

# Solidarity in the Stacks Episode One

Originally aired on Radio Caracol de Berkeley in 2020. Produced by Sam Gutierrez and Saida Cornejo with support from the Ethnic Studies Changemaker Podcast Studio and Dr. Pablo Gonzalez.

This transcript has been edited for brevity and clarity.

[00:00:00]

[sounds of footsteps and a creaky door opening and closing]

**Hosts:** Hi, welcome to the very first episode of Solidarity in the Stacks! I'm Saida and I'm Sam. Sam's pronouns are they/them. They're a fourth year Ethnic Studies major and Education minor from Pomona, California. Saida's pronouns are she/her. She is a Legal Studies and Ethnic Studies double major in her last semester at Cal and is from Hayward, California.

**Saida:** Our podcast strives to bring awareness of the resources available for UC Berkeley students and the larger community. We'll be examining social justice issues from a historical perspective and engaging in thought-provoking discussions that highlight critical research and the radical librarians, activists, and scholars behind it.

**Sam:** Before we dive in, we'd like to introduce the awesome staff at the Ethnic Studies Library.

**Robert:** Hello, my name is Robert Toyama. I am the cataloging coordinator for the Ethnic Studies Library. I perform cataloging, classification and duties at the library. These include the Asian American Studies Collection, the Chicano Studies Collection, the Native American Studies Collection, and the Comparative Ethnic Studies collection.

**Sine:** My name is Sine Hwang Jensen, I use they/them pronouns, and I'm the Asian American Studies and Comparative Ethnic Studies librarian at the Ethnic Studies Library.

**Nathaniel:** My name is Nathaniel Moore, my pronouns are he, him, and I am the archivist at the Ethnic Studies Library.

**Neda:** Hi, this is Neda Salem, Acquisitions Coordinator and Circulation Services team leader for the Ethnic Studies Library.

**Melissa:** Yá'át'ééh. [Introduction not transcribed] Hello, my name is Melissa Stoner. I am the Native American Studies Librarian at the Ethnic Studies Library.

**Lily:** Hi, I'm Lillian Castillo-Speed, Head Librarian of the Ethnic Studies Library. I oversee the work of the other five library staff and I report to the chair of the Ethnic Studies Department. I'm also the Chicano Studies Librarian and I'm the database manager of the Chicano Database. Welcome to the Ethnic Studies Library podcast.

**Saida:** Each episode will be spotlighting a librarian or staff member to acknowledge the impact and importance of these people to the University and Berkeley community. We hope to help y'all become more familiar with the brilliant people who work at the Ethnic Studies Library.

This episode spotlight features... the library's archivist, Nathaniel Moore.

**Nathaniel:** So my name is Nathaniel Moore. My pronouns are he/him, and I am the archivist at the Ethnic Studies library. I think one of the things that led me to be an archivist was both a passion for history as well as a desire to help preserve the voices of different communities and struggles that are often left out of the dominant historical narrative.

So I think that my work at the Ethnic Studies Library kind of has three main impacts to different communities, kind of student body, community at UC Berkeley. I think a second impact is just preserving these voices. And so, you know, one of the reasons why these stories and the histories of marginalized communities in the United States are not more a part of the dominant narrative is oftentimes – whether or not it's people's history being destroyed or whether it's not, it's people's history and being subjugated – preserving that history and making it a part of how people can access the day-to-day understanding of their reality is super important to challenging that. And so I think that the work we do, especially around archives, and again, preserving the stories of these communities is kind of an additional impact.

And then, you know, I kind of see a final impact just as the personal inspiration that these materials provide for people when they're able to access them.

[00:05:00]

**Saida:** Shout out to Nathaniel for being our first spotlight feature.

**Sam:** Since this is our very first episode, we wanted to feature someone very special to the library that could also share a little history about the Ethnic Studies Library itself. That someone is Lillian Castillo-Speed. Lily is the Head Ethnic Studies and Chicano Studies Librarian.

Some quick fun facts about Lily. She's an Aquarius and was born on February 15th. She's been a librarian for almost 30 years and she's been recognized and nominated by Berkeley to be honored in their project, 150 Years of Women at Berkeley. And now before we jump into our interview, we wanna share a quick PSA (public service announcement).

