

ALANA ACKERMAN
Curriculum Vitae (current as of October 2025)

American Bar Foundation
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Research Professor
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EDUCATION

- 2025 **Ph.D. Anthropology**, with a Graduate Minor in Gender and Women's Studies,
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Dissertation: *The Violence of Refuge in Ecuador*
Doctoral committee: Gilberto Rosas, Andrew Orta, Ellen Moodie, Y  n L  
Espiritu, and Carmen G  mez
- 2013 **M.A. Anthropology**, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO),
Ecuador
- 2008 **B.A. Spanish**, Tufts University (*cum laude*)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Anthropology of migration, refuge, and asylum; critical refugee studies; war and violence; law, bureaucracy, and the state; disability and crip studies; Latin American studies; Ecuador and Colombia.

PUBLICATIONS

- 2025 "Crippling Ethnography: Disability, Unruly Movement, and the Doing of Anthropology." In *The Disabled Anthropologist*, edited by Sumi Colligan and Anna Jaysane-Darr, pp. 40-57. New York: Routledge.
- 2025 "Intimate War Across Borders: Terrifying Encounters, Recognition, and 'the Colombian Armed Conflict' in Quito, Ecuador," *American Anthropologist* 127 (1): 96-107. <http://doi.org/10.1111/aman.28043>
- 2024 (With Catherine W. Cheung, Michaelene M. Ostrosky, Courtney O'Grady, Mia Chudzik, Natalie Perez, Nicole Delinski, and Rebecca L. Smith.) "Exploring School Staff's Perceptions about Implementing Saliva-Based Testing." *Public Health Challenges* 3 (3): 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/puh2.225>

- 2024 (With Catherine W. Cheung, Michaelene M. Ostrosky, Mia Chudzik, Courtney O’Grady, Natalie Perez, and Rebecca L. Smith.) “Exploring Parent Perceptions of Virtual Learning in School: Learning During a Pandemic.” *Social Education Research* 5 (2): 288-300. <https://doi.org/10.37256/ser.5220244572>
- 2024 “‘Everything I Have Seen There, That I Know...’: Witnessing the Colombian Armed Conflict Through Refugees’ Narratives of Implication.” *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 47 (1): 49-62. <http://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12567>
- 2022 “For Colombians in Ecuador, Displacement is Ongoing, and Refuge is Elusive.” *North American Congress on Latin America*. <https://nacla.org/colombians-ecuador-displacement-ongoing-and-refuge-elusive>
- 2020 “Displaced in Place: On Being Forced to Move and Forced to Stay During a Global Pandemic.” *American Ethnologist* website, edited by Gabriela Manley, Bryan M. Dougan, and Carole McGranahan. <https://americanethnologist.org/online-content/collections/making-sense-of-things/urbana-champaign-displaced-in-place-on-being-forced-to-move-and-forced-to-stay-during-a-global-pandemic/>
- 2014 *La ley, el orden y el caos: construcción social del Estado y el inmigrante en Ecuador* [Law, Order, and Chaos: Social Construction of the State and the Immigrant in Ecuador]. Quito: Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales. <https://editorial.iaen.edu.ec/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2016/08/la-ley-el-orden-y-el-caos.pdf>
- Under review.* “Ni de tránsito, ni de destino: Ecuador como espacio de persecución y desplazamiento para personas refugiadas de Colombia” [“Neither Transit nor Destination: Ecuador as a Space of Persecution and Displacement for Refugees from Colombia”]. Invited chapter as part of a book edited by Leonardo Herrera Mejía and Sarah England, under review by the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American Council of Social Sciences, CLACSO).
- In progress.* “La fugitividad refugiada: La visibilidad amenazante, el reconocimiento y estrategias de evasión en Quito, Ecuador” [“Refugee Fugitivity: Threatening Visibility, Recognition, and Strategies of Evasion in Quito, Ecuador”]. Invited chapter as part of an edited book, *Parece que fue ayer: 25 años de estudios migratorios en Ecuador* [It Seems Like Yesterday: Twenty-Five Years of Migration Studies in Ecuador], edited by Gioconda Herrera, Carmen Gómez, and Alicia Torres, to be published by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American Institute of Social Sciences, FLACSO).
- In progress.* “‘No sé si soy refugiada’ [‘I Don’t Know if I Am a Refugee’]: The Ambiguity of

Refuge in Necropolitical Ecuador.” Paper abstract accepted by the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, as part of a special issue, “Who is a Refugee in the 21st Century?”, edited by Ulrike Bialas, Aryan Karimi, and David FitzGerald.

