UC SANTA BARBARA

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A Scholar of Promise

Who gets to be a family?

It's a poignant and serious question for many prospective parents. And for Nora Kassner, a graduate student in UC Santa Barbara's Department of History, it's among the key considerations of her dissertation, which examines the history of LGBTQ foster parents in the 1970s to '90s.

"As foster care continues to be a site of contestation over U.S. family policy," she said, "my work asks questions about who gets to be a family and offers a roadmap for contemporary activists to understand how to make change."

For that innovative work, Kassner has recently been honored as a WW Dissertation Fellow in Women's Studies for 2022 by the Institute for Citizens & Scholars.

As a fellow, she will receive a $5,000 stipend for expenses needed to complete her dissertation, "*Hard to Place: Queer Foster Families and the Remaking of U.S. Family Policy, 1975-1996*," which focuses on the impact of queer foster parents on U.S. family policy in the 1970s-1990s.

"I am deeply honored to be among this year's recipients of the WW Women's Studies Fellowship," Kassner said. "Past cohorts of Women's Studies Fellows have changed the way we think about gender and sexuality, and I am grateful — and more than a little amazed — to be in their midst."

Alice O’Connor, a professor of history and Kassner’s graduate advisor, called the award a well-deserved acknowledgement of important research.

“It is wonderful to see Nora getting recognition and support for her path-breaking research on the history of queer family formation,” O’Connor said. “As a WW Dissertation Fellow in Women’s Studies, she joins an interdisciplinary network of young scholars who are doing important, socially engaged research that will shape the field for years to come.”

Kassner joins seven other promising Ph.D. students in an international network of WW Women’s Studies Fellows who have become distinguished faculty members, artists and novelists, and leaders in business, government, and the nonprofit sector. They include a Pulitzer Prize winner, two MacArthur Fellows, and numerous Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellows.

Founded in 1945, the Institute for Citizens & Scholars is associated with the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, which focuses on broadening civic engagement, supporting civil discourse and reemphasizing excellence, opportunity, and diversity in higher education.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.