



Napier News - Spring 2026

An E-Newsletter for Friends and Supporters of The Napier Initiative at Pilgrim Place

Napier Celebration Commemorates Intergenerational Leadership



The **Napier Initiative** hosted its annual Celebration Event on April 11, welcoming more than 200 guests to Pilgrim Place to honor its intergenerational learning programs. With a theme of "Together We Turn the World," this year's event honored 11 Napier Fellows from The Claremont Colleges and their Pilgrim Place resident mentors, as well as those connected to intergenerational courses held in partnership with The Claremont Colleges. Zumaya Toussaint-Farrell and Nathan Flores, both from Pomona College, were named as this year's Minus Awardees, each receiving a \$20,000 grant to conduct fellowship projects that align with Pilgrim Place's values of justice, peace, and care for the earth. Daniel Fernández from Claremont McKenna College was named the Troxell Prize Awardee.

"At the heart of our Napier Initiative are dreamers, doers, and donors who create a community of action and support," shared Napier Council Chair Mary Elizabeth Moore at the event. "This includes the whole community gathered here, and the

long line of fellows, faculty, and students who continue their support of Napier in countless ways.”

[READ MORE ABOUT THIS YEAR’S FELLOWS](#)

[VIEW CELEBRATION PROGRAM](#)

A Napier Fellow Working for Social Justice



Contributed by Paul Turner, Napier Communications Chair

Following her B.A. from Pomona College, 2020 Napier Awardee Alejandra Davila obtained a master’s in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government. Today, she serves as a front-line social justice advocate as a policy analyst at the Fines and Fees Justice Center (FFJC) in New York City.

Prior to joining the FFJC, Alejandra was an advocate for students in the juvenile justice system at the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL), where she collaborated with students on academic plans as they re-entered their communities and schools. “I witnessed the systemic failures of an underfunded education system and a biased criminal justice system. Many of my students would miss school to help their parents with childcare, work an extra shift in construction, or participate in the informal economy.” She noted that her students’ absence from the education system and their prolonged presence in the justice system were linked to their exclusion from financial stability.

It was at the NCYL that Alejandra first learned of the movement to end fines and fees. Prior to 2018, California charged youth and their families for detention, public counsel, electronic monitoring, probation, and supervision services. “The very same juvenile justice system that claimed to ‘rehabilitate’ was actually part of a larger system trapping young people in a cycle of debt, instead of creating genuine pathways toward economic mobility,” said Alejandra. Yet, amid the systemic cracks, community organizers were able to secure several wins: in 2018, California became the first state to eliminate all fees in juvenile justice cases and, by 2020, California had forgiven over \$360 million in outstanding

juvenile court debt. “I saw the impact of this legislation up close, witnessing the relief that washed over my students and their families once they learned they had one less bill to pay.”

It was a full-circle moment, then, when Alejandra joined the Policy & Research team at the FFJC. Founded in 2018, the organization was born from the “desire to end the harmful practice of running our justice system off the backs of those with the least ability to pay,” said Alejandra, who advances legislative and fiscal analysis of fines and fees reform to support local, state, and national advocacy efforts to end the cycle of debt and punishment.

“I am proud to be part of the larger movement to end fees in the adult criminal justice system,” said Alejandra, who collaborates with organizers and policymakers to reimagine the system that has kept one in three Americans trapped in court debt over the last ten years. “I believe in common-sense policymaking: ending the practice of suspending driver’s licenses for failure to pay fines and fees; wiping out uncollectible criminal justice debt; and encouraging governments to stop profiting off punishment.”

READ MORE ABOUT ALEJANDRA’S WORK

If you are a past Napier Fellow, we’d love to hear from you! Email advancement@pilgrimplace.org about what you’re doing now so we can share in future communications.

JOIN NAPIER FELLOWS LINKEDIN GROUP

The Napier Gift: Longtime Napier Volunteer Leader Reflects on His Experience



Contributed by Dick Johnson, Napier Communications Committee

For the past 10 years, The Napier Initiative has captured my interest and imagination. Religion, Ethics and Social Practice, a course I took in 2015, put me in a class with students who seriously sought ways for their values to inform their

careers and lives. They were joined by elders from the community, including me, who might serve as resources and perhaps model what they wished to become.

Something occurred during that semester that made me realize how significant the Napier experience might be. In our class, I noticed one student who barely participated. She appeared to distrust the idealism that often filled the class. We played a game that allowed participants to either share resources or amass them for themselves; she chose the latter. At each class, one member delivered a brief autobiographical presentation. As we neared the end of the semester, this student had yet to do so.

One day, our class welcomed members of Homeboy Industries, the famous Los Angeles project of Father Gregory Boyle, dedicated to rescuing gang members from their previous lives and setting them on a path of self-worth and fulfillment. Several program participants told their stories, filled with raw, devastating, and heartbreaking experiences. They told how they had found a place and a family at Homeboy Industries.

