comfort Women in Asia: Alone in Atrocity, Together for Justice

On Monday November 3rd, the Equity Studies Program participated in ***Comfort Women" in Asia: Alone in Atrocity, Together for Justice***. The evening included a trailer screening of *Within Every Woman*, an interview with **Thea van der Wal** (Author of memoir "I Thought You Should Know" and survivor of a WWII Japanese POW Camp in Indonesia), and a panel discussion with **Joshua Pilzer** (Author, and Associate Professor, Faculty of Music, UofT), **Angela Lytle** (Executive Director, Women's Human Rights Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), **Diana Tso** (Performer/Artist in Education; Artistic Director, Red Snow Collective), and **Flora Chong** (Executive Director, Toronto Association of Learning & Preserving the History of WWII in Asia).



During the years of the Asia-Pacific War, the Imperial Japanese Army mobilized more than 200, 000 women from across Asia into a military sexual system. These women were referred to as "comfort women," exploited and subjected to the rule of men. Their ongoing struggle has brought them together in solidarity for their rights as women, and more importantly, as human beings. The event addressed how survivors struggled for justice and continue to strive for peace and reconciliation with the participation of activists, educators and citizens around the globe.

Do No Harm? Nazi Doctors and the Persecution of Gays

On Thursday November 6th, the Equity Studies Program hosted the Holocaust Education Week event ***Do No Harm? Nazi Doctors and the Persecution of Gay***. Keynote speaker **James Waller**, Cohen Chair of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College New Hampshire, affiliated scholar at the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation and author of *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*, brought awareness to the treatment of homosexuals under the Nazi regime.

Under National Socialism, Nazi doctors often used gay men for scientific experiments in an attempt to locate a "gay gene" to "cure" homosexuality. The lecture explored the cultural, psychological and social factors that drove Nazi policies against gay men and created a space to remember all of the bodies who suffered under the Nazi regime. Ultimately, the event fostered an understanding that this period of history and the policies it carried are lessons of injustice that must never be repeated.



Linked Oppressions

An annual tradition of the ESSU, **Linked Oppressions** is a series of events that examines how various forms of marginalization, particularly racism, homophobia and transphobia, are articulated, experienced and resisted.

LGBTB+Q Resources at Fisher Library

On Wednesday, November 12th Equity Studies students visited the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library for the **LGBTB+Q Resources Workshop**. The afternoon was an opportunity to explore the many resources that often go unnoticed, collecting dust as the years go on.



The Workshop allowed participants to see that LGBTB+Q literature has always existed in dynamic forms, ranging from steamy gay pulp

fiction, gay and lesbian periodicals, HIV/AIDS education posters, to historical texts. The afternoon was filled with fun conversation and a better understanding of the resources at Fisher Library that we all can enjoy!

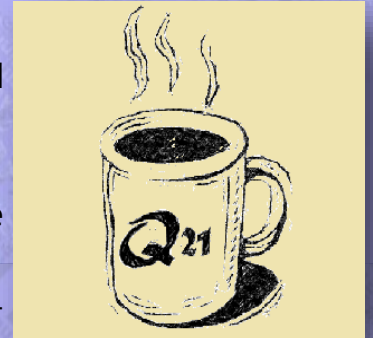
Q21: Sex Positivity Conversation Café

On Thursday November 20th the ESSU and Gender & Sexual Diversity Office presented **Q21: Sex Positivity Conversation Café**. The goal was to personally reflect on the relationship one has with sex. Using a cultural lens to address ideas surrounding sex, various

questions were asked about how sex affects our relationships and regulates what we do, say and desire.

Facilitated by **Cassandra Dang Nguyen** (Women's Education and Outreach Program Coordinator at Asian Community AIDs Services and Equity Studies Graduate), Q21

fostered a space for all bodies to share diverse experiences and expose how we can be complicit in the marginalization of certain bodies. The



conversation between strangers, friends and colleagues created a space of understanding and solidarity. Q21 is a weekly Conversation Café hosted by the UofT Gender and Sexual Diversity Office that discusses questions students want to talk about!

Trans Workshop with Nikki Ward

On Transgender Remembrance Day, **Nikki Ward**, who is with *The 519*, led a workshop for students, staff and community members to understand the ways in which trans bodies have been excluded and marginalized in daily life. Ward emphasized the need for new and inclusive thought, spaces, and relations to combat homelessness, suicide, and poverty that are commonplace in the trans community. Through such workshops, the ESSU seeks to partake in this fight for justice!



ESSU Visits the 519's Trans Day Vigil

For Transgender Remembrance Day, the ESSU visited *The 519* for their annual **Trans Day Vigil**. Transgender Remembrance Day raises public awareness of the hate crimes against trans bodies, expresses solidarity and respect for trans in the face of hatred, and gives allies a chance to support the community, remembering those who have lost their lives through anti-trans violence. For over 35 years *The 519*, located in the diverse Church and Wellesley Village, has worked with the LGTB+Q community to build healthy and welcoming spaces to meet and celebrate. The Vigil was an opportunity to do just that, remembering the lives of those lost and who, if alive, would have benefitted from resources such as the 519 and Linked Oppressions.



Trans Film Screening

The ESSU partnered with the UofT Gender and Sexual Diversity Office and Media Commons to screen **Antiman (2014)** and **Transfiction (2012)**, films that focus on the queer community in Latin America and the Caribbean. The evening began with a few words from **Nikoli Adrian Attai** (PhD Candidate in Women and Gender Studies, UofT), who emphasized how transgender bodies and communities transgress normative constructions of gender and sexuality, positing new ways of being and existing in the present and

future. The message at the end of the night was clear: all individuals have the right to choose and experience life in the way that they see fit. We are all unique, and we all face struggles—being in solidarity with each other is the best way to be!

Trans and Intersex Awareness Seminar

The ESSU and Sexual Diversity Students Union presented the **Trans & Intersex Seminar**, hosted by trans/intersex/two-spirit playwright and filmmaker **Alec Butler**. Using personal narratives, Butler discussed the historical treatment of trans and intersex bodies. The marginalization, lack of information, and isolation of such bodies was described as taking a serious and negative toll, and for Butler the way out of such negativity was through writing.

The seminar discussed the importance of building confidence through support. During the 70s, when sexuality was becoming a hot topic in public debate, there was “no Ellen,” as Alec said. Thus, identifying as one who is nonconforming was negatively stigmatized, and had brutal effects. Intersexuality is not a new phenomenon, and by addressing historical circumstances, this seminar allowed us to better understand contemporary issues!



We Belong: Toronto's Municipal Politics

On January 19th 2015, the ESSU partnered with the Centre for Community Partnerships, the Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office, Maytree, the Multi-Faith Centre, the Sexual And Gender Diversity Office, the University of Toronto Students' Union and the Urban Studies Program to host ***We Belong: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Toronto's Municipal Politics***. The event focused on the discriminatory climate during the 2014 municipal elections in Toronto. Panelists at the event included former City Councillor candidate, **Munira Abukar**; Toronto District School Board Trustee, **Ausma Malik**; Ward 27 City Councillor, **Kristyn Wong-Tam** and former Mayoral candidate, **Olivia Chow**.



The panelists engaged in powerful dialogue, sharing their personal experiences of racism, homophobia, Islamophobia and sexism, while addressing how Toronto's political, social and economic climate allows such incidents to occur. They discussed how necessary change is being made by a variety of small and large communities, proving that Toronto is and will continue to become an even more diverse, equitable and inclusive city.

Food Justice, Fat Activism and Body Politics

How is fat portrayed within the media and communicated to the public? How are the foods we eat related to the politics of fatness and our bodies?

On February 26, keynote speaker, author, and fat activist **Katie LeBesco** discussed these questions, along with three student leaders who shared their personal stories of food justice and body politics. The event addressed how we come to understand the intersections of race, gender, and class, and how these intersections affect our perceptions of food and fatness.



DECOLONIZE YOUR MIND



Decolonizing Our Minds (DOM) kicked off on Saturday, February 28th with **Dr. Stanley Doyle Wood** who introduced the conference's theme, "Life is Protest."



Hosted by the ESSU for the past seven years, DOM seeks to interrogate the ways different marginalized communities practice resistance. The focus is to conceptualize life as the most dynamic form of protest, and its parallel narrative of death as a force for activism.

The conference began with two moving performances. **Nimkii Osawamick**, an Anishnabe dancer and singer, brought awareness to Native issues through dance. In her performance, **Sashoya Simpson** discussed racial identity and her struggle to find herself. Students, faculty and guests were left in a reflective state by both performances.

A panel on activism included: **Jaroslava Avila**, a member of Women's Coordinating Committee for a Free

Wallmapu which mobilizes for land claim rights in Southern Chile; **Alec Butler**, an intersexed playwright and filmmaker; **Sandy Hudson**, a graduate student in Social Justice Education, OISE/UT and founder of Black Lives Matter Toronto; and **Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha**, a queer disabled femme writer, healer, performer, and teacher of Tamil and Irish.

The panelists addressed questions about what it means to be an activist for both the individual and the community. They discussed how being an activist can bring prestige and how this prestige can affect the outcome of a movement for the entire community. They concluded that mobilizing as part of the community is essential to being an activist and should be central in the discourse of activism itself.



