

## **Background**

My interest in development and labor economics stems from lifelong pursuit to help those with less power than I have been granted. I saw this inequality first-hand as a high school science teacher through Teach for America. I taught two classes for students who had all failed Biology in the previous year. Getting to know the students and seeing the effects of many years of teachers giving up on them profoundly affects my understanding of the education and labor market. When our school was forced to make significant gains or else be taken over by the state, I saw the very real tension between students' and teachers' interests. How do we ensure lessons are differentiated, so every student has the potential to succeed while still allowing teachers to have a sustainable work-life balance? The education system had failed my students up to that point, and so my research interests lay at the heart of how to solve these problems.

## **Contributions to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion during Graduate School**

When I entered the research phase of the PhD, it quickly became clear there was highly unequal access to support across the graduate students, especially within the development field. If a student wanted to collect original data or conduct an RCT, they would need to raise grant funds and partner with a local research agency. For students without existing faculty connections, navigating this "unwritten" curriculum was a huge barrier. During my fourth year, I began receiving frequent questions from students in younger cohorts on these aspects of the PhD. However, I noticed some students, especially those who were not from the US, did not know who to go to for those answers. I did not want their success to be dependent on knowing the right graduate student or faculty member. As a result, I founded a group dedicated to helping Berkeley graduate students with aspects of the research process, which are not part of the formal curriculum but key to the research process. We created a 20-page document to serve as a guide for incoming 3rd years and held quarterly meetings to support students on these issues.

As a development economist, I believe an integral part of my job is to train and empower the next generation of development economists, who will hopefully more closely reflect the subjects of our research. During graduate school, I worked closely to mentor a fantastic group of RAs from Pakistan and India who have now gone on the graduate programs in Europe and the US or have taken jobs in government and INGOs. I worked especially close with the Center for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP), providing trainings, informational interviews, and coaching sessions for research assistants across many of CERP's research projects, beyond my own.

## **Future Plans**

Development economics has a checkered history, including racism, xenophobia, and colonialism. While the field has made some strides in the last few decades, much more can be done to ensure development economics serves those who it is meant to benefit. As an Assistant Professor, I would do my best to leverage that position of power to serve those who have less.

Concretely, I plan to take the following steps:

- *Research:* I commit to having at least one co-author on every project from the country I am working in. This is crucial to improve the quality of the research and ensure there are no unintended consequences. All four of my current co-authored papers include co-authors that grew up and/or currently live in the country we study.
- *Teaching:* Being able to teach development economics is a fantastic platform to challenge xenophobic and racist ideas that students may have been exposed to previously. However, some older development economics reinforces the developed/developing divide, so I intend to ensure my syllabus has been vetted to properly deal with these issues.
- *Hiring and mentoring:* I intend to continue hiring and mentoring research staff and BIPOC students and those from low-income countries.