

The 2023 ETMU Awards

ETMU chairperson's speech and press release

Introduction

Every year, ETMU grants the ETMU Award as a recognition to individuals and communities who have done significant work in the fields of ethnic relations and international migration, in Finland and beyond. The award recipients can be academics, researchers, students, NGOs, activists, artists, spiritual leaders, collectives, and so on. Nominations for the Award are sent by ETMU members to the ETMU board.

This year, the ETMU board has received altogether four nominations for four individuals and collectives who have done undoubtedly precious work in the areas of ETMU's activities. Despite the many negative developments and injustices that we can witness in Finland and in the world right now, we hope that remembering that there are many great individuals and communities acting for a fairer society can nurture hope and inspire more people.

Considering that there are several urgent fundamental questions in Finland and in the world right now, and inspired by the fact that this year ETMU has turned twenty years old, the ETMU board has decided to slightly change the practice related to the ETMU Award, thus enabling the possibility of granting every year a dual Award: an Award for individuals and collectives speaking mostly to/from academia, and an Award for individuals and collectives speaking mostly to/from other parts of society. By doing so, the board does not mean to reproduce dichotomies between academia, on the one end, and activism, arts, or other such dimensions, on the other end. On the contrary, we believe academic work is fundamental for the production of knowledge towards a just society; likewise, we see that lots of critical knowledge and praxis are produced and enacted outside of academia, too. Like conference co-chair Johanna Ennser-Kananen said in her opening speech to this ETMU conference, we need each other within and beyond the communities we inhabit.

The 2023 ETMU Academic Award

The recipient of the 2023 ETMU Academic Award has received many nominations for the Award over the years, and for excellent reasons. They have been devoting invaluable life-long work to questions of gender, racism, activism, politics of belonging, nationhood and multiculturalism.

As stated in the nomination letter, this person has introduced, translated and grounded in the Finnish context an array of essential concepts, and greatly advanced critical race and whiteness studies as a discipline. In addition, she masters both academic, popularising and other languages in an impressive fashion, and has importantly engaged with various media. The number of projects that this scholar has been leading, supported by prestigious Finnish, Nordic and international funds, is remarkable; and through her leadership, this awardee has facilitated the important work of many younger scholars. She has also been active in numerous national, regional and international research networks. Last but not least, she has experience of working on issues that are at the core of knowledge and justice both within and outside of academia.

Personally, I have had the pleasure to witness the kindness and modesty of this person and her selfless commitment to collective learning – and un-learning.

The 2023 ETMU Societal Award

The recipient of this year's ETMU Societal Award formally started their activities a bit over two years ago, but the constant work they have been doing and the significance of such work are much greater than this timespan. They have increased public awareness about the humanity, history, culture of Palestinians and Palestine, and drawn attention to questions such as who speaks about Palestine, from where to where, and how.

They have been tirelessly producing and sharing knowledge that is critical, actionable and accessible. As mentioned in the nomination letter, they have been creating communal spaces and relations of care, grieving, hope, love and change - all this in the current phase of the seventy-five-years-old process of physical and epistemic erasure of the Palestinian people at the hands of the state of Israel, the nearly twenty-years-old siege on Gaza, years of escalating Zionist violence and the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people.

Many of the communities and institutions we inhabit have been silent and silencing the calls for ceasefire, for protecting all civilian lives, and for supporting the freedom of Palestinians. Knowing some of the patterns of such silencing, and thinking of the contributions that we have witnessed during this ETMU conference, I would like everybody to ask ourselves: when did "migrants' and exiles' lives matter" ever mean "citizens' lives don't matter"? When did "Romani lives matter" mean "majority Finns' lives" don't matter? When did "Palestinians' lives matter" ever mean "Jewish or Israeli lives don't matter"? And why should speaking up for one cause ever mean dismissing all other causes? In colonialism, racism, capitalism, nationalism and patriarchy only the lives of a few matter. These are structures that we all navigate, that some try to resist and unmake, while others benefit from them. All forms of oppressions are intertwined. For liberation, we need each other. There are no losers in liberations. The only loss is privilege, and privilege should be lost, as it is an integral part of oppression.

The 2023 ETMU Awardees

ETMU believes that, if everybody, including our communities, journalists, university decision-makers, the Finnish government, and beyond, read and shared the works of these two awardees, Finland and the world could be a better place. These Awards are our way to express our gratitude, respect and love to the 2023 ETMU Academic and Societal Award recipients respectively: warm congratulations to Professor Suvi Keskinen and Palestinian Voices in Finland!