

2022 Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award Winners Announced

Florence Emilia Castillo is the 2022 Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award Recipient

Cierra Sorin is the 2022 Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Honorable Mention Awardee

The Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award was established in 2005 to support first generation college students who began their academic careers in a community college, have faced significant obstacles, are committed to teaching, and mentoring other less privileged students, and exemplify Beth's commitment to professional service and social justice work through activism. Beth B. Hess was a President of SWS and one of our mentoring award winners; she was also the President of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) and Secretary Treasurer of the American Sociological Association (ASA).

SSSP and ASA join SWS in supporting the Beth B. Hess Scholar each year given Beth's significant contributions to SSSP and ASA. Advanced graduate students in sociology at the dissertation writing stage are invited to apply. In 2022, the subcommittee (Sarah Bruch, Chair; Myra Marx Ferree, Nancy Naples, Toni Calasanti, and Mairead Moloney) faced the challenge of selecting the winner. When there is more than one exceptionally strong candidate, an Honorable Mention Awardee is also selected. The Honorable Mention Awardee receives a \$3,500 scholarship.

The scholarship carries a stipend of \$18,000 from SWS with travel assistance, \$500 from SWS, \$300 from SSSP, and \$500 from ASA to support 2022 Summer Meeting travel, as well as one-year memberships in SWS, SSSP, and ASA. SSSP will celebrate the awardees at their Annual Meeting.



The subcommittee is thrilled to announce that the 2022 Beth Hess Award winner is Florence Emilia Castillo. Emily is an activist researcher doing her dissertation on the effects of ethnic studies teaching on student learning under the direction of SWS member Nancy López at the University of New Mexico. Emily's application notes that this award reflects her own "intersectional identity, non-traditional experiences in academia, and my commitment to pursue positions within academia that will allow me to continue mentoring students and doing work grounded in social justice" and we strongly agree. As a first-generation college student, Emily worked and helped support her family even when she was enrolled in community college in Dallas, Texas. Going on to pursue higher education while still holding down jobs in insurance and tech support, she tried international studies, then Latin American Studies, then

anthropology, but did not feel like she had found an academic home until she discovered sociology. As she explains, "I continuously felt out of place amongst academics "studying" people and

communities that looked like my own without any reflexivity about their privilege and power” until sociology offered her the “tools for praxis-based work” and “educational liberation.”

Once Emily landed in New Mexico, she put her dedication to intersectional mentoring and activism to work. Her transformative teaching practices center on counter-narratives from the cultural resources that her low-income Black and Brown students bring into the classroom and have brought Emily nominations for college-wide awards. Her mentoring has been supported by an El Puente Research Fellowship that allowed her over the last six years to instruct and intensively involve twenty undergraduates of similarly marginalized backgrounds in the research process, and to successfully put them on track for becoming independent researchers themselves in their own graduate careers. She has facilitated workshops on intersectionality and ethnic studies both locally at the teachers’ union and in 2020 at the Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) Summer Meeting. Emily’s activism at the University of New Mexico has included participating in both a campaign for a graduate requirement on race, ethnicity, intersectionality for all graduate students and the creation, analysis and action plan based on the climate survey in the sociology department itself, as well as being on the multi-university National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded team assessing how context diversity in teaching STEM subjects fosters increased minority inclusion and degree attainment.

Her major advisor, Nancy López, credits Emily with being one of the graduate students “responsible for establishing our Ethnic Studies Education and Health Research Practice Partnership through the Institute for the Study of ‘Race’ and Social Justice” and describes her as being passionate about “creating scholarly innovations for equity based policy action.” Nancy López lauds her transformational, intersectional teaching and her ability as a public-facing sociologist to communicate with people of any level of education and all backgrounds, and rates her as in the “top 1%” of the many graduate students she has mentored. Emily herself credits her community college philosophy teacher, John Wadhams, as the one who first taught her to think critically about the ethical and material consequences of policies and defend her perspective and analysis in debate.