WRITING AWARDS

- 2024 Demitri B. Shimkin Award, for the paper, “Five Machete Slashes, *Tirar la Toalla*, and *Seguir Adelante*: Refugee Injury and Care in States of Racialized Abandonment,” Anthropology Department, University of Illinois

- 2023 Prize for Research in the Humanities (best graduate student research), for the paper, “I Hope They Don’t Find Me Here: Persecution, *Encuentros*, and Refuge Across Borders in the Global South,” Humanities Research Institute, University of Illinois

- 2023 Graduate Student Award in Applied and Public Anthropology, for the paper, “Resettlement Denied: Persecution, Refuge, and the Violent Entrapment of Colombian Refugees in Quito, Ecuador,” the Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

FELLOWSHIPS & OTHER AWARDS

- 2024-2025 Graduate Student Fellowship, Humanities Research Institute, UIUC
- 2024 Graduate College Conference Presentation Award, UIUC
- 2023-2024 Peace Scholar Award, United States Institute of Peace
- 2023 Mellon Foundation, Humanities Without Walls Summer Bridge Fellowship
- 2023 Dissertation Writing Fellowship, Anthropology Department, UIUC
- 2021 Mary Jane Neer Scholarship, Disability Resources & Educational Services, UIUC
- 2020 Teachers Ranked as Outstanding, UIUC
- 2020 Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad, Fulbright-Hays Program
- 2020 Dissertation Travel Grant, Graduate College, UIUC
- 2020 Kilby Fellowship, Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies, UIUC
- 2019 Nicholson Fellowship, Unit for Criticism & Interpretive Theory, UIUC (for summer study at Cornell University’s School of Criticism and Theory)
- 2019 Diversity Travel Grant, American Ethnological Society
- 2016 Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, Social Science Research Council
- 2016 Whitten Fellowship, Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies, UIUC
- 2016 Changemaker Award, Live Oak School
- 2015 Tinker Foundation Fellowship, Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies, UIUC
- 2015 Summer Research Grant, Anthropology Department, UIUC

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2024 **Applied Research Laboratory for Intelligence and Security, University of Maryland:** I participated in a 10-week summer program, Research for Intelligence and Security Community (RISC), part of the Applied Research Laboratory for Intelligence and Security (ARLIS), housed at the University of Maryland. My participation involved working closely with two colleagues to conduct a collaborative literature review on the sociocultural dynamics of “wargaming.” At the end of the program, we presented our 40-page review to government officials and ARLIS researchers.
- 2021 – 2022 **Quito, Ecuador / Champaign, Illinois:** 12 months of ethnographic doctoral research involving in-person participant observation, in-person and remote interviews, archival research, and digital communication with Colombian refugees, NGO workers, and government bureaucrats based in Quito, Ecuador. The question that guided this research is how refugees experience and navigate violence, persecution, and displacement in spaces and at times of supposed peace and refuge in the Global South.
- 2019 **Urbana-Champaign, Illinois:** 6-month research assistantship with Professor Gilberto Rosas at Illinois. Assistantship involved studying scholarship related to U.S. immigration detention, family separation, deportation, and asylum; communicating with and gathering information from scholars of U.S. immigration; creating an annotated bibliography of scholarship on changes and continuities in U.S. detention and family separation; compiling sources on legal testimony; and assisting the professor with the IRB process, etc.
- 2016 **Quito, Ecuador:** 2 months of preliminary doctoral fieldwork involving interviews and participant observation with Colombian refugees in Quito; participant observation in Asylum Access, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that aided Colombian refugees; interviews with NGO workers and Ecuadorian government officials; and online research of secondary sources to learn about the Colombian conflict and issues affecting Colombian refugees in Ecuador.
- 2015 **Quito, Ecuador:** 2 months of preliminary doctoral fieldwork involving interviews with NGO workers, academics, and government officials about the Mercosur residency visa and Colombian refuge in Quito, Ecuador.
- 2014 **Urbana-Champaign, Illinois:** 3 months of ethnographic research for a Qualitative Methods course, including interviews and focus groups with Latin American students, researchers, and staff affiliated with the University of Illinois.

This research focused on preconceptions about the United States before migrating versus experiences after migrating.

