

CONVERSATIONS

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month



DAISY PINEDA
Diversity Liaison | OC APA



JORGE PADILLA
Academic Liaison | OC APA



YURITZY RANDLE
At-Large Board Member | OC APA

We are proud to celebrate the people on our board, and how they are making a positive impact in the planning industry.



Catherine Aguilar

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Leadership Letter

Embracing Diversity - Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

Being different can feel scary for many reasons. Fear of rejection, social pressure to conform, and uncertainty are all factors that make being different daunting. However, what adds depth to our perspectives, leads to innovation, and contributes to talent retention is a commitment to diversity. When we embrace what makes us different, it often leads to a sense of purpose since we end up contributing towards something much bigger than ourselves.

At OC APA, we proudly embrace the diversity on our board and celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Our featured Board Members Daisy Pineda, Jorge Padilla, and Yuritzy Randle talk about their journeys in “being different” and how it has led them to building stronger communities through a career in Urban Planning. They also shared how being the first in their family to pursue a different path unlocked new opportunities and inspired other community members along the way to pursue purpose driven impact work.

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month through October 15, I invite you to read through our September edition of *CONVERSATIONS*. Be brave, bold, and **dare to be different**. The world is counting on it.

Yours Truly,

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DAISY PINEDA

Diversity Liaison | OC APA

Daisy's background is in Urban and Regional Planning. She completed her undergrad studies at UCSD and graduate studies at UCI. Today, she serves as a planning consultant, and focuses on entitlement processing and land use regulations. Daisy hopes to leverage her passion for planning to expose environmental inequities.

OC APA: Are you the first in your family to explore a career in planning?

Pineda: I am definitely the first in my family to pursue a planning career. Both my parents are immigrants from Mexico where “urban planning” doesn’t exist as the technical application that we have in America. Still, their background really inspired me to go into planning.

I grew up frequently visiting their intimate village. That village didn’t need permits or ask for government position to renovate whatever they needed. I really liked that the built environment was so customizable to what they wanted. I now know that it is called placemaking.

OC APA: Did your family influence you to pursue a certain career path?

Pineda: My family background really inspired me to go into planning because of where they grew up. When I spoke to them earlier in my career - when I began exposing them to planning here in the states - they would tell me that there were no regulations to think about.

The name of the village is La Concepcion in Michoacan, Mexico. I lived there for a little over a year when I was little. My parents would tell me stories of how the village would build whatever they needed. For example, they built juice bars and soccer fields for the kids.

One time, the community wanted a formal plaza as a meeting space, so the community rallied together to build one in the middle of the village! I think it’s so beautiful that a community can work together to transform spaces that make a meaningful impact in the lives of all the residents.

I grew up in spaces where I can envision what I wanted to do in planning. So as a planner now, I’m super excited to amplify my community’s voice and advocate for what they want in their communities.

OC APA: What community are you aspiring to work with today and in the future?

Pineda: In the past, I worked for a large City and another time for the County. In both jobs, I felt like I didn’t have a strong sense of community.

Now, I’m excited to return to my home and work for the City of Eastvale, Riverside.

I love the nostalgia of coming back home to see all my friends and the places I used to play at. I do really like the city. It may be a little smaller and guilty of suburban sprawl, but I think the city is really making an effort to unite the community.

One project I'm especially looking forward to being a part of is the development of a downtown node or downtown center in the city. We feel like we don't have a lot of these spaces to just hang out and enjoy living in the city. Any project that involves open spaces or pedestrian accessibility gets me really excited!

I'm excited to give back to my city. I was there before it was a city, so it's been really amazing to see it transform throughout the years. And now, in a full circle moment, I'm able to work on projects that are helping bring the city together.

For the future, I'm excited to work with more underrepresented communities in general that face impacts like environmental racism or environmental injustices, whether it be through pollution or climate change disasters or anything like that. I'm also excited to explore the public health aspect of that and how all these externalities are impacting communities.

OC APA: Who is your role model in urban planning?



