

Vincent Munoz:

I think what we need to do is explain how our principles of free speech, free inquiry will help serve the cause of justice.

Betty Friendan:

The First Amendment, the constitutional freedom of speech and freedom of conscience that is the bulwark of our democracy.

Bettina Apthekar:

There was a passion in what was being said, affirming this what people considered a sacred constitutional right, freedom of speech and freedom of association.

Michelle Deutchman:

From the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement. This is SpeechMatters, a podcast about expression, engagement, and democratic learning in higher education. I'm Michelle Deutchman, the center's executive director and your host. This summer we're switching things up with a special series, and I'm handing the mic over to the center's communications and program associate Melanie Ziment. Melanie has a hand in everything we do at the center, including producing this podcast and overseeing the center's valuing open and inclusive conversation and engagement initiative, VOICE for short. Through a competitive process, the Center Awards up to \$5,000 to UC students, staff, and faculty who are interested in conducting research or coordinating programs and activities that further the center's mission. Since the program started in 2019, we've supported more than 100 projects. For the next few episodes, Melanie will be in conversation with VOICE participants who spent the past academic year completing innovative, thoughtful, and critical programs that enhance expression, engagement, and democratic learning.

In these dark times, we hope these initiatives offer insight, inspiration, and even some hope. But before we dive in, let's turn to class notes, a look at what's making headlines. Federal judges across the country continue to hear and rule on numerous challenges to the Trump administration's actions targeting research funding in higher education. This past Friday, June 20th, a group of researchers from the University of California requested that US District Judge Rita Lin block the Trump administration from terminating already approved research grants and restore the grants that have already been canceled per the president's executive orders targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, gender ideology, and alleged inefficient government spending. During Friday's hearing, Lin noted that canceling grants because they touch on blacklisted topics is likely a violation of the First Amendment. Yesterday, Judge Lin ruled in favor of the researchers. She held that the vehicle used for the funding cuts, form letters, was problematic, as was the rationale for why the cuts were necessary.

Also, last week, federal Judge William Young ruled that some of the Trump administration's cuts to National Institutes of Health were void and illegal, reproaching the government for racial discrimination and prejudice against LGBTQ individuals. Judge Young questioned the government's motives for cutting hundreds of grants that focused on the health of women, LGBTQ people, and Black communities. Judge Young said that in his 40 years on the bench, he had, "Never seen a record where racial discrimination was so palpable." State courts were also hard at work last week. In a victory for academic speech and inquiry, the Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled that HB1775, a piece of legislation passed in 2021, does not apply to academic speech in higher education. The plaintiffs, represented by the ACLU, argued that the law unlawfully silenced students' and educators' speech through vague and over broad terms and censored conversations on issues such as race and gender.

The legislation also impacts K-12 schools, but that part of the litigation will continue. While the courts continue to be a bulwark for the First Amendment and other essential rights protected in our constitution. This month, approximately five million people across all 50 states and over 2000 cities and towns took to

the streets and participated in the No Kings Protest. Many say No Kings was one of the single largest protests in United States history. Whether singing, chanting, holding signs, or waving flags, Americans made their voices heard during the day that was largely peaceful with only isolated confrontations. Los Angeles has been an exception, where the National Guard and Marines had been deployed earlier by the Trump administration in response to protests of work site raids by federal immigration law enforcement agents. The use of military personnel was challenged in court by California Governor Gavin Newsom, who called the deployment unnecessary and illegal. Attorneys from the Trump administration argued that the president's decision to deploy the National Guard was unreviewable by courts.

In a two one ruling, the federal judge panel for the Ninth Circuit ruled that the decision was reviewable by the judicial branch, but found that the President had a legitimate interest in protecting federal employees when he ordered the troops to Los Angeles. Whether you agree with the Ninth Circuit, with the administration's immigration policy, or with the message of the No Kings demonstration, the winner of this protest is our democracy. Being able to safely and publicly assemble and to freely criticize our government is what has long distinguished the US democracy. I hope we can all hold onto that in the days and months ahead. Now to our main show, we are kicking off the series by talking to two staff members at UCSB who designed and teach a course called the Civic Engagement Scholars Program, CESP for short. Take it away, Melanie.

Melanie Ziment:

After producing two seasons of SpeechMatters, I'm thrilled to have the chance to be on the other side of the mic for this special SpeechMatters summer series. I'm especially excited to shine a spotlight on the center's voice initiative and to share some of the incredible work that it's made possible across the UC system. With that, I want to introduce today's guests, Katya Armistead has spent over 30 years serving the UC Santa Barbara community, go Gauchos, and has held almost every position on campus, serving as an undergraduate and graduate student admissions administrative assistant, assistant director of admissions, and manager of the visitor center, assistant Dean of Student Activities and student Life, associate Dean and director of the Office of Student Life, Dean of Student Life, and finally Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life and Belonging.

This academic year, Katya announced that she's retiring, though we are pleased that she will stick around to teach this course. Viviana Marsano, another Gaucho with a formidable acumen, serves as the assistant Dean for Civic and Community Engagement at UC Santa Barbara. Born and raised in Argentina, Viviana moved to Santa Barbara to attend UCSB and to complete her PhD. Her focus is on development of students as involved empathetic citizens as they participate in community initiatives at UC Santa Barbara. She previously worked at the UCSB Multicultural Center for 15 years and has been around campus for the past 40. Welcome to you both and thank you so much for taking an hour to speak with us during commencement season and a busy time on campus.

Katya Armistead:

So good to be here. Thank you.

Melanie Ziment:

So Katya and Viviana have been part of the VOICE initiative since the 2020-2021 cohort. We're going to talk a lot about your project, but I just want to ask to get us started, how you think about the framework for civic engagement. What is your definition?

Katya Armistead:

Our goal is to have our students think about civic engagement beyond just, "Oh, I voted." There's actually four components of civic engagement. It's the political engagement, maybe it's running for office,

supporting someone who's running for office, getting involved politically. It's in community engagement, it's philanthropy, getting involved in the nonprofit, volunteering, understanding what it means to give back, what service is. It's learning the skills of being able to have civic conversations, listening, listening to understand not just arguing with someone, but seeing if you can have some empathy, understand where someone else is coming from. There's probably a reason why they have a different idea than you do in terms of an issue or a societal problem. Then finally, it is social justice. It's activism, it's protests, it's freedom of expression, it's making your voice heard. So we try to introduce our students to all of these areas so that they can then have that framework to decide what kind of projects they want to engage in.

Viviana Marsano:

From what Katya said, I feel that the students always think that being civically engaged is being that activist in the front of the march with the bullhorn, and that's something that we tell them the first day of classes, you don't have to be that. And there are all these other ways to get involved. And I think part of our chore is demystify that, that if you are not in the front of the march, you are not civically engaged.

Melanie Ziment:

Katya, can you tell us about your VOICE project, what it is, what inspired you and Viviana to create the program?

Katya Armistead:

Yeah, well thanks for asking. Actually, Viviana and I, which is really funny, because we work very closely together, were asked separately by Maeve DeVoy, who worked in our CAPS center, and she worked in that center and she asked both Viviana and I if we would be interested in co-sponsoring an application to voice or to receive a voice grant to start a civic engagement class.

So that was the first concept, and it's about fostering ideals of active citizenship among our undergraduates, engaging the next generation of leaders on issues that are important to our campus and to the surrounding communities of Isla Vista, Goleta, and Santa Barbara. And it's about creating alliances with leaders and organizations and all those communities and providing students an opportunity to develop their leadership and organizational skills to affect measurable positive change. So she brought us together, we started brainstorming this year long class, which makes it really unique, and they'd have to complete all three quarters, with the final quarter culminating in a project informed by everything that they learned fall quarter when we do constructive dialogue, leadership development, bring in tons of speakers about what is civic engagement from government, to volunteerism, to activism.

Yeah, so we started in 2021, Maeve ended up leaving the university before we even finished the first class, but Viviana and I dove in headfirst and have had a great time leading this class since.

Melanie Ziment:

Viviana, can you talk about how the CESP program has changed over the past number of years and how you've grown as you've continued teaching the course?

Viviana Marsano:

Great. First of all, I'm very excited about being here with you. I feel when we get together, we cannot stop talking to each other, so it's so phenomenal, and I want to highlight the work that your center is doing. I couldn't imagine a better fit for our class than this one. One thing that I want to add to what Katya mentioned about the class is that another thing that the students have to do for the class, we have four experiential activities in the quarter, the first quarter. Those experiential activities include attending a county supervisor's meeting, a school board meeting, city councils, either Goleta, Santa Barbara. A lot of

things that expose them to what civic life is and what it is to participate as a citizen. One thing that is very dear to me is the idea that you have to start getting involved locally first.

I feel that when you get involved locally, then you can actually see the results are more tangible. You see that you went the public comment, you got something passed, a legislation passed, and then that actually pumps you up to go to the state and national level. So that's why Katya and I feel that this is really, really important, and the students have to write a page or two, they have to write a little essay for each of them, and it's really interesting to see the things that they observe, the things that probably are different from them. They say, "Oh, everybody's very civil and everybody's heard." Things like that and they learn a lot to see their growth just doing that is phenomenal. So back to your question about how I think it has changed over the years, I was trying to think about it, and Katya, I don't know if you remember, we started right after the pandemic. So we got a cohort that were, for the first time, they were on campus.

They didn't know the community. For some of them it was the first year being back. So when it came to decide on the projects and the community that they wanted to influence, it was hard for them, because they were not that familiar with the community. But even then we got some good examples that we can talk about later when we talk about the project. That's a little bit different. I would say looking at this year, the amount of commitment of these students, the amount of the impact that their projects have made and will make, because some of them want to continue with the projects even when they are not in the class anymore. I do think that the commitment, the knowledge, the involvement of the students has really, really increased exponentially since the first year.

Melanie Ziment:

I know we've kind of talked about the projects generally, but I want to get into some of the specifics, because these students have really found ways to impact their communities and connect their own passions to the work that they've done through this course. And so I know we're going to get a chance to speak with a couple of the students about their project and highlight that, but I wanted to ask you both to maybe share a couple projects that you feel like have had a huge impact coming out of this class.

Katya Armistead:

Yeah, I think you're going to talk with Ashley from the group that created World News for Dummies, so she'll be able to highlight some of their amazing work.

Ashley Segat:

Okay. Hi, my name is Ashley Segat. I'm a third year poli sci major at UCSB. World News for Dummies is a large project, and we have eight topics that we go over. It's national politics, international relations, human rights and activism, health and wellness, economics and business, society and culture, technology and innovation, and oh my gosh, what is the eighth one? We have eight. We have a lot of topics that we cover everything, and we divide the work amongst our editors, and we basically just dive deep into concepts that people don't understand, and we're trying to approach news in a non-polarizing way. And so we are well aware that we have a lot of media happening, and people consume media in different ways, but what we see is that whether you are on the left or on the right, there tends to be a villainized from the left media from the right side and a radicalized version of things from the right when they're perceiving the left.

None of those things are beneficial, and no matter what side of the political spectrum you are in or that you associate with, you can use our platform, because that's not what we're trying to do. We're not trying to have those messages. In World News for Dummies, we basically just break down ideas and institutions. For each of our topics, we have terms and thematic concepts. Us as editors have basically compiled the list, and we've defined with reputable sources terms that you need to know about national politics, so you should know what the legislative branch is, what the executive branch is, what the

president is, but then a concept, for example, would be checks and balances. It's like what is the actual role of the legislative branch? How does the legislative or the judicial branch and executive branch check each other and understanding the roles of the president and things of that sort.