Emily’s activism outside the university has centered on involving young people in participatory action research, in one case challenging the policies that criminalize and incarcerate them, and in another case with a grassroots organization concerned about racism in the K-12 system. This latter project dove-tailed with a larger initiative, the Research Practice Partnership, studying how to improve pedagogy for ethnic studies teachers in the Albuquerque Public Schools and assess how inclusion of ethnic studies in the K-12 curriculum improves student learning, graduation, and health and well-being indicators. This timely issue speaks to the broad politics of suppression and exclusion from learning about race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality that are sweeping across many states.

Emily has built on this activist research project to construct her dissertation, which employs the Latin American feminist methodology of *testimonio*, that is, collecting the narratives and counter-narratives of those who experience an oppressive system from multiple standpoints to build a deeper understanding of the processes of exclusion and silencing in the collective knowledge thus produced. Using testimonial narratives from 30 activists in various roles in the creation of ethnic

studies in the Albuquerque Public Schools, Emily is analyzing the connections between their analysis of white supremacy as systemic racism and their strategies of resistance to it. She has prior research experience using this testimonio methodology in the youth participatory action research project, showing it to be a means to empower youth, build self-esteem, and improve educational outcomes. As a public-facing sociologist, Emily's goals include producing both academic articles and practical policy research, along with offering transformative teaching and mentoring to students like herself who are new to the academy, empowering them also to do research that changes many lives, including their own.

The committee strongly believes that Emily's research, activism, teaching, and mentoring capture what the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship stands for. We are pleased to give this award to Emily and look forward to her continuing commitment to intersectional social justice in her teaching, feminist methodology in participatory action research in communities of color, and the kind of public-facing sociology that will make an impact in and outside of the academy.

The subcommittee is delighted to recognize Cierra Sorin as the 2022 Honorable Mention. Cierra has faced numerous hardships in her life that would have hindered many from achieving their full academic potential. Cierra, however, persevered in the face of long-term interpersonal violence, and is the first woman in her family to receive a bachelor's degree.

Cierra began her academic career at Cerritos College, a comprehensive community college in Norwalk, California. Her own experiences with interpersonal violence, coupled with the experiences of other women in her inner circle, prompted her to embark on her first social science research endeavor. Her multi-method project utilized surveys and interviews to better understand experiences of sexual violence and introduced her to the discipline of sociology. Cierra

subsequently deepened her research and disciplinary foci, earning her B.A. in sociology from the University of California, San Diego before attending graduate school at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB).

Cierra is currently a doctoral candidate in sociology with an expected dissertation defense in 2023. Her research builds on her prior work and examines processes of consent within the context of pre-existing social inequities. Specifically, Cierra examines consent knowledge, practices, and education efforts within United States BDSM communities. She will draw upon 75 hours of in-depth interviews with 55 BDSM practitioners to answer research questions related to consent violations in this community, and the social power dynamics that fuel and sustain them. Cierra has



created a bridge between her research and activism by actively engaging with University of California policy makers to improve campus policies on sexual violence and sexual harassment. She has also given back to her community college by regularly visiting classes and explaining the transfer process, the university hidden curriculum, and her decision to attend graduate school. She also serves as a graduate student mentor, graduate instructor, and lead teaching assistant to undergraduates at UCSB.

Despite myriad academic and family breadwinning responsibilities, Cierra is a highly productive scholar, having co-authored four publications and sole-authored one. We agree with Cierra's mentor, Tristan Bridges, that she is "poised to make important contributions to our understandings of sexual consent" with the completion of her doctoral work and future endeavors. As an intersectional scholar of gender and sexualities continuously engaged in research, mentorship, and activism, Cierra embodies the spirit of the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship Award, and we are pleased that the Honorable Mention funds will support her final year of dissertation writing.

SWS will honor Emily Castillo and Cierra Sorin and all our 2022 Summer Award recipients during our Awards Banquet which is scheduled to take place on Sunday, August 7 from 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm in the Los Angeles Convention Center, Room 515B.

If you are interested in making a gift to support the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship, please contact Barret Katuna, Executive Officer, at swseo.barretkatuna@outlook.com, or make a gift via this form: <https://sws.memberclicks.net/donation-form>.