- 2014 **Urbana-Champaign, Illinois:** 4 months of a research assistantship with Professor Jessica Greenberg at Illinois. This research focused on the tension between freedom of expression and protection of reputation in the legal discourse of the European Court of Human Rights. Specific duties included reading court cases pertaining to this topic, grouping cases according to analytical categories, deciding on relevance of cited precedent cases, and organizing information via Zotero.
- 2010 – 2012 **Quito, Ecuador:** 2 years of a research assistantship in the Department of Anthropology at FLACSO Ecuador. Responsibilities included organizing social science conferences, conducting archival research, transcribing recorded interviews, and translating academic articles from Spanish to English, etc.
- 2011 – 2012 **Quito, Ecuador:** 1 year of ethnographic research for my M.A. degree at FLACSO Ecuador, involving: interviews with immigrants and government workers based in Quito; participant observation in visa processing offices of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services of Ecuador; archival research in the National Assembly of Ecuador; and discourse analysis of laws, agreements, treaties, and other documents regarding migration and foreign affairs.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & SERVICE

- Nov. 2025 Session chair for the panel, “Towards a Critical Anthropology of Impunity,” American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, LA (*upcoming*)
- Nov. 2025 Paper presentation, “Necropolitical Recognition of Refugees in Ecuador,” American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, LA (*upcoming*)
- Nov. 2025 Paper presentation, “El reconocimiento legal como violencia política en Ecuador” [“Legal Recognition as Political Violence in Ecuador”], World Anthropological Union, Antigua, Guatemala (*upcoming*)
- May 2025 Session organizer for the panel, “La otra cara de la migración: Movilidades menos visibilizadas en las Américas” [The Other Face of Migration: Less Visible Mobilities in the Americas], Latin American Studies Association, San Francisco, CA
- May 2025 Paper presentation, “*Sapos* on the Run: Snitching Toads, Refugees, and the Role

of Betrayal in the ‘Colombian Armed Conflict,’” Latin American Studies Association, San Francisco, CA

- March 2025 Paper presentation, “Snitching *sapos*: ‘Toadly’ Refugees, Betrayal, and the Ongoing Present of the ‘Colombian Armed Conflict,’” Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology, Panama City, Panama
- Nov. 2024 Paper presentation, “Evading Recognition: Life-Threatening Visibility and Refugee Fugitivity in Quito, Ecuador,” American Anthropological Association, Tampa, Florida (*missed due to illness*)
- June 2024 Session co-chair for the panel, “Buscando asilo, encontrando violencia: migración latinoamericana en su tránsito y destino” [“Searching for Asylum, Encountering Violence: Latin American Migration in Transit and Destination”], Latin American Studies Association Annual Meeting, Bogotá, Colombia
- June 2024 Paper presentation, “‘No me siento seguro aquí’: experiencias de persecución entre refugiadxs colombianxs en Quito, Ecuador” [“I Don’t Feel Safe Here: Experiences of Persecution Among Colombian Refugees in Quito, Ecuador”], Latin American Studies Association, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, Colombia
- April 2024 Paper presentation, “Refugee Injury,” Cascadia Seminar in Medical Anthropology, Oregon State University
- Dec. 2023 Paper presentation, “Encuentros aterradores: Violencia que cruza fronteras y la visa de refugio en el Ecuador” [Terrifying Encounters: Violence that Crosses Borders and the Refugee Visa in Ecuador], Center for Advanced Latin American Studies (CALAS-Andes), Quito, Ecuador
- Nov. 2023 Paper presentation, “Where Violence Comes From: Colombian ‘Infiltration,’ Xenophobic Discourse, and the Murder of Fernando Villavicencio in Quito, Ecuador,” American Anthropological Association, Toronto, Canada
- March 2023 Paper presentation, “Navigating Bureaucracies of Entrapment: An Ethnography of Refugee Resettlement in the Global South,” American Ethnological Society, Princeton University
- March 2023 Paper presentation, “Resettlement Denied: Persecution, Refuge, and the Violent Entrapment of Colombian Refugees in Quito, Ecuador,” Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology, Universidad de Cartagena (*winner of the Graduate Student Award in Applied and Public Anthropology*)

- March 2023 Paper presentation, “They Gave Us a Visa, But We Aren’t Safe Here: Refugee Status as Violent Entrapment in the Global South,” Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford (*conference was canceled due to labor strikes*)
- March 2022 Graduate student roundtable, “Displacement,” for the Gender & Women’s Studies Graduate Student Colloquium, “Formations,” Champaign, Illinois
- May 2019 Paper presentation, “Crippling Ethnography: The Leaky Intersections of Forced Displacement and Chronic Pain as Strange Ways of Moving and Feeling,” Sociocultural Anthropology Graduate Student Symposium, Champaign, Illinois
- March 2019 Paper presentation, “Crippling Ethnography: The Leaky Intersections of Disability, Pain, and Strange (Im)mobilities,” American Ethnological Society Annual Conference, Washington University in St. Louis
- Nov. 2016 Session co-organizer (with Dr. Sophia Balakian) for the panel, “Refugees, Evidence, and the Politics of Proof,” American Anthropological Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Nov. 2015 Paper presentation, “Refugees or Universal Citizens? Shifting Notions of Citizenship in Twenty-First Century Ecuador,” Tinker Workshop for Summer Fellows, Champaign, Illinois
- April 2015 Paper presentation, “Borders in Transit: Government Discourse in Twenty-First Century Ecuador,” at the colloquium, “Thinking Andean Studies: An Interdisciplinary Colloquium,” University of Pennsylvania