That way you're actually able to have that preliminary knowledge, so when you're consuming media, you actually come from a more informed perspective and you're actually able to understand what's happening. And that goes into all different... Oh, the last one is environment sustainability. It just came to my head. If you come across something in the news that you're not sure of, you're actually able to go back to that dictionary and see if we have it defined, and if not, we have a Google form that you're able to fill out and we'll define it for you. That way you're not going down those unhealthy rabbit holes that give you a bunch of different answers, a bunch of different perspectives. We're just going to give you the most unbiased and factual information for you to use.

Katya Armistead:

Mental health has been something that has consistently been an area that our students have dove into over the years. I had one student who, she was an international student from China, and she really wanted to create a comprehensive resource for international students to have programming, to get help, to learn more about mental health. And she was able to give her project over to our health and wellness folks, professionals, and they've actually used it a little bit and incorporated it in some of their projects. The next year after that, I had an Asian American student who used some of that concept, actually connected with that student, and she was a resident assistant and incorporated some of those concepts and created a whole program for her floor in the residential hall. So it's been really fun to see the different ways that they learn about the concept of civic engagement and really trying to make a difference in thinking about individual's lives. And I think those are a couple of really good examples. That's really what we want. We want them to think about what they care about and then where they can make a difference in that area.

Viviana Marsano:

One project that a student did our first year, when I said the students were not that familiar with Isla Vista, he worked in a houseless center in Ivy, Father Hodges House of Hope. He actually rounded up some students, some friends of his, and they created a series, they did a clothing drives, we did some socials with them. They also created, we had somebody, a former staff that came and talked to them about career, how to try to find a job now that they were more settled. And I know that that project continued after the class. This year, I can think a couple of them. Oh, one project that has followed that continuation that Katya mentioned, last year, we had a student whose sister had died of a fentanyl overdose, and she and her mother were very, very active in the campaign, and they are from LA, so in LA, their congress person was trying to work on a bill to consider selling fentanyl an issue of homeland security.

This student was also in a sorority, very involved with fraternities and sorority life. She created a campaign, an educational campaign, telling them about the problems of fentanyl, the use of Narcan, how you can administer it, and then campaigning to collect signatures for those bills, right. Funny enough, one of the bills passed before she finished the project. But there are new bills. Right after that, there was a bill that students were circulating to ask them to make it mandatory for res halls in universities to educate their residents about how to use Narcan. Everything is really connected. This year we had other two students who were also in sororities who picked up that project, and they did the educational part. Another issue that you all know that huge issue in Santa Barbara and all of California and the state is housing. And we know that in Isla Vista there is such a dense, dense, dense area.

It's half a square mile, and it's one of the most dense areas in California at least. And also the fact that the students sometimes get abused by the property providers and repairs. They do not get their deposits returned or whatever. She was very interested in working on that. Funny enough, the Blum Center also at UCSB for the study of poverty started a project in IB about this. Two of our students chose a topic and

they worked with them. So Sofia, actually, that you are probably going to interview, took that project and she was in charge of making some documentaries about the experience of those students.

Sofia Aliamus:

Okay. My name is Sofia Aliamus, and I am a rising senior at UC Santa Barbara, studying political science. Going into my third year at Santa Barbara, all my friends were going to study abroad. Every last one of them was going to go study abroad, and so I was kind of alone in my house, alone in my community, and I figured what better way than to just force myself to get involved. And so I saw this class. I think I got an email about the class through my student email, and I signed for it. When I started the course, I really had no involvement in my school and my community whatsoever. I knew that there were things in the school and with my community that I was unhappy with, unsatisfied with, but never enough to really get me involved or get me interested in making a change personally.