**Saida:** Do you know where the library is? The library is located in the basement of Stephens Hall. The entrance can be found near the courtyard between Moses and Stephens Hall on the south side of campus near the Campanile. The library can be accessed online at [eslibrary dot berkeley dot edu](http://eslibrary dot berkeley dot edu), where you can find information about the library's collections, publications, staff, and other resources.

**Sam:** Hi, Lily. Thank you for taking time to join us today and talk about yourself and your career as an Ethnic Studies Librarian. We wanted to start off by asking if you could introduce yourself and share a bit about where you grew up and went to school.

**Lily:** Good morning, Saida and Sam, thank you for having me in this podcast.

Yeah, I was born in East LA. Our family moved to San Gabriel Valley when I was in about third grade, and we grew up in La Puente. Yeah, that was our neighborhood on Lassalette Street near Temple. Went to La Puente High School.

**Sam:** Lily became the first in her family to attend college. She was fortunate enough to receive an Educational Opportunity Program scholarship to attend UC Riverside, roughly 40 miles away from her hometown in La Puente.

**Saida:** Like many first generation college students, leaving home and living on campus was a big deal for her family. It was difficult to leave home and only visit her family once in a while, something [00:05:00] that many college students can relate to. As students of color, Sam and I understand how one's identity can shape our experience at an institution of higher education.

When asked about her experience as a Chicana at UC Riverside, Lily mentioned,

**Lily:** Mainly I was just very much interested in my studies, wanted to do well. I was the only person from my family that went to college of my brothers and sisters and the first one. So it was something I really wanted to be successful at.

So, I was trying to do my best to succeed and not let people down. At the same time there was all this turmoil going around, political turmoil, social turmoil, because it was the sixties.

**Sam:** For Lily, excelling in school was her priority. However, the political turmoil of the sixties could not be ignored.

**Lily:** During the sixties, ethnic minority populations at UC Berkeley were beginning to grow. Students began to question why there weren't more books in the libraries or classes that reflected their experiences and those of their communities. Why there weren't more professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants willing to include their histories in the curriculum being taught.

**Saida:** Lily explained how this led to the Third World Liberation strikes of the 1960s. Where students demanded representation in a Third World College run by Third World people. Although the Third World College was not created, the University established the Department of Ethnic Studies as a compromise with the students.

The Department of Ethnic Studies later influenced the formation of the Ethnic Studies Library. In our interview, Lily emphasized the important role that students played in the formation of the ethnic studies library.

**Lily:** Along with all of this political organizing, students were gathering information on their own about their own history, about politics, about all the changes that were going on in the country.

So the students did that. They created reading rooms, and these were not official reading rooms. They weren't like, "Here's a building and here's your room to have your reading room." They set it up where they could. Sometimes in Professors' offices, you know, in their file cabinets, and they'd just start collecting things.

They started collecting the papers that they wrote for their other classes. You know, this was before there were Ethnic Studies courses. [00:10:00] And so in

their Sociology class or their English class, they would write papers on topics that were of interest to them and what they felt was being left out. And then they would start collecting those papers that they wrote.

**Sam:** Eventually these unofficial reading rooms led to small libraries for each of the three departments in the Ethnic Studies Library. These small libraries did not have librarians. They only had staff and work study students to help keep the libraries running. Eventually, in the early to mid seventies, the libraries obtained librarians of their own.

Lily was first hired as the temporary head librarian of the Chicano Studies Library and was permanently given the position in 1984. All three libraries were located in small rooms in Wheeler Hall and worked separately. In 1997, an opportunity arose to merge the libraries and house them in Stephens Hall. This led to the formation of the Ethnic Studies Library, where Lily became the head librarian. She, along with the awesome staff, played a crucial role in overseeing the transition.

**Saida:** Later on in our interview, we were curious to know what had motivated Lily to pursue librarianship and made that career choice. Lily explained how she started off by volunteering at a high school library after graduating from Riverside, something she extremely enjoyed. She then became a library assistant and decided it was something that she wanted to advance and be better at. She was encouraged by someone to apply to library school and explains this eye-opening experience.

**Lily:** So the campus had a library. I walked over there. Walked in at the front desk. There was a woman sitting there and I told her my problem was that I wanted to take this course, but I didn't know what to do. I wanna get some training. And she said, "Do you have a bachelor's degree?"

