

The Importance of Unlearning



Diane DeVore kicks off the 2024-25 student luncheons hosted by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Diane DeVore (formerly Hernandez-Olortiga) has achieved some notable “firsts.” She’s a first-generation college student, the first member of her family to come out as queer, and a first-generation Latina in her family in the United States.

An academic advisor at Clark, DeVore shared her story at the first Queer Student Luncheon of the academic year on October 8. The free event is presented each term by Clark’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to create community for students who identify as queer and allies.



The luncheon provides food and community for students and employees.

DeVore grew up in Compton and Long Beach, California, and lived in a household committed to traditional gender norms, including her father who holds machismo world views. She was outed to her family when her father read her Myspace messages with her girlfriend. She said, “I was never afraid of myself, but I was scared of the world around me.” She was shaped by the pressure to come out early to a family that was not accepting.

When she had the opportunity to move out of her parents’ home, she took it. In college, she met queer and Indigenous mentors who allowed her to unlearn the gender norms and colonial thinking she grew up with. “In the queer community, especially, we ask ourselves hard questions... just by existing we are pushing against these boundaries every day.”

Her college journey was non-traditional. She dropped out twice but eventually earned her master’s degree in a primarily online program. She said “It’s okay to take breaks and step back. You’re not on anyone’s timeline but your own.”

When asked how her queer and Latina identities intersected, she said, “It took more unlearning than learning because of the machismo culture.”

Now, her relationship with her family is stable, she’s recently married, and she works at Clark helping students like herself navigate college.



Students had the opportunity to ask DeVore questions.

She left students with three pieces of advice:

- “In the queer community, we are never really alone.”
- “Give yourself the space to grow and figure out who you want to become and unbecome.”
- “Together our stories help build for the next generation of queer community.”

Upcoming ODEI Luncheons

- October 22 @ noon: Students with Disability Luncheon in

PUB 161

- November 12 @ noon: Students of Color Luncheon in PUB 161

Connect with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI)

- In-person: Diversity Center, Gaiser Hall 214
- Phone: 360-992-2292
- Email: diversity@clark.edu
- Website



lunch is served



students attend the luncheon



DeVore answers questions



DeVore tells her story



employees also attend



students ask questions

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley