

# **SOLIDARITIES**

*graduate student conference*

Call for Papers  
Department of Anthropology  
Johns Hopkins University  
September 20-21, 2019

**Keynote:** Mythri Jegathesan, Santa Clara University

Questions of how solidarity forms—and why and when it sticks—have been foundational to the social sciences: early scholars were attentive to social cohesion (Durkheim 1893) and class unity (Marx 1852); more recently, notions of solidarity have been conceptualized in relation to performative assemblies of social movements and networks of collective action (Castells 2012; Shantz 2000; Barry 2001; Graeber 2009; Butler 2015). Much of this literature, however, assumes a certain picture of politics and activism that is spectacular and demand-driven and one that involves protest-action and media attention in varying degrees. What other models of politics, which may be more quotidian or ephemeral, are available to consider as the ground on which different solidarities take shape? These forms of solidarities are often enfolded into the everyday, and are not necessarily coded as “solidarity,” instead emerging as forms of care (Das 2007, Laugier 2006, Ferrarese 2016), evasion, or subtle non-cooperation against oppressors (Scott 1985).

How can we think of the emergent manifestations of solidarity in these different contexts? Are these subtler appearances of solidarity engaging with, or in tension with, those apparent in more spectacular politics? These models of social and political unity appear in movements as diverse as BDS, #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, Antifa, environmental and climate justice, as well as the struggle for indigenous rights. As contemporary anthropological scholarship has demonstrated, they likewise appear through more subtle political engagement, the “quiet encroachments” of streets vendors, everyday resistance of waste pickers, or the collective labor carried out through kinship ties to endure war and “post”-war contexts (Bayat 2010, Al-Mohammad 2012, Millar 2018). Can solidarities across these different political engagements take place or be thought of in conjunction with one another?

More generally, what are the practices through which solidarity is engendered and networks through which it flows? In what ways are futures envisioned through solidarity? How are relations of solidarity embodied and sustained? What are the limits of solidarity—for instance, in capturing the particularities and heterogeneities of individuals and communities supported? What are the pressures that changing legal, politico-economic and environmental-medical regimes place on actual forms of solidarity? And which subjects are included and excluded from networks of solidarity? We want to consider how our understanding of solidarity might be troubled if we question a simple divide between the progressive agenda and the politics of the Far-Right. This understanding of solidarity may also look different when we destabilize the normative values embedded in progressive advocacy. How can we make sense of the ways in which fascist, racist, and misogynist collective movements also espouse the vocabulary and logic of solidarity? Finally, we ask: in addition to being an ethnographic or conceptual object, what is the methodological import of solidarity, and how might social scientists think of forging solidarities with their interlocutors?

We invite paper contributions from across disciplines as well as multi-modal presentations (performance, poetry, video, sonic ethnography, or demonstration), which explore the complex

engagements with solidarity that emerge from—and respond to—anthropology’s history, methods, and modes of analysis.

The Organizing Committee looks forward to receiving your submissions and thinking collectively through the possibilities of solidarity.

**Keynote:** Mythri Jegathesan is a cultural anthropologist and Assistant Professor at Santa Clara University (SCU). Since 2008, she has conducted ethnographic projects on labor aspiration and postwar agro-economic transitions and with members of the Working Women's Front, the first women-led trade union to organize women workers across formal and informal sectors in Sri Lanka. Dr. Jegathesan has published in *Anthropological Quarterly*, *Dialectical Anthropology*, and *SAMAJ: South Asia Multidisciplinary Journal*. Her first monograph, *Tea and Solidarity: Tamil Women and Work in Postwar Sri Lanka*, is part of the *Decolonizing Feminisms* series of University of Washington Press.

**Submission Guidelines:** The conference will take place on Friday and Saturday, September 20-21, 2019 at Johns Hopkins University’s Homewood campus. We encourage submissions from graduate students across disciplines as well as artists and practitioners. Submission of full papers is required no later than two weeks prior to the start of the conference.

\*A limited number of travel grants will be available to help defray the costs of attendance. Details on how to apply for these funds will be provided to accepted presenters.\*

**Individual Presentation Submissions:** Please submit a concise abstract (max. 300 words) along with a brief bio (presenter’s name, program, year of study, research focus, and contact information) to [jhuanthrogradconference@gmail.com](mailto:jhuanthrogradconference@gmail.com) by July 15, 2019. For multi-modal presentations, please indicate any equipment requirements.

**Panel Submissions:** Please submit a concise panel abstract along with three to four individual paper abstracts (max. 300 words) to [jhuanthrogradconference@gmail.com](mailto:jhuanthrogradconference@gmail.com) by July 15, 2019.