

# Rune Soto Ponce

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## EDUCATION

**B.A., Chicana/o Studies** – *University of California, Berkeley*

August 2022 – May 2026 (expected)

GPA 3.9

### Research interests

- **Chicano Movement & Latina Feminism**
  - Examining the intersection of gender, activism, and cultural resistance in Chicano history.
- **Latinos in Labor & Reconstruction**
  - Exploring the historical and contemporary role of Latino laborers in rebuilding communities post-disaster.
- **Rasquachismo & Artistic Resistance**
  - Studying how Chicano artists use resourcefulness and subversion to challenge dominant narratives.
- **Cultural Identity & Storytelling in Animation**
  - Investigating how Latino animators reclaim narratives and integrate cultural symbols in their work.
- **Media Erasure & Latino Representation**
  - Examining how mainstream media excludes or misrepresents Latino contributions in labor and culture.
- **Chicana/o Studies & Public History**
  - Bridging academia and public engagement through digital humanities, children's literature, and animation.
- **Latin American Folklore & Oral Traditions**
  - Documenting and analyzing myths, legends, and oral histories as tools of cultural preservation.

## RESEARCH & ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

### **Entre 2 Mundos, Latino Animation Project** – *Research Assistant*

JANUARY 2024 – PRESENT

- Supervisor, Marc Sanchez
- As a research assistant for Entre 2 Mundos, I contribute to a groundbreaking Latino animation project blending Latin American folklore, history, and cultural hybridity. Produced by acclaimed animator Jorge Gutiérrez, the series draws from Pre-Contact Mesoamerica, Cholo culture, and Afro-Caribbean traditions, embracing multilingual storytelling in English, Spanish, and Nahuatl. My role involves researching historical moments for adaptation and ensuring cultural authenticity in worldbuilding. This spring, I will represent Entre 2 Mundos at BIPOC Comic Con, engaging with industry professionals and scholars. This experience strengthens my research on Latino representation in animation and my commitment to visual storytelling.

### **Digital Humanities Research Project** – *Research Assistant*

JANUARY 2024 – PRESENT

- Supervisor, Professor Long Le-Khac
- Under Professor Long Le-Khac's supervision, I analyze Asian American literature using digital humanities methods, focusing on Goodreads data to explore how books are categorized and engaged with. This project aims to examine the top 1,000 books tagged "Asian American" to identify trends in genre classification, author demographics, and audience reception. Through this research, I am gaining experience in computational methodologies, including Python and web scraping, expanding my ability to use data-driven approaches for cultural analysis. Understanding how digital platforms shape literary narratives deepens my interdisciplinary approach to ethnic studies, equipping me to examine how marginalized stories are framed and circulated.

### **Children's Book**

#### **Lorena: The Truth of the Lagoon** – *Illustrator and Researcher*

DECEMBER 2024

- Link: [Lorena: The Truth of the Lagoon](#)
- My research examines the erasure of Chicana voices in history through the untold story of Lorena Encinas, a young Chicana wrongfully accused during the Sleepy Lagoon Trial. *Lorena: And the Truth of the Lagoon*, a children's book I co-developed, challenges the invisibility of Chicanas in public memory and aims to make Chicana/o history accessible to younger audiences. Drawing on Chicano Studies and Latina feminist frameworks, we reinterpreted Encinas' story using visual storytelling, inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa, Carmen Lomas Garza, and Frida Kahlo. This project explores how creative storytelling can counter historical erasure and promote accurate Latina/o representation in media.

## **Ethnic Studies Library** – *Student Employee*

SEPTEMBER 2024 – PRESENT

- Supervisors, Lillian Castillo-Speed and Sine Hwang Jensen
- At the Ethnic Studies Library, I research and curate materials to preserve Latino/a histories. I helped expand the Chicano Studies Collection by incorporating award-winning Latino/a children's books, making history accessible to younger audiences. I also assisted with archival materials for the Carlos Muñoz Jr. exhibit, organizing documents on his activism. Currently, I'm researching the library's origins and its role in preserving ethnic studies materials. As states ban Ethnic Studies programs, this work becomes increasingly urgent. Through archival research and book curation, I remain committed to making underrepresented narratives accessible for future generations.

## **The Archive of Latinx Feelings** – *Undergraduate Research*

SEPTEMBER 2024 – DECEMBER 2024

- Supervisor, Professor Raúl Coronado
- My research examines how historical narratives shape Latino identity and memory. Under Professor Raúl Coronado, I analyzed 19th-century Mexican-American letters, notebooks, and diaries to explore expressions of belonging and resilience. The project aims to digitize and transcribe these texts using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and AI tools to create a searchable database of Latino emotional expression. This Digital Humanities approach enables large-scale analysis of handwritten texts, revealing how Latinos documented their experiences. Understanding the evolution of emotional language informs my broader research on storytelling, representation, and preserving Latino narratives across time.