And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Then you should go to library school." And that was the first time I'd thought about that or even thought that I could be the librarian, the person that had her office and could close the door. [Laughs] Not that I wanted to close the door, but it just seemed like that was unattainable. I hadn't thought about that.

So I did end up applying for several colleges, several university programs, for library school. And, when I got accepted at Berkeley, that was it for me. I just figured that's where I have to go, to Berkeley.

**Saida:** Throughout her career, Lily has been engaged in the modernization of libraries. When asked what this means for her, she expressed that automation and using the libraries as a tool for social justice played a large role in the modernization of libraries.

Due to the pandemic, the Ethnic Studies Library is currently closed. However, our library's awesome librarians are available for reference appointments via Zoom. You can view their appointment availability by checking out the staff page on the Ethnic Studies library website at [eslibrary dot berkeley dot edu](http://eslibrary dot berkeley dot edu). See you soon!

**Sam:** As someone who has spent a lot of time with the dope librarians at the Ethnic Studies Library, it wasn't until recently that I realized how white librarianship is. During our interview, we got to ask Lily about navigating the challenges that come with being a librarian of color. She spoke to the importance of having mentors who were also librarians of color, helping her along the way to learn about librarianship and even about herself.

**Lily:** One thing I mentioned before is mentorship. My mentors, Francisco Garcia-Ayvens, Richard Chabran. I wouldn't be here now if it hadn't been for their support and just showing me how to be a librarian, but also with Francisco showing me the collection and also he showed me this book by Cherrie Moraga called *Loving in the War Years*.

And that was a big change, when I read that book. That just really changed how I looked at my own identity and what I could do, you know, who I was and what I could possibly do in this world. So mentors are very, very important.

**Saida:** Lily also shared about her own work as a mentor and her recruitment efforts alongside UC Berkeley librarian and friend Susana Hinojosa. [00:15:00] Together, they worked to recruit more students of color into librarianship and mentor them. We talked about her work with REFORMA, a national association affiliated with the American Library Association, whose work is aimed at making libraries and librarianship more accessible to Latinx and Spanish-speaking folks.

While reflecting on the question of how she's navigated being a librarian of color, Lily shared an interesting point about being a librarian of color within the Ethnic Studies Library.

**Lily:** It's different for me, I've thought about this. Being a librarian of color for me is different because I'm in a library that's of color. I'm in a Chicano Studies

Library, or it's already assumed that that's my work, it's not like I'm in an institution where I have to prove the value of Chicano Studies.

I'm in an institution that is Chicano Studies and is Ethnic Studies. So, it's different and I try to kinda see it from the other side, from another person who is in a majority white institution and trying to be a librarian there and trying to make inroads and trying to make change, you know, so that's something that I haven't had to do in that same way.

**Sam:** Reflecting on our experiences with the impact of Ethnic Studies courses on the understanding of our identities, Saida asked how Lily's path to librarianship helped Lily understand her community and herself. Lily described the necessity of these courses for understanding her own self and the realization of the impact she could have because of the identities she holds.

**Lily:** Yeah, you know what? I think basically what it came down to was, once I knew more about Chicano studies and the Chicano Studies Library, I thought I could make a difference because of who I am, who I was. You know, if I was gonna go into computers and libraries and stuff, I'd be one person among a whole lot of other people and I would try to do my best.

But for this particular role of Chicano Studies librarian, I could actually contribute because of who I was. I thought that was some unique thing. Not unique. I'm not the only one, but I mean something that I could do perhaps more than other people, to help within that role. So that inspired me to do it.

**Saida:** One of the things we hope to engage in our conversations featured on this podcast is a question of what radical librarianship means. We were excited to kick off this conversation by having Lily be the first person to share what that means to her. Her explanation went over some past and current projects, as well as some radical ideas that drive the work being done at the Ethnic Studies Library.

Lily talked about the Chicano indexing project, a project that started with her mentors and it's work that she continues today. According to Lily, the Chicano indexing project came out of Chicano librarians' Do-It-Yourself attitude.

**Lily:** When they came to the decision that they were not going to rely on mainstream reference books to include Chicano journals, when I walked into the Chicano Studies Library that fateful day, there was already a project going on among librarians across the southwest, and it had started in the mid, in the late seventies, and it was radical.