This year DOM added special “breakaway sessions” that allowed for intimate discussion among peers. The first session on the Pan-Am Games was facilitated by **Joel Dembe**, Canada’s top ranked wheelchair tennis player. This session explored the ways in which society can hyper-regulate bodies to exclude those who fall out of the acceptable norm. Joel discussed the ways in which inclusion can be both political, as well as a site of resistance. He concluded that existence and survival are forms of resistance.

The second session, entitled “Why I Stayed: Surviving Abuse as Politics,” critiqued the portrayal of abused individuals as victims, or responsible for their conditions, rather than active resisters. The group shared many personal stories of the difficulties in accessing legal, psychological and social services, with facilitator **Chris Rahim**. They concluded that survival is resistance and that, when survival is emphasized and acknowledged, individuals can move mountains.

The final breakaway session was a film screening of *Sea in Blood* led by **Richard Fung**, a faculty member at Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD). The film presented personal stories of illness, specifically thalassemia and AIDs, and the ways in which love and loss can mobilize resistance. Focusing on colonialism, migration and political change in the Caribbean, the film and its discussion taught participants how unique histories can be mobilized for powerful change.

DOM concluded with a keynote talk by **Dr. Audra Simpson**, an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, and author of texts including *Mohawk Interruptions: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Her talk, titled “Reconciliation and Its Discontents” focused on the project of reconciliation for the Indigenous community in Canada today.

She argued passionately that although the government’s apology has led to discussion of rights and institutionalized spaces of living, an apology is not enough. There must be a resistance that includes all Indigenous communities in Canada who have faced 500 years of violence and that is 500 years too long. Indigenous lives have become symbols of protest, and we must all work to actively return Indigenous communities to peace and safety.



Nirmalla Erevelles Series on Disability

Putting Disability Studies into Research/Theory/Praxis

On March 11th, the Equity Studies Program and ESSU took part in **Putting Disability Studies into Re-Praxis: A Student Seminar** with **Dr. Nirmalla Erevelles**. Seminar participants took an intersectional analysis to address how Disability Studies engages with race, class, sexuality, and gender affect life outcomes and circumstances. Dr. Erevelles' article, "Coming Out Crip" in *Inclusive Education* framed the discussion. In the article she discusses the ways inclusivity is political and, more specifically, the ways Disability Studies' primary focus on space can ignore ideological assumptions that construct certain bodies as abnormal, and deviant. The group discussed how society can bring aspects of intersectionality and Disability Studies into daily life to destroy ideological assumptions of normality and abnormality.

Tongue-Tied: Theorizing at the Intersections of Bilingual Education, Deaf Studies, and Disability Studies

At the School of Disability Studies, Ryerson University, on March 12th, Dr. Erevelles delivered a lecture entitled **Tongue-Tied: Theorizing at the Intersections of Bilingual Education, Deaf Studies, and Disability Studies**. She emphasized the necessity of creating alliances across fields to create transforming possibilities. Discussion surrounded the oppressive English Second Language programs, stating the goal is to encourage bodies to conform to a Western speaking style. She encouraged the

audience to focus on the ways structures create and maintain ableism.

Work In Progress Session with Dr. Erevelles

The series concluded on March 13th with the Center for Media and Culture in Education's **Disability Studies Work in Progress** session. Presentations facilitated by **Mary Jean Hande** and **Fady Shanouda**, were followed by a response from Dr. Erevelles, creating a vibrant learning environment. Hande created links between the financial crisis of 2007-2008, poverty and disability in a neoliberal environment. Shanouda brought light to the idea of passing as it relates to marginalized and non-visible identities. Shanouda drew on personal experiences to discuss how passing can be a problematic form of resistance. By connecting disability to other studies, all speakers brought light to the necessity of creating connections across fields for the transformation of Disability Studies.



Equity Students at TESOL



On March 26th, students from Equity Studies performed the ethnography *Hong Kong, Canada* at a teachers conference at the Metro Convention Center. The performance is part of the Introduction to Equity Studies class, where students are given the opportunity to take part in an extra-curricular activity of their choice in order to gain hands on knowledge of topics learned in class. The ethnography written by Tara Goldstein, discusses social and linguistic dilemmas that many immigrant and Canadian-born youth face in the classroom.



**We cannot
all succeed
when half of
us are held
back**

—Malala

Yousafzai

International Women's Day

The ESSU and Peace, Conflict and Justice Society celebrated International Women's Day on Wednesday, March 11th with the film screening of *Empire of Dirt*. The event was moved off the UofT campus in solidarity with the strike held by CUPE Local 3902.

