Faculty Statement Regarding Disaster Response

The following statement is from a multidisciplinary consortium of faculty across the Cal State LA campus community in response to the recent global disasters as a unifying voice to those in need.

California State University, Los Angeles is known for being one of the most diverse college campuses in the nation. Therefore, as we have watched hurricanes and earthquakes devastate American and international communities, it goes without saying that our heart goes out to those in the Gulf region of the United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Our campus community has professional and personal ties to these regions. Moreover, while these disasters have caused the displacement of people and tremendous loss of life, it has not done so equally. Disasters often exact greater harm on the most vulnerable in society. Said differently, those who were struggling to get by before hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria and the recent earthquakes are now in an even worse condition. To that end, since each of our respective disciplines require that we act in an ethical and socially just manner, act we must.

An integral part of living Cal State LA’s motto of engagement, service, and the public good is to leverage our proximity to Los Angeles’ civic, cultural, and economic centers and build on the skills of our world renowned faculty, students, and staff to be of service to our fellow Americans and act as global citizens in service to the world as a whole. As such, we call on our colleagues and students to join us in delivering support to these affected communities, with a special focus on the indigenous and marginalized communities in Oaxaca with which the Cal State LA community has close physical and cultural proximity. With this in mind we have formed a cross-campus and cross-disciplinary consortium with the intent to:

1) Stand in solidarity with the Cal State LA community’s existing responses to these disasters by introducing recommendations/assignments that incorporate socially just responses to natural disasters.
2) Begin the mechanisms to deliver monetary funds to aid those in the indigenous communities within the Oaxacan region through fundraising and ensure that local community organizations are in receipt of those funds.
3) Create a dialogue among faculty/students/community about the necessary response to natural disasters through service learning/classroom activities starting in the Spring semester.
4) Work with campus organizations to create service learning activities during the spring and summer breaks.

We welcome others to join us in our passion for humanistic responses to these crises with the intent of assisting those in need. Our spirits have been moved by the devastation we have seen, but the human psyche is strong and resilient.

If you would like further information or would like to sign on, please contact Aaron Sonnenschein (asonnen@calstatela.edu).

(A Group of Staff and Faculty in Support of and in Solidarity with Latin America)
Nikola Alenkin (Social Work), Beth Baker (Anthropology and Latin American Studies), Gabriela Fried Amilivia (Sociology and Latin American Studies), Alejandra Marchevsky (Liberal Studies and WGSS), Enrique Ochoa (Latin American Studies and History), Jason Plummer (Social Work), Deborah Ribera (Special Education and Counseling), Aaron Huey Sonnenschein (English and Latin American Studies), Tasha Wilis (Social Work), Ericka Verba (Latin American Studies)