Daisy and her team at the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan for the community of Sunset Beach, 2023

Pineda: I think one of my role models was Professor Leslie Lewis at UCI. She introduced me to planning when I was narrowing down what I wanted to study. Her background in public health really opened my eyes to the importance of helping the community. She made me fall in love with planning and the impact that it has on people.

I haven't met a lot of Hispanic planners. Being Hispanic is a large part of my planner profile and I believe that there is room to have more conversations regarding how planning often excludes people like us.

Jorge Padilla and Lisandro Orozco have been my mentors throughout my planning career. They both have been helpful in connecting me to other Hispanics in the field.



UC Irvine's Master of Urban & Regional Planning (MURP) 2023 Graduation



JORGE PADILLA

Academic Liaison | OC APA

Jorge Padilla is the Assistant Director for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program at University of California, Irvine. Jorge is a dedicated higher education professional with nearly a decade of experience in the field. He is passionate about providing a holistic, student-centered approach to ensure students excel in their academics and their professional development while addressing their overall growth and well-being. Jorge is currently a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program (Ed.D.) at UCLA. Jorge is a native of Echo Park, Los Angeles and currently resides in Long Beach.

OC APA: Are you the first in your family to explore a career in urban planning?

Padilla: Yes. There's actually a lot of firsts for me!

I'm a first-generation college student.

First generation graduate student.

First in my family to graduate college and get a master's degree.

First in my family to pursue a doctorate degree.

And yes - I'm also the first in my family to explore a career in urban planning.

OC APA: Did your family influence you to pursue a certain career path?

Padilla: Growing up, I lived in Echo Park near downtown LA, but I remember a very different place than what we see now. I grew up in pre-gentrified Echo Park.

On the other side of all that niceness was displacement. Entire families were priced out of their neighborhoods and could no longer afford rents and mortgages. My parents were homeowners, and we were also victims of the 2008 housing crisis. I lost my childhood home while I was in college.

I took that experience as fuel to study the conditions as to why gentrification and displacement occur, and who it affects. That was my first real life introduction to understanding the city. It helped me understand our experiences as first-generation immigrant families and people of color in these urban centers, and how these conditions make or break us.

I came to study MURP here at UCI as a student 10 years ago in 2013, knowing that I had a personal story to tell. I wanted to utilize urban planning as the platform for me to get a better understanding of the city and hopefully become an agent of change to make parts of the city function better for residents like my family.

OC APA: What types of communities have you worked with in the past?

Padilla: I've always been involved in very eclectic neighborhoods and communities. In fact, when I was a teenager, I worked with a Filipino non-profit called Search to Involve. That was my first introduction to working with communities.

Throughout my schooling, as an undergrad at UC Santa Cruz, and even when I was working on my masters, my community became a little more focused and centered around my identify as a Salvadoreño. I did a lot of volunteer work with the Salvadoran communities in LA and Salvadoran students in UCSC as a member of the Salvadoran student union.

OC APA: What community are you aspiring to work with today and in the future?

Padilla: I am passionate about working with students.

Currently, I am the Assistant Director of Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program at UCI. I ensure that the experience our students receive is one that engages their occupational interests. I enjoy existing in this unique opportunity, as a UCI MURP alumni, to help students build professional skills and capacities to be competitive applicants in the job market as aspiring planners.

It's important to me that my Latinx/a/o students see that a career in this field is not only possible, but that they can find success and a great sense of identity in planning. More importantly, I want them to hear firsthand from planners what they are experiencing in their careers.



Vacation in Rome, Italy, Spring 2023

My one advice to up-and-coming Latinx/a/o planners is to find mentors and professionals that care about you, that are willing to challenge you, and will champion your success in this field.

OC APA: Who is your role model in urban planning?

Padilla: Jonathan Pacheco Bell is definitely my role model! Ever since I met him as a MURP student, and even continuing into my career now, I follow the work he's done in the communities he's served.

He's a Senior Planner with 4Leaf, Inc., and still very much involved in the several communities across Los Angeles County, including his work with the Florence-Firestone neighborhood in unincorporated LA County. His work in the field knocking on doors and getting to know the residents and the neighborhoods. He has a saying, "We cannot plan from our desks."