Empire of Dirt is a powerful film about the cycle of abuse Native women face. It tells the story of three generations of Indigenous women who are given the chance to put an end to the painful legacy of violence that has followed and trapped them. The story centers on the experiences of Cara Lee and her daughter, who she gives birth to at the age of 15. The film linked the experiences of these women to the violent history of residential schools and shows how the strength of Indigenous women is the foundation of their survival.



On March 21st, Equity Studies students and faculty held a community organizing workshop. Inspired by all that they learn within the classroom, students wanted to take their knowledge to the next step: action. Despite deadlines fast approaching for course work, students took time to organize an event that translated theory into meaningful action.

Facilitated by Kara Bender, a native of the South and organizer and trainer with *Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training* in the US, the workshop was a space to learn about transformative communities with an anti-oppression, social/environmental/economic justice, and community centered framework. The goal was to discuss and mobilize cross-movement solidarity around campus-based movements. The event acknowledged that the University of Toronto is a large, diverse place, and emphasized the necessity for unity to create long-term and grounded change in everyday practices and structures.



knots

AN UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL
OF DISABILITY STUDIES

Knots is a disability studies undergraduate journal that aims to highlight original and unpublished work by students. *Knots* works to challenge normative conceptions of disability and embodiment, contributing new and innovative knowledge to the field of disability studies. It is edited and compiled by a team of senior students and faculty advisors in the disability studies stream in the Equity Studies program.

The first issue was launched February 28, 2015 at the **Reclaiming our Bodies and Minds: Intermingling Disability Communities Conference** in Toronto. **Sarah Hoedlmoser, Siva-Jeevini Sivarajah** and **Geoff Wilson** were the three chief editors of the journal.

Congratulations to editors, reviewers, and authors for the launch of an amazing contribution to academia! For information, e-mail: knots.contact@gmail.com!

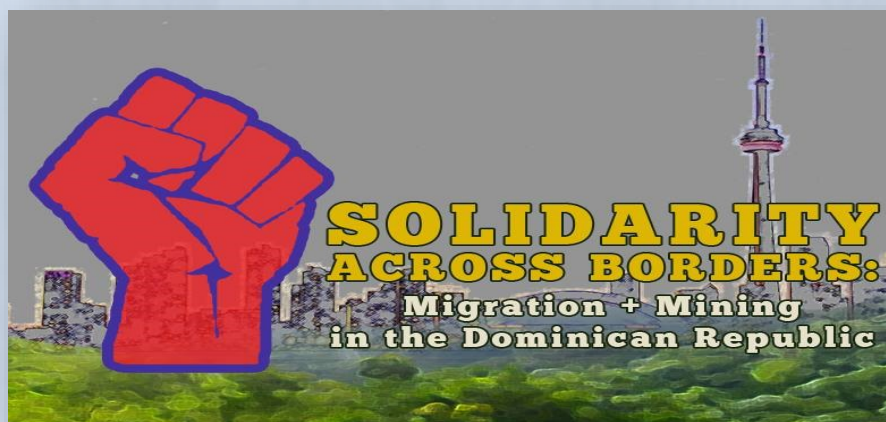
Solidarity Across Borders: Forum on Migration and Mining in the Dominican



Originally scheduled in March, and changed due to solidarity with the CUPE 3902 Unit 1 strike, organizers of **Solidarity Across Borders: Forum on Migration and Mining in the Dominican** invited three Dominican Republic delegates and grassroots activists from *La Federación de Campesinos Hacia El Progreso* to discuss issues of land rights of local farmers, and ecological reservation. These delegates however, were denied visas over concerns that they would remain in Canada.

Despite this, the ESSU did not give up on the event. Solidarity Across Borders was held on April 15th, with one of three delegates skyping in from the Dominican Republic. **Esteban Polanco**, the Director of *La Federación de Campesinos Hacia El Progreso*, discussed what it means to create solidarity across borders when one belongs to a nation-state that seeks to maintain neo-colonial power relations with the global south. This was followed by a screening of the documentary, **The Weight of Gold** which addresses the structural consequences of foreign mining interests in the Dominican Republic.

The audience then engaged in dialogue with representatives from anti-mining groups including *Protest Barrick* and *Mining Morality Canada* around the impacts of mining, migration rights, and the necessity to see local, national, and global differences when thinking about solidarity. Ultimately, the success of this event inspired students to mobilize around the denial of visas for the Dominican delegates. Students partook in letter writing to Canada's Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), Lynne Yelich, proving that the Equity Studies student body is not a group that will stay silent against injustices. If solidarity is claimed, it comes with responsibility, and these students sought to prove exactly that!