## **VOLUNTEER WORK & COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

### **Dorothy Day House** – *Volunteer*

SEPTEMBER 2024 – PRESENT

- My first hand understanding of housing instability motivates me to assist Berkeley's unhoused population through direct service at Dorothy Day House, where I help with meal distribution. Dorothy Day House, founded in 1992, began by serving daily breakfast in People's Park and has since expanded into a shelter and resource hub. As the Bay Area's housing crisis worsens, organizations like this remain critical. Through my work, I aim to provide direct support while advocating for long-term solutions to address homelessness and housing insecurity.

## **Native Community Center – Intern**

SEPTEMBER 2023 – DECEMBER 2024

- I worked at the Native Community Center, focusing on preserving cultural narratives through food and storytelling. I led a community cookbook project, documenting Indigenous recipes alongside personal stories to highlight the significance of Indigenous foodways. I collaborated with students and community members, oversaw design, and developed outreach strategies. Additionally, I co-organized three Indigenous foodways events, integrating historical research with contemporary practices. I also expanded digital outreach by creating promotional materials. This experience reinforced my dedication to preserving underrepresented histories and making them accessible through community-driven projects.

## **UC Berkeley Pre-College program— Resident Assistant Mentor**

JUNE 2023 – AUGUST 2024

- Over the past two summers, I mentored over 40 high school students in UC Berkeley's Pre-College Scholars Program, guiding them through academic challenges and college life. Last summer, I led the Lavender Cohort, supporting LGBTQ+ students. Many came from backgrounds where higher education felt out of reach, so I helped demystify research, scholarships, and academic resources. As a low-income student, I understand the barriers they face. My mentorship reflects my broader mission to make education accessible, empowering students to pursue their ambitions and ensuring diverse voices are represented in academia.

## **Residential College, Bowles Hall – Affinity Group Co-lead**

JANUARY 2023 – MAY 2024

- During my first semester at UC Berkeley, Bowles Hall became my home—a space where I could build community and support others like me. As a low-income student, transitioning to university life was overwhelming, so I co-led the Queer and Low-Income Affinity Groups, organizing inclusive events and advocating for peers. One of my most meaningful projects was an Indigenous foodways event, blending historical and contemporary food practices. Managing the budget, meal prep, and research, I fostered cultural engagement through shared meals. These initiatives helped reclaim space in an institution that has historically excluded students like me.

## AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

### Kathy Espinoza Howard Scholarship

- I was awarded the Santa Clara County Housing Authority (SCCHA) Scholarship twice, receiving a total of \$2,000 in recognition of my academic achievements and commitment to higher education. This merit-based scholarship, valued at \$1,000 per year, is awarded to students from low-income households who receive rental assistance from SCCHA and are pursuing a technical school, community college, or university education. Selected from a competitive pool of county-wide applicants, this scholarship aims to support students overcoming financial barriers by providing funding for tuition, books, and other educational expenses.

### QTBIPOC Empowerment Award

- I was honored to receive the QTBIPOC Empowerment Award, a scholarship dedicated to supporting and uplifting LGBTQIA2S+ and BIPOC students at UC Berkeley. Selected as one of five recipients, I was awarded \$250 in recognition of my commitment to community empowerment and academic excellence. This scholarship is designed to provide financial support to students who navigate the intersection of these identities, reinforcing the importance of visibility and inclusion in higher education.

## Other Skills & Interests

### Languages:

- English (native); Spanish (conversational); German (novice reader/writer)

### Extracurriculars:

- Art Exhibition
  - Link: <https://www.bayviewartandlit.com/runedeleonwherejaguarsroam>
  - My exhibition, Where Jaguars Roam, Wild Tongues Speak, was displayed at a local gallery from February 22 to March 14, 2025. This intimate space provided a unique setting to showcase my work, which explores the intersections of identity, literature, and nature. As a Chicano Studies student, I use wildlife imagery as a metaphor for diverse Latina/o experiences, blending historical narratives with ecological aesthetics. Inspired by stories of the natural world, my illustrations reimagine landscapes and species as symbols of cultural resilience, migration, and storytelling across generations.
- Letterpress
  - During my artist residency at Moving Parts Press in Mendocino Fall 2024, I worked alongside Felicia Rice, whose contributions to Xicanx letterpress deeply inspire me. My passion for book arts began in a hand-printed books class, where I first encountered Codex Espangliensis by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Enrique Chagoya. Seeing it in person revealed the intersection of my Chicano

studies, bookmaking, and storytelling. Through the WWOOLF Fellowship, I contributed to ongoing projects, gaining hands-on experience that expanded my appreciation for printmaking. This residency reinforced my commitment to preserving underrepresented narratives through book arts, blending historical research with creative practice.

## CREATIVE PROJECTS

### **Anna May Wong Video Essay** – *Animator, Researcher, Video Editor*

DECEMBER 2024

- Video essay about the life of Anna May Wong, the first Asian American actress, made in collaboration with three peers.
- Google drive link: [Anna May Wong](#)

### **Native Community Center Community Cookbook** – *Organizer and Editor*

APRIL 2024

- A community cookbook consisting of recipes from members at UC Berkeley's Native Community Center
- Google drive link: [NASD Community Cookbook Spring '24](#)

### **Don't Feed the Cat!** – *Illustrator*

MAY 2024

Google Drive Link: [Don't Feed Cat!](#)