Then I joined this class, and we get these speakers from all different aspects of the community, from local government, like I mentioned, professors, authors, and they kind of just made me realize that as a student, as I was just 20 years old, that I can make a difference, which I didn't really see that being a possible outcome of me being one out of 20,000 students at UCSB. I got involved with the UCSB Blum Center, which focuses on social inequality and poverty is how I found the housing committee, which I've been collecting data and research on housing insecurity in Isla Vista, inappropriate landlord communications and contracts, and really listening to the student body and the residents of Isla Vista to see what they're upset with and what I can do to change that. I think long story short, the biggest thing I learned was that my voice actually can make a difference and my actions can make a difference, and I would encourage others to realize that potential within themselves as well.

It feels like you're kind of just an ant, and if you go to a big public school, it just kind of feels like you're just walking around and you can't make much of a difference, but you really can if you just try. A little bit off-topic of the whole housing thing, but what we learned in class was how to engage in productive conversations with people you disagree with. That means being a mediator and realizing when a conversation hits a dead end and it's really just not going to go anywhere. How to agree to disagree, how to engage that if someone isn't budging, how to just end the conversation respectfully. What the biggest takeaway I've had is I can be hard-headed when it comes to my political views and opinions, and I think what our nation does not need more of is disagreement and volatile disagreement.

And so what Katya and Viviana, I think, have fostered within our class is how to go out into the world and be active citizens, but in a way that we're encouraging healthy debate, healthy conversation, informed, educated conversation. I think that's just so much more important now than ever. It's okay to disagree with people. It's okay to have different opinions, and me bringing that out into the world, even though it's just me, it makes me feel like I'm making a difference. When there's so much crumbling down, it feels like there's so much coming down around us, if I know that within my small community I can foster a more stable environment of people agreeing to disagree or having different opinions, but we can still be friends and we can still have fun conversations, we can just talk about something else. Just realizing that you can make a small scale difference, and if everybody makes a small scale difference, then it becomes large scale.

Viviana Marsano:

Funny enough, a lot of these projects, the students, I think I mentioned at the beginning, have decided to continue with these projects even if they are not in the class anymore. Katya and I are thinking about encouraging them to create registered campus orgs with them so they can have access to funding and things like that. These become institutionalized groups. That's a mouthful, sorry. But yeah.

Melanie Ziment:

No, no. I could sit and listen to you both talk about this project that your students are working on all day. It is really just a needed dose of encouragement during this time. But I also want to just note that what I'm hearing you both talk about is just this amazing ability for larger impact and just this network that you've been able to grow through the course and just how many issues and areas impacting the community that your students and you both have been able to do work on and impact. I wonder if you have been able to just quantify or understand better the impact that the program has been able to have, not just on the students taking the course, but through them to the communities they're working in.

Katya Armistead:

We usually have about 20 students a year, but in terms of, I'll give an example. We elicit from them who would you like to hear from? We have our regular speakers. We're very intentional. Viviana and I are very involved in the nonprofit world here in Santa Barbara County, and so we have a lot of contacts. And one student, a couple years, or maybe it was last year, asked they wanted to learn a little bit more about immigration, how timely. She didn't know how timely that is. I invited a woman who's a UCSB grad, she has her master's from UCSB, and she is executive director of the Immigrant Legal Defense Center. There was a student who's like, "That's who I want to work with. I want to work in that organization." So because I have a relationship, I was able to make that introduction after she had done the presentation in class.

She created their newsletter, she created a fundraising event, she created their donor database. The infrastructure that she helped that organization create because they are so short-handed is long-lasting and so timely, because we couldn't predict the chaos around immigration that's happening right now. The focus of this particular organization is on minors and unaccompanied minors, and they do such critical work. I went to the event that she created, and the staff and the executive director were hugging. They were like, "Thank you so much for sending her to us." They didn't know what to do with her. They were like, "Yeah, she can come intern, but we don't really have a structure." And she's like, "I will help create structures and systems." When you asked about the lasting change, what that student brought to that organization and going to that event and meeting the donors and seeing the money that they were raising at this event, my heart burst. It was so incredible, because she created systems that are going to last for a very long time for that organization, and it's so timely.