Student Experiential Program: Belize



From May 16th to May 25th, students from Caribbean Studies, Aboriginal Studies, Human Biology, First Nations House and Equity Studies participated in activities with the **Centre for Engaged Learning Abroad (CELA)** in Belize. Equity Studies student participants included **Padideh Hassanpour**, **Leah Woldegiorgis**, and **Zahra Vaid**.



Guided by **Dr. Filiberto Penados, CELA**, and in the company of faculty supervisor, **Professor Alissa Trotz**, students focused on issues related to food and indigeneity. Students engaged with Indigenous groups, including the Garifuna, Yucatec Maya, and Q'eqchi' Maya, to learn about different practices of gender, health, land use, food sovereignty/sustainability, and development.



Students gained tremendous insight on the struggles and accomplishments of the Indigenous communities in Belize, and made connections to their own lives and academic learning. Upon returning, students have reflected on their experiences which they will share with other students and faculty in their programs!



The program is funded by New College, the Dean's International Initiative Fund, the E. Anthony Fund for Community Engagement in Belize and the five participating programs.

For more information on the program, email: nc.programs@utoronto.ca!





The David Clandfield Scholarship in Scholarly Activism

As New College principal, Professor David Clandfield played a major role in establishing the Equity Studies program in 1998, and has been an ongoing supporter of the program. In 2014-2015 the **David Clandfield Scholarship in Scholarly Activism** was established. The award, based on academic standing, will be granted to a student who is entering their fourth year as an Equity Studies major, and is likely to contribute to social justice issues.



The special award, gifted by Professor David Clandfield, seeks to tie academic and community engagement efforts for Equity Studies students. He stated, “[I hope they] will feel that their thirst for social justice, informed by scholarly understanding, is being recognized by the academy as a legitimate pursuit...and that this will lay the groundwork for lives of active citizenship in the search for a better world for all.”

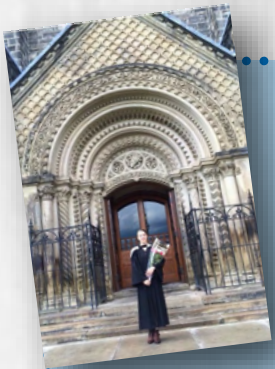
Connecting academia to community engagement is integral for Equity Studies students and faculty, and this scholarship will assist in emphasizing its importance.

This is the first scholarship for the Equity Studies program. As the program celebrates its 17th year, it can also celebrate its growth and success—for students, faculty, and the communities involved!

Janet Lambert Prize Winner: *Sarah Hödlmoser*

The Janet Lambert Book Prize in Equity Studies is named in honour of a long-serving member of the New College administrative staff, and is awarded to a 4th year, or graduating student, who has excelled, and made a contribution to the Equity Studies Program.

This year’s prize winner is **Sarah Hoedlmoser**. Sarah has been very active in Equity Studies program activities. Serving as a member of the editorial team, Sarah helped establish *Knots*, the Equity Studies’ first undergraduate journal in disability studies. The journal, launched in February 2015, is a huge contribution to the UofT community and to the field of disability studies more generally!



Senior Doctoral Fellow, Chandni Desai



Chandni Desai is a PhD candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT). Her research interests include anti-racism, anti-colonial thought, feminist praxis, social movements, solidarity, decolonization, social justice and hip hop education.

In her dissertation "Cartographies of Palestinian Resistance", Chandni examines the forced movement/exile of Palestinians to the U.S. and Canada (settler colonial states), and the ways in which their movement and subject production as oppressed people is set in motion with other oppressed communities. More specifically, she examines how Palestinian subjectivity and political consciousness is shaped by the experience of exile, and the way in which Palestinians draw on cultural practices they encounter in exile, such as hip hop, spoken word, and dabke, to resist hegemonic colonial, imperial, racial and geographic formations both locally and globally. Her project explores the ways Palestinian artists re-mix their cultural work into political activism, and the pedagogical implications cultural resistance within political activism has for movement building. Chandni has presented her work in the United States, Canada, Lebanon, Turkey and Puerto Rico. She currently holds an Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS).

A warm congratulations and thank you to Chandni for all of her hard work!

Equity Studies

Equity Studies is an undergraduate program that focuses on social justice theory and practice in a variety of local and global contexts. Cutting across a spectrum of academic disciplines, the program uniquely combines classroom based learning with community and activist work so that students can build tools for social change.

Course offerings focus on disability, social advocacy, and global food equity. With a vibrant student body, a wide range of community partners, and a bold curriculum, Equity Studies at New College is a leading centre for social justice education in Canada.

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