



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
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Contact: Angela Daidone
201-684-7477
news@ramapo.edu

Ramapo College Student Earns Top Research Award on Environmental Harm to Ramapough Nation

MAHWAH, N.J. -- Ramapo College student Jenna Regenthal '21 was awarded first place from the 2020 New Jersey Women's and Gender Studies Consortium (NJWGSC) for her research paper that examined the devastating toxic environmental impact that has affected the Ramapough Lenape Nation.

Jenna's paper, titled "Environmental Reproductive Justice for Indigenous Communities: A Case Study on the Ramapough Nation," brings to light the Ramapough people's continuing struggle to achieve justice on several social issues and the negative health outcomes suffered by the community.

"I wanted my research paper to incorporate two of my greatest political interests: reproductive justice and environmental justice. There is considerable overlap between these two social issues, yet our legislation fails to reflect their intersections," said Jenna, a political science major with a minor in human rights and genocide studies. "As a result, many people find themselves lost in the periphery -- struggling to achieve justice without a legal framework that properly addresses their circumstances," adding that while she cannot claim to truly know the experiences of the Ramapough people, her goal was to "provide support as an ally and to amplify the voices of those leading the fight for environmental reproductive justice."

"Doing the research for this paper was a bit difficult because of the subject matter. It is heartbreaking to read about all the lives cut short by contaminant-related illnesses and to see the many ways in which the Ramapoughs were let down by the institutions that were supposed to protect them," said Jenna.

Ramapo Assistant Professor of Political Science Amanda Roberti, who was Jenna's faculty mentor for the project, said she wasn't aware that prizes would be awarded at the Consortium, which was cancelled due to the Covid-19 restrictions. However, she was not surprised that the NJWGSC recognized Jenna's work.

“Jenna's paper highlighted her masterful critical analytical skills with an intersectional lens on a topic that is so often understudied, namely environmental and reproductive justice in Native American communities,” said Roberti. “It's prime for recognition. This award is prestigious coming from a state-based, field-specific consortium.”

Jenna initially wrote the paper for Roberti's Sex and Reproduction course last fall. When Roberti learned the NJWGSC was accepting submissions for original research, she encouraged Jenna to participate.

“The students were free to pick a topic that they could do an intersectional policy analysis on. This means that they would have to explore the gender, race, ethnic, etc. dynamics of a policy issue. Jenna decided to go local because she had some experience working with environmental justice groups,” Roberti said.

“I'm thrilled with the award,” said Jenna. “I had been mourning the fact that I couldn't actually present at the Consortium because it was cancelled but so grateful to have been accepted. Being awarded first place is like the cherry on top.”

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Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The College is ranked #1 among New Jersey public institutions by College Choice, and is recognized as a top college by *U.S. News & World Report*, *Kiplinger's*, Princeton Review and *Money* magazine, among others. Ramapo College is also distinguished as a Career Development College of Distinction by CollegesofDistinction.com, boasts the best campus housing in New Jersey on Niche.com, and is designated a “Military Friendly College” in Victoria Media's *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Business Administration, Data Science, Educational Technology, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education.