



Forrest Stuart
Graduate Fellowship Recipient

Forrest spent a majority of his childhood in San Bernardino, California. Many of his experiences growing up mixed-race – his mother is Mexican-American and his father is African-American – in an economically-depressed city has fundamentally shaped who he is today, and guides the position he strives to carve for himself in academia, from his teaching, to research and social activism. He owes much of his current aspirations to his mother, a high-school teacher, who was emphatic during his childhood that he “play” with his racial background, by cultivating deep friendships with a wide range of peers, and paying attention to the distinct cultural norms that separate groups along a host of social lines.

He received his bachelor’s degree in Politics and Legal Studies from the University of California Santa Cruz. While there, he had the opportunity to learn from influential scholars like Angela Davis, who taught him to critically analyze the often-invisible impacts that race and class have on communities like those found in his hometown. He began working in prisoners’ advocacy and began several years of work as an investigator for various public defenders’ offices. This work continued throughout his master’s program in Justice, Law, and Society at the American University in Washington, DC. Here, he learned the important role that politics has on the construction of criminality in marginalized communities. He returned home to Southern California in 2006 in the hopes of utilizing his schooling to improve conditions here. Since beginning the Sociology Ph.D. program at UCLA, he has found opportunities to fuse his passion for social activism with academic research. For several years, he has worked with local unions on the development of novel strategies to empower immigrant and African-American workers that were formerly excluded from the organized labor movement. More recently, he has turned his attention to Skid Row, working with grassroots organizations to empower homeless and low-income residents to fight for equal and just treatment from the police and city officials. Teaching has played a major role in this effort, as he has looked for ways to fuse undergraduate education and civic engagement to push social activism even further.