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CSUF celebrates Hispanic and Latinx Heritage Month

By Alec Calvillo

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(Alec Calvillo / Daily Titan)

In honor of Hispanic and Latinx Heritage Month, Cal State Fullerton held a reception in the Titan Student Union Monday.

Julián Jefferies, associate professor of literacy and reading, shared his story about his six-month journey studying individuals who returned to Mexico after living in Central America. This included their reintegration into the school system and adaptation to a

new way of life.

Jefferies said he met many young immigrants during his stay in Mexico who came from other countries in Central America.

One individual he met, said he had to leave his home in Honduras because he was threatened to join a gang. Jefferies said he was taken by surprise when the Honduras native asked Jefferies how life is in the United States.

“Should I tell him about life as an undocumented immigrant here in the U.S.? The day-to-day fear of being deported, fear of leaving the house, fear of being stopped by police?” Jefferies said in his speech.



(Alec Calvillo/ Daily Titan)

The celebration was put on by Vincent Vigil, interim director for Diversity Initiatives & Resource Centers. Vigil said he chose Jefferies as their speaker partly because he challenges students to learn about their roots.

“He has really engaged the students to think outside of the box,” Vigil said.

Jefferies said children of immigrants should find out what made their parents or grandparents risk a dangerous journey and leave loved ones behind in their emigration to the U.S.

He said it is important for Hispanics to care about their heritage because of the issues they face.

“(You’re) living in a contradiction where you’re not wanted by police, by immigration authorities, by public opinion. At the same time being sought after by the construction industry, by the landscaping business, by the cleaning and restaurant business who depend on undocumented labor to maximize their profits,” Jefferies said in his speech.

Jefferies said that although being Latino is a “beautiful thing,” Latinos are still a minority and are exploited.

“Our community is under attack with deportations, separating our families. This didn’t start with Trump, it started much before. Actually, Obama was the one that deported the most. We’re being negatively represented in the press. None of our stories are told in Hollywood,” Jefferies said.

Fram Virjee, interim CSUF president, said Hispanic and Latinx Heritage Month is a celebration of diversity, which is important for a university to thrive and be successful.

“This is a month where we pause, where we contemplate, where we commemorate, the rich culture and integral nature of Hispanic and Latinx heritage here at Cal State Fullerton,” Virjee said.



(Alec Calvillo/ Daily Titan)

Jesus Llanes, CSUF transfer student, said he could relate to immigrants who returned to Mexico after coming to the U.S., because he was once in their shoes.

Llanes said he decided he would go to the event to celebrate his culture and see what the presentation was about after receiving an email invitation. The email highlighted how Hispanics are returning to their countries and are having to reintegrate into the school system.

“That happened to me, I went back to Mexico and I had to relearn Spanish again,” Llanes said.

Llanes said he came to the U.S. at the age of five. He took a vacation to Mexico in 2007 when he was entering sixth grade, but his visa was stolen and he wasn’t able to return for a year. “Being Hispanic is just my culture,” Llanes said. “It’s a privilege to be a Hispanic.”