You know, I didn't realize. I appreciated more and more as time goes by how radical that was at the time. I hate to keep saying that phrase again “before the internet,” but at that time, the way you found things in journals was actually to look up a reference book. You'd actually look through the pages and you'd look up a subject like “history of Spain” or something, or “history of Mexico” or something, and you'd look it up and then there'd be all these journals listed in a little, little tiny, tiny print, little journals. And then they'd say the name of an article and an author in volume one, number two, et cetera, pages something, and then this would go on for tiny, thin pages, these books.

The thing about those books was that they had all these journals in them that were considered like the real journals or the academic journals, or the standard journals or the scholarly journals. They didn't have any Chicano journals, and this was during the time of the Chicano Studies movement or the Chicano movement, when there was like this [00:20:00] outpouring of articles, art, poetry, essays that came out in Chicano journals.

And so these librarians that I mentioned, my predecessors, they put, they decided that that needed to change and so they created their own system, their own index, their own book with the tiny letters in it. And they called it the Chicano Indexing Project

**Sam:** Saida and I also learned that the Chicano Studies Library published its own books. Another radical thing Lily mentioned was the Chicano students' refusal to accept the standard classification system set by the Library of Congress, and these students moved to adapt their own system called the Chicano Classification System. The students who created the system refused their materials to be pigeonholed under the standard classification E184, which was where Chicanos and other minority ethnic groups would be listed.

These students, not librarians, created their own system and figured out how to use all the classes. The Chicano Studies collection at the Ethnic Studies Library continues to use this classification system to this day.

**Saida:** Aside from creating this system, students also worked to microfilm newspapers. This collection of Chicano newspapers was put together by students back in the seventies, and is a collection that is widely [used] by academic libraries.

Nowadays, Lily is concerned with the issue of accessibility that arises specifically from being in the internet age. She brought up the question of what



the availability to access certain materials means to the people who are in or own the materials.

**Lily:** Radical... nowadays, we are in the internet age. And that brings up a lot of issues because now that things are able to be digitized and made accessible, one radical aspect of that is thinking about what does that mean to the people who, let's say, own the materials or the people who are in the materials. So that's been an ongoing issue lately.

The radical idea is that we do have to put restrictions on that and see if these are things that are respectful of the customs or traditions and privacy of groups who have owned these materials or, even if they haven't owned them, that just that they involve them. So, making sure that everybody is consulted is radical.

And, one phrase that Sine and Melissa and I use, Sine Hwang Jensen and Melissa Stoner, who are the other librarians in the Ethics Studies Library, we use that term, "Nothing about us without us," which is a very short way of summarizing what I just said. Nothing about us without us being involved or being consulted.

**Saida:** When asked if she thinks the library continues to serve the purpose past students envisioned the library would fulfill, Lily said,

**Lily:** Definitely our library, with the staff that we have, we have a great staff. I mentioned Sine Hwang Jensen, the Asian American Studies librarian, Melissa Stoner, the Native American Studies librarian, Nathaniel Moore, the archivist of the Ethnic Studies Library, Robert Toyama, cataloger, and Neda Salem, our operations manager.

I think that we, that they, will keep working on this. I'm not saying I'm going to retire, but at some point the library will go on without me at some point. But yeah, I think we are on the right track. I really do. The other staff will have other ideas of what radical means.

**Sam:** As part of a recurring closing segment we hope to have on this podcast, we asked Lily what she was currently reading.

**Lily:** There's a book called *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson. There are parts of that book that are so moving. At the same time, it also changes and brings in ideas that I hadn't seen in that certain way.

It brings in a whole different way of looking at things. It may be not new for other people, but for me it was new. [00:25:00] And, I like to think that, “Oh, I’m in Ethnic Studies, I’m in Chicano Studies, I know all these things.”

But yeah, the writing is so good. The author's ability to convey the injustices, but base it on logic from history is just amazing. So, I totally, I really recommend it. It will help with these times.

**Saida:** Once again, we'd like to thank Lily for taking the time to share her experience and journey with us. Follow us on Facebook at UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library. For more information on resources and events. You can also check out the Ethnic Studies Library website, at [eslibrary dot berkeley dot edu](http://eslibrary dot berkeley dot edu) to set up a virtual appointment with any of the staff.

**Sam:** This podcast was produced by the Ethnic Studies Changemaker project. Thanks for listening!

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