After these individuals spoke, this young woman began to speak. It was a tale of an absent father and an abusive mother who dragged her from country to country. Her story indicated that she had never felt loved. While most of us sat there, stunned by her story, those from Homeboy Industries immediately knew who she was, down to the very depths. They surrounded her. "Come to Homeboy," they implored her. "We'll take care of you. You'll be fine." They had little idea what college was, but they knew who this girl was. They knew what she had suffered, what she needed, and what they could give her. When I told this story at the annual Napier celebration, I concluded by saying that I saw a life saved that day.

Another marvelous part of the Napier experience belongs to the Fellows, students who received encouragement and support for their proposed projects that further the Napier values of peacemaking, social justice, and caring for our fragile earth. It's hard to measure the value of these projects, for they often become markers along a path of larger dreams. In 2011, Takako Mino, one of the first Napier Fellows, received funds to help her teach debate to young schoolgirls in Uganda. Her dreams and her sense of possibilities have continued to grow. Today, she is the co-founder of the first liberal arts college in Uganda, enrolling its first class this fall. Today, over 150 Fellows have inspired us while being themselves inspired by what can be done.

Napier has the power to change lives. It has the power to affirm the hopes and dreams of young people and to stir alive again the dreams and hopes of elders. While I have decided to retire from the Napier Council this year, it has been the most important and rewarding experience of my life.

My Napier Experience: A First-Time Elder Student



Contributed by Sue Talbot

“College town.” These two words kept coming to mind when, three years ago, I began my search for a senior living community. Of course, I was mainly looking for a beautiful environment, lifelong health care, decent food, and interesting people. But also, there was that little voice in the back of my mind saying, “In a college town, you could probably take college classes—even though you are now an older person and your brain hasn’t heard the words ‘homework,’ research paper,’ or ‘exams’ in over 50 years.”

When I ultimately ended up at Mt. San Antonio Gardens in Claremont, it wasn’t long before I got wind of the Napier Initiative as one possibility for auditing classes at The Claremont Colleges. I was intrigued by the notion that this would be more than an auditing experience—Napier classes are “intergenerational” and “interactive,” and elders enrolled in the classes are expected to fully engage in the learning process alongside undergraduate students. Intriguing, yes, and a bit intimidating. I come from the Pre-Critical Thinking era of pedagogy, and I know very well how brilliant today’s students are. Could I hold my own and make any kind of small contribution?

When I saw that a Claremont McKenna history class, Histories of Second-Wave Feminism, was added to Napier’s class offerings last spring, I was overjoyed and signed up immediately. It had never occurred to me that I could actually take a history class that dealt directly with MY OWN LIVED HISTORY—a period of time that was a defining era in my life. So exciting!

And yes, it was everything I could have hoped for. There were three Napier elders in the class, along with 18 undergraduate students; it was taught seminar-style, with very little lecture and lots of discussion (both in small groups and as a whole class). Instead of a paper and final, we had in-depth reading homework and a short quiz every week. There was one group project, several dynamic guest speakers, and an oral history project. The professor [Diana Selig] was fabulous, and all my fellow students were fun and inspiring. Best of all, not only did I get to revel in nostalgia, I also learned so much about the 60s and 70s that I knew little about, despite having been in the middle of it all. It was just fascinating to look at my history from the perspective of 50 years later, through the eyes of people who were not even alive at the time.

Building Bridges: Pilgrim Place Recognized by Draper Center



Pilgrim Place was honored to receive the Bridge Builder Award from the Draper Center for Community Partnerships at Pomona College. Presented at the Center's annual Community Engagement Awards Ceremony, this award recognizes a community partner that has demonstrated a commitment to facilitating sustainable and collaborative relationships between the Pomona College community and other internal or external communities. Pilgrim Place was nominated for this award by Pomona students in recognition of its work with Orientation Adventure last August and the Pilgrim Exchange, an intergenerational club through which Pomona College students connect with Pilgrim Place residents. These activities include Castle Café social gatherings each Friday, as well as events with poetry reading, film viewing, and memorializing Martin Luther King, Jr. These efforts build upon Pilgrim Place's intergenerational learning foundation, **The Napier Initiative**, in partnership with The Claremont Colleges.

Two Napier Fellows Return to Pilgrim Place



This spring, two Napier Fellows returned to Pilgrim Place to share about their respective work in social justice. 2025 Napier Awardee Natasha Yen presented on May 12 about her youth empowerment and community development efforts in Soweto, South Africa. A few weeks later, 2011 Napier Awardee Takako Mino presented about Musizi University, the first liberal arts college in Uganda, which she co-founded. Musizi will enroll its first class this fall. Takako's Napier fellowship

project focused on teaching debate to young students in Uganda, sharpening their skills in analyzing and influencing current events.

Your tax-deductible contribution directly supports
The Napier Initiative, including student projects, intergenerational courses,
and mentoring. Gifts of all sizes make a difference and ensure these
enriching experiences, now and in the future.

GIVE NOW



COA# 226 | DSS# 197607628 | DHS#950000084