

LEANNA FIRST-ARAI

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EDUCATION

PhD Candidate in Geography — University College Dublin (Jan 2023-)

MA in Latin American Studies — Tulane University (2016)

Thesis: *Poco Memorable o Inolvidable: Rereading the Roots and Reverberations of the 1954 Banana Workers' Strike in Honduras.*

BA in History — University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (2011)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Environmental health, social ecology

Just sustainabilities, urban planning, green gentrification

Environmental and climate-focused social movements

Participatory GIS, community-engaged research

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Current position: PhD Researcher, UCD School of Geography; Independent Journalist

(2020-2022) Associate Teacher of Spanish, the State University of New York, Oswego, NY

(2019) ESL Teacher, Hopeworks, Memphis, TN

(2014-2018) ESL Teacher and Advisor, The NET Charter High School, New Orleans, LA

(2015-2018) Board Member, The Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans, New Orleans, LA

(2012-2013) General Assignment Reporter, New England Public Radio (NPR), Springfield, MA

(2010-2011) Writing Workshop Facilitator, Prison Creative Arts Project, Ann Arbor, MI

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Publications

First-Arai, Leanna (2010). “Failed linkages: Detroit’s people mover in the context of a southeast Michigan regional transportation system,” *Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design*, (4): 65-68.

Sample of Journalistic Work

[We Glow In the Dark](#). *The Margin*, September 21, 2022.

[How the oil and gas industry is trying to hold US public schools hostage](#). *The Guardian*, May 4, 2022.

[Here’s How the Biden Administration Can Prevent Needless Deaths From Pollution](#). *Truthout*, February 14, 2022.

[A ‘false solution’? How crypto mining became the oil industry’s new hope](#). *The Guardian*, December 16, 2021.

[Biogas from America’s favorite meat: pollution solution or a prop for poultry?](#) *The Food and Environment Reporting Network*, December 13, 2021.

[Will taxpayers bear the cost of cleaning up America’s abandoned oil wells?](#) *The Guardian*, September 21, 2021.

[Many Agricultural Workers Still Can’t Get COVID Vaccine as Growing Season Begins](#). *Truthout*, March 16, 2021.

[Pipeline tells Black Memphis landowners: sell us the rights to your land or get sued](#). *The Guardian*, April 22, 2021.

[Ecosystem Destruction Fueled the Pandemic. Pollution Has Made It Worse](#). *Truthout*, December 30, 2020.

[Even in Death, Black Bodies Face Environmental Racism](#). *Truthout*, July 10, 2020.

[Pipeline through the heart: A Black neighborhood’s uphill battle against oil developers](#). *MLK50 + Southerly*, September 10, 2020.

[How Soil Acts as a Living Witness to Racial Violence](#). *Yes! Magazine*, February 27, 2019.

[Entergy Gas Plant Evokes New Orleans Legacy of Environmental Racism](#). *Sierra Magazine*, May 9, 2018.

RECENT CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

“How much healthier without highways? Measuring and mapping respiratory and mental health changes when ‘freeway fighters’ win.” *International Geographical Conference* (Dublin, Ireland) August 2024.

“Streetless maps and data gaps: leveraging digital maps to resist racist development in Memphis, Tennessee.” *Conference of Irish Geographers* (Wexford, Ireland) May 17, 2023.

“Beyond superfund sites and strange fruit: mapping, naming and reframing unequal exposure as ‘environmental lynching’ in Memphis, Tennessee.” *Irish Association of American Studies Annual Conference* (Limerick, Ireland) April 28, 2023.

INVITED TALKS AND INTERVIEWS

“Environmental Justice and the Scholarship-Journalism-Activist Nexus.” *The Scholar Activist Network* (Online) July 13, 2023.

“Bitcoin Goes Greenwashing.” *The Scam Economy Podcast* ([Online](#)) April 8, 2022.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Stone Center Tinker Summer Field Research Award - Tulane University 2015
Funding for a two-week research trip to Honduras to conduct oral histories and archival work.

Shapiro Undergraduate Research Award - University of Michigan 2011
Received honorable mention for project entitled: *Urban Exacerbation: The Ineffectiveness of Drug Treatment and Law Enforcement in 1970's Detroit*.

LANGUAGES

English: Native

Spanish: Fluent

Galician: Functional

REFERENCES

Dr. Jeremy Auerbach (PhD supervisor)
Assistant Professor of Geography
University College Dublin
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Dr. Guadalupe García (MA supervisor)
Associate Professor of History
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