OC APA: How do you embody your role model in your career?

Padilla: I really take everything he does to heart when I think about serving my students.

I don't like being behind the desk.
I like talking to students.
I like getting in the classrooms,
And I like having that human touch with them.

I really think a lot about what Jonathan does. I think about how I can bring that spirit of getting to know the people that we're serving to my career in education and serving students effectively.



Picture day with MURP students, Spring 2022



YURITZZY RANDLE

At-Large Board Member | OC APA

Yuritzzy is an Associate Planner for the County of Orange, serving on the Advanced Planning team. She has been a member of the APA-Orange chapter board since 2017, where she previously served on the OC APA board as the Student Representative for UCI. Additionally, Yuritzzy serves as a mentor for the APA Orange Peel Mentorship Program.

OC APA: Are you the first in your family to explore a career in urban planning?

Randle: Both my parents were born in Mexico. I am a first-generation college graduate and the first in my family to get a master's degree. My dad did study architecture in Mexico, but he paused to come to America where he met my mom. They fell in love and ended up raising a family.

Although my dad never went back to Mexico to finish his architecture degree, he does talk about architecture often. I was inspired to carry the torch that my dad carried. I initially went to Mt. SAC to pursue architecture. As I progressed, I realized that it wasn't the correct path for me. I ended up switching to Sociology and finished that degree at Cal Poly Pomona.

I don't know how I ended up getting into planning. I kind of just stumbled upon it. I had such a great time in planning, because my dad introduced me to architecture at such a young age. This made my transition to graduate school a lot smoother.

OC APA: What types of communities have you worked with in the past?

Randle: My work has taken me to a lot of places. I started out as an unpaid planning intern for the City of Anaheim until I found a paid position elsewhere. Then, I spent a month in the City of Diamond Bar. My first full time position was in the City of Hermosa Beach, and now I'm working for the County of Orange.

I would say that working for the City of Hermosa Beach was the most eye-opening. Compared to working in Anaheim, the troubles that people were facing and the work I did were completely different. In Anaheim, I helped people start businesses and first generation home-buyers. In Hermosa Beach, the population was more affluent. Now that I'm working for the County, I see such a variety of backgrounds.

OC APA: Is there a certain community you hope to work with in the future?

Randle: In terms of future communities, I don't really mind where I end up as long as I can be in a community where I can use my Spanish, and also provide for the community. I think my work is so impactful when I work with communities that look like me and I can personally connect with. I forever want to be working for the public sector. I really enjoy being a resource for the public.

OC APA: Do you see yourself as a role model to younger generations or to other Hispanics?

Randle: Mentoring younger planners is very important to me. I've been serving as a mentor on the Orange Peel Mentorship Program. So far, I've had two mentees and informally mentored someone at my job at the County of Orange.

The biggest thing for me is being able to talk to younger planners and connect with them on a personal level. I think younger planners feel pressure to go through formalities. I hope to slowly pull back their walls, so I can help them launch their careers.



Reviewing the Coto de Caza Specific Plan at the Orange County public counter and assisting the public with their zoning designation.

OC APA: Who is your role model in urban planning?

Randle: When I was working at the City of Anaheim, I was on the Public Information Team. There were two managers at the City of Anaheim: Irma Huitron and Judy Dudant. They did a lot of work building rapport with the employees. By the end of our work, they'd built a community within us. They always supported us and had our backs. They were always there to help us whether it meant interpreting code or helping us communicate with the public. They were mentors to all of us. Their unconditional support really helped us work together as a team and provide that same positive attitude to the communities we served. I truly admire them for being Latina and women in the industry. They showed me how to achieve a harmonious balance between investing into my career and maintaining a fulfilling family life. I aspire to provide the same kind of mentorship to younger planners



2023 Family vacation at Tokyo, Japan

LET'S CONNECT

Follow us on our socials for the latest scoop on our events, programs, announcements and all things OC APA!