INVITED PRESENTATIONS, LECTURES, AND WORKSHOPS

- Nov. 2025 Invited roundtable discussant, “Imagining Disabled Anthropologists: Haunting Ableism in the Field,” American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, LA (*upcoming*)
- Dec. 2024 Invitation to speak on a panel about migration and refuge in Ecuador, as part of the event, “Ecuador migrante: 25 años de inserción en los circuitos globales y desiguales de la movilidad” [“Migrant Ecuador: 25 Years of Insertion in Global and Unequal Circuits of Mobility”], FLACSO Ecuador
- October 2024 Invited roundtable speaker, “Ethics across the Fields,” Illinois Anthropology Colloquium
- April 2024 Invited speaker, “Dissertation Research – A Panel Discussion,” Doctoral

Research Support Program & the Writers Workshop, Illinois

- Nov. 2023 Invited presentation, “Race Across the Border: Becoming Black in Ecuador,” for the symposium, “Race, Migration, and Memory,” UIUC Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, Illinois
- August 2023 Invited workshop presentation, “Policing Refugee Labor: Street Work, *Metropolitanos*, and Forced Displacement Across Borders in the Global South,” as part of the Graduate Writing Retreat, hosted by the Critical Refugee Studies Collective
- April 2023 Invited colloquium speaker, “Refugio carcelario: reflexiones en torno a las experiencias de refugiados colombianos en Quito” [“Carceral Refuge: Reflections on the Experiences of Colombian Refugees in Quito”], FLACSO Ecuador
- April 2022 Invited speaker, graduate student roundtable, “Obstacles and Opportunities: The Changing Landscape of Fieldwork in Latin America,” University of Chicago
- October 2021 Invited colloquium participant, “Student Experience Panel” on disability and ableism, Crip*Colloquium, Krannert Art Museum, Illinois
- Dec. 2020 Invited conversation on migration and displacement in Ecuador, for Professor Ellen Moodie’s undergraduate course on “Introduction to Latin America,” Illinois
- Nov. 2015 Invited lecture, “Language and Culture in Ecuador,” for Professor Alison Carter’s undergraduate class, “Introduction to Anthropology,” Illinois
- October 2015 Invited lecture, “Language and Culture in Ecuador,” for Professor Gilberto Rosas’ undergraduate class on “Social Problems,” Illinois
- Feb. 2015 Invited lecture, “Language and Culture in Ecuador,” for Professor Brenda Farnell’s undergraduate class, “Language and Culture,” Illinois

TEACHING EXPERIENCE (at the University of Illinois unless otherwise indicated)

- Fall 2024 **Instructor of Record**, “Refugio, Desplazamiento y Derechos Humanos” (“Refuge, Displacement, and Human Rights”), for the graduate program in “International Migration, Refuge, and Human Rights,” FLACSO Ecuador
- Spring 2024 Graduate Assistant, Fine and Applied Arts 497: Crip* Research Internship
- Fall 2023 Graduate Assistant, Fine and Applied Arts 497: Crip* Research Internship

- Fall 2022 **Instructor of Record**, Anthropology 103 online: Anthropology in a Changing World
- Spring 2021 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 103 online: Anthropology in a Changing World
- Fall 2020 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 279: Business, Economy, and Society
- Summer 2020 **Instructor of Record**, Gender and Women's Studies 201: Race, Gender & Power
- Spring 2020 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 103 online: Anthropology in a Changing World; and Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 270: Language in Culture
- Spring 2019 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 246: Forensic Science
- Fall 2018 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 103 online: Anthropology in a Changing World
- Fall 2016 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 270: Language in Culture
- Spring 2016 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 230: Advanced Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology
- Fall 2015 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 101: Introduction to Anthropology
- Spring 2015 Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 270: Language in Culture

MENTORING EXPERIENCE

- 2023 – 2024 **Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program (URAP), Illinois:** 10-month mentorship program. For this program, I participated in interactive workshops on intentional mentorship and worked closely with an undergraduate student as she designed a research project about armed conflict, human rights violations, and forced displacement. I met regularly with my mentee to support her project, assign and discuss readings, set up meetings with a local librarian, and support the creation of a poster for the 2024 URAP research symposium (<https://undergradresearch.illinois.edu/symposium.html>).
- 2022 – 2023 **Learning Environments in Anthropology Disciplines (LEAD), Anthropology Department, Illinois:** 8-month program during which I engaged in one-on-one mentoring of a first-generation undergraduate student in the Department of

Anthropology at Illinois. I also worked with other LEAD graduate students to organize workshops for the entire undergraduate LEAD cohort that focused on CV-writing, job searching, graduate school applications, and other professionalization events.

PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Peer review service

- 2025 *Anthropology and Humanism*
2024 *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies; International Journal of Inclusive Education*

Volunteer service

- 2024–present **Student Councilor, Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology (SLACA):** This position involves attending SLACA meetings and participating in the business of the Committee, serving on sub-committees, and taking on special assignments for the Executive Committee.
- 2023 **Immigrant Services Champaign-Urbana (ISCU):** 2-month summer internship funded through a Mellon Foundation grant to support a local community organization. I conducted short-term research projects for ISCU on U.S. immigration and asylum policies, compiled a database of regional immigration and asylum lawyers, connected immigrants and asylum seekers with free legal services, attended board meetings, and completed other tasks in support of this organization.
- 2016 **Asylum Access, Quito, Ecuador:** 2-month Legal Advocate Internship, for which I participated in a training week for NGO volunteers, participated in workshops on refugees' rights, as well as issues related to working with people affected by armed conflict, conducted short-term research projects on migration and borders in Latin America, provided general office assistance, and provided occasional childcare for refugee families who visited the NGO, among other activities.

Student committee service

- 2025 Reader for the thesis by Ericka Daniela Poveda Lugo, for a “Specialization in International Migration, Refuge, and Human Rights”
Thesis: “Reconocimiento del desplazamiento interno en Ecuador y su impacto en el acceso a derechos: un análisis tras la declaratoria de Conflicto Armado Interno”

[“Recognition of Internal Displacement in Ecuador and its Impact on Accessing Rights: An Analysis Following the Declaration of Internal Armed Conflict”],
Department of Sociology and Gender Studies, FLACSO Ecuador

CREATIVE WORK

- Spring 2024 **“Cultivating Disability Joy,” School of Fine and Applied Arts, Illinois:** I organized and led a group of undergraduate interns in the creation of a semester-long project on disability joy. Our culminating event was a public presentation and interactive workshop, for which we collectively presented on local disabled artists, and guided participants through “disability joy” art making. We also held a public event on the UIUC campus that engaged community members in the creation of a collective mixed media collage related to disability joy. https://www.instagram.com/crip_asterisk/p/C6E8oZLxg2L/
- Fall 2023 **“An Accessible University Means...,” School of Fine and Applied Arts, Illinois:** I organized and led a group of undergraduate interns in the creation of a semester-long project about accessibility and the university. Our culminating project was the publication of a booklet that provided a creative and collaborative response to the statement, “An accessible university means...,” as well as a survey about experiences of disability and ableism on campus. Our culminating event of the semester was an accessible film screening (with live ASL interpretation and captioning) of *I Didn’t See You There*, by disabled filmmaker Reid Davenport. https://www.instagram.com/crip_asterisk/p/CzpGWeexHqD/?img_index=1
- 2022–2023 **Access Praxis, Illinois, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago:** Through a 10-month assistantship under the direction of Professor Liza Sylvestre, I collaborated with a small group of disabled scholar-activists on an experimental and accessible video collage that represents personal and collective experiences of disability and ableism. Our culminating event was a video exhibition and roundtable discussion, called “Access Praxis,” held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in April 2023: <https://visit.meachicago.org/events/access-praxis-cripistemology/>
- 2022-2023 **Cripistemology and the Arts, School of Fine and Applied Arts, Illinois:** As part of the same 10-month assistantship with Liza Sylvestre, I worked on an artistic project about representations of disability in the University Archives Disability-Related Digital Resources. This project involved curating a selection of historical images related to disability and wheelchair use at UIUC, and producing a series of creative and poetic image descriptions.

LANGUAGES

English: native language

Spanish: fluent in speaking, reading, writing, and listening

Portuguese: basic reading

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Anthropological Association

Association of Political and Legal Anthropology

Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology

Latin American Studies Association

FLACSO Ecuador, Anthropology Department (affiliated researcher during doctoral fieldwork)

HIAS Ecuador (affiliated researcher during doctoral fieldwork)