



IWALEWA OLORUNYOMI



WHY DID YOU APPLY?

“I applied for the Ceny Walker Travel Grant to support my ethnographic fieldwork in Brownsville, Texas, where I was investigating SpaceX’s operations and their impact on the predominantly Latinx community in the Rio Grande Valley. My thesis research required traveling to conduct interviews with residents, environmental activists, and Indigenous leaders, and the grant made this fieldwork financially possible.”

PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF WHAT YOU DID WITH YOUR SCHOLARSHIP OR GRANT.

“I used the grant to cover travel and accommodation costs for my fieldwork in Brownsville during summer 2025. I interviewed residents about their experiences with SpaceX’s presence, spoke with environmental activists, and met with Indigenous leaders concerned about the company’s impact on their communities and sacred sites. This fieldwork forms the foundation of my MA thesis, which examines how SpaceX produces “desubjectified futures,” symbolically including local communities in multiplanetary progress narratives while materially excluding them from decision-making and resource distribution.”

AWARD: Ceny Walker Graduate Travel Grant

- **MAJOR:** Anthropology
- **YEAR:** Second-year M.A.

HOW DID THIS SCHOLARSHIP OR GRANT HELP YOU?

“The Ceny Walker Travel Grant was essential to completing my thesis research. It covered my travel expenses and accommodation, making it financially feasible to spend time in the Rio Grande Valley conducting ethnographic work. Without this funding, I would not have been able to afford the on-the-ground research that is central to my project. The grant allowed me to build relationships with community members and gather the nuanced qualitative data that you simply cannot obtain remotely.”

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR FUTURE APPLICANTS?

“Be clear and specific about how the travel directly supports your research goals. Explain not just where you’re going, but why being there matters for your project and what questions you can only answer through in-person fieldwork. Additionally, break down your budget realistically to show you’ve thought through costs like travel and accommodation.”