Viviana Marsano:

That made me think of another example about the impact. We have an organization called CCUASE here, which is the Central Coast United Alliance for a Sustainable Economy. They do work with farm workers, they do work with housing, they do work with immigration. Last year, three of our students worked with them. One of the projects was the impact of pesticides near the schools in Santa Maria, north of Santa Barbara. Also, the impact of pesticides on pregnant women. The amount of possibilities and the impact that they created. One of our students is a Spanish speaker, so she was the one talking on the phone with the farm workers and informing them, it's creating an impact one person at a time, really.

Melanie Ziment:

I want to turn to talking about the current moment. We kind of mentioned that it's a tumultuous time, and there's been significant increases in polarization in our society during the five years that you've been working on this course and just changes in general to the political climate, new presidential administration, for one. I wondered how this has had an effect on how your students think about civic engagement and also how you talk about engagement and activism in the classroom?

Viviana Marsano:

I want to go back a little bit. Civic engagement is a fairly new field within higher education. In 2012, 2013, the American Association of Colleges and Universities did a report called the Crucible Moment in which they talk about what's happening, polarization among different groups. At that time, which I think has changed, it was the lack of participation in politics and even voting in young people between the age of 18 and 29, which I think has changed quite a bit. It has increased. They created a document asking that colleges and universities also have to address that, and they gave a list of the concepts that we should actually emphasize, the skills that we want to develop in students. I think that in a way, civic discourse is part of that, right? We incorporate constructive dialogue in the class. The students, we don't have enough time as much as we would like to, but once we give them the role play, they always want more.

At the beginning, they are like, "Okay, I'm a little bit confused." Also, we have to think that a lot of the times our students, and when you are in colleges and universities, a lot of people have very similar thoughts. Sometimes it's a little bit more difficult to create that dialogue and giving them the skills to actually have two very opposing views, but we pick some topics. For me, this has had a great effect in the students, and the fact that they want to do more exercises like that is very telling. Katya and I are planning on spicing it up a little bit, that section of the class, how can we create more fake conflict so that they get the skills?

Melanie Ziment:

For sure. Just hearing you talk about these stories and talk about these moments in the classroom, teaching dialogue, and this is with only 20 students a year, and there's only two of you. It makes me think about what we could do with more and how this could grow or potentially exist on other campuses and in other communities and just the exponential impact that that would be able to create. I wanted to talk about just how you might think about replicating this program or how you might encourage others to do something similar or something different on their own campus, just any thoughts you would have to share to those listening who might take encouragement from this conversation and think about doing something similar?

Katya Armistead:

Well, the great fortune of us having the VOICE Grant, we have been able to purchase the books for our students, so that's not a financial burden. And we could use more books, because we weren't requiring them to buy all these books and we could do that. But also, it afforded us the opportunity or the ability to continue our growth in learning in this area. We attended a workshop in Michigan, well, it was provided by Scott Myers Lipton, who's created this whole social action curriculum. He was a professor at San Jose State, and he was all about this civic engagement, but about social change and bringing a class together to work on a project. Now it was more focused, the whole class did a particular project. I think one of their most successful campaigns was, what was it, Viviana? It was the-

Viviana Marsano:

Minimum wage for workers in San Jose.

Katya Armistead:

Minimum wage. Yeah, so if you looked it up, you'll see that students really furthered that conversation and actually got tremendous movement, because they really uplift this to lawmakers and really got that conversation. We've had a whole wave of minimum wage rising in California thanks to their good work. He put curriculum together in terms of how to actually make these movements happen. Viviana and I went to his workshop that was held at the University of Michigan, and he makes it very affordable. I think the most expensive thing was us flying there, but the VOICE Grant afforded us that opportunity. We introduced pieces of that curriculum in our class, and it really focuses on their critical thinking skills,

understanding how systems work, structures work, how to solve problems, overcome challenges, social responsibility, leadership skills. It starts from first just thinking of an issue and moves into issue identification, and it then moves to, okay, so something might really bug you, but start asking other people, "Does it bug you? Do you think there could be something that should be changed?"

And understand if there really is an issue that you could garner support and traction on. It really helps walk students through how to do this, how to make a difference. It's really strengthened, I think, our teaching and moving students along. When you're asking us about how could you replicate that, I'd say this is foundational as well. He has it twice a year in different parts of the country, these two-day seminar workshops. We shared our syllabus with others, and we could continue to do that. I would imagine that every campus would do it slightly different based on their culture, and that's cool, and we're happy to share what's worked for us. I think that coupled with knowing that there's an actual book, there's actual curriculum around social action, and then the concepts that we have created, I am confident other campuses could do this.

Viviana Marsano:

I would also like to mention, Katya talked about that curriculum, but also Emma Tolliver, right, who received this grant, and then she has been a guest speaker in our class, where she developed this handbook, I would say about, which I think it's very connected with what Katya said. She has this document where it tells the students how to write a press release, how to influence, how to change opinions, and the students see it and they are like, "Wow." I think we don't have enough hours in the class to do these things in a deeper level. Also, in terms of growing this, I think we have grown the program within UCSB without even knowing it. I think earlier today we mentioned we have worked with the Blum Center, we have worked with the Immigrant Legal Defense Center, with the Isla Vista Community Services district. I feel that's the way we create the ripple effect. Right?

Melanie Ziment:

Thank you so much, both of you, for this time. It's been so amazing to get to learn about the class and the work the students are doing. I just want to close out, we always end with talking about something that our listeners can do. After listening, what kind of action might they be able to take? I know that there are different modalities and different assignments that you give your students in your class, that we wondered if you might be able to share an assignment from the course that you might be able to give to our listeners about learning about this topic or doing something that impacts their own community?

Katya Armistead:

Well, I think Viviana mentioned how we have the students, because everything's recorded and on Zoom, to go to city council meetings, school board meetings, their local city government, just anything. Our students would always like, "Oh my gosh, I had no idea the different issues that they're talking about, the complexity." I really challenge folks to attend some meetings. You don't have to participate. You could just listen, think about what's happening in your local community and school boards and city government is just an excellent way to do that.

I started this class with Viviana. We brought in school board members, city council members, our county supervisor. Little did I know, and I just thought, "Oh gosh, I would never be an elected official." And I was asked to run for our county school board, and I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I have to practice what I preach?" Now I've been elected. I'm an elected official. I am on our Santa Barbara County School board. And I don't think I would've done it had I not done this class, because now I personally have been exposed to all these elected local politicians. It's not as scary as I thought it would be. I learned a lot from them, because I've heard them present every year. They encouraged me to do it, and I did it. So yeah, get involved.

Viviana Marsano:

I would echo what Katya said, and I think I gave you the examples of Isla Vista. Do you know the IBCSD Community Services District in IV has a board of directors and they have a position for a student. The Isla Vista Recreation and Park District also has a board of directors where students can be part. It's just for anywhere where you are in the nation, you can find those opportunities locally and try to engage your students, ask a group of students to go and do public comment at one of these meetings. There are so many things you can do in the community, even just distribute food at a food distribution. I have noticed that the students in this class got exposed to one thing, and some of them are writing to us and saying, "Oh my gosh, this class has changed my life." It only takes to expose somebody once or twice and get that spark going.

Melanie Ziment:

Well, thank you both. You've definitely put the spark in my day. I always say this, it's the biggest regret of my Gaucho career, not having had the opportunity to take your course when I was a student. But I'm so grateful to get to hear about all the work you've both been doing. I'm grateful to you both for putting in so much work and effort into this course and for spending an hour talking with us about it. Thank you both so much.

Viviana Marsano:

Thank you.

Katya Armistead:

Thank you.

Michelle Deutchman:

We will continue our Summer Voice series next month when we talk with voice recipients, Giovanna Itzel and Breana Guadalupe Figueroa Perez, a graduate and undergraduate student respectively at UC Irvine, about their project Rewriting Migration Stories at UC. Talk to you next month.