How do you see Caltech growing as it relates to inclusion and diversity? I believe in my heart of hearts that love, respect, curiosity, and caring will win over pettiness, anger, small-mindedness, and bigotry. But the work of hope and the labor of love is as slow as it is meaningful. So while Caltech struggles to make institutional changes to embrace change, I am most proud of and excited about all the spaces I see popping up around campus for communities supporting one another. I think that it is these bonds of camaraderie that are the strongest bridge to growth for all of us.

What does receiving this award mean to you? I’m honored and humbled to be recognized by a community that I hold so near and dear. The greatest reward for my work is feeling a sense of community with all of you. I feel profoundly grateful to be appreciated by the very people who have inspired me and made me feel connected to something meaningful here at Caltech.
How do you see Caltech growing as it relates to inclusion and diversity?

Part of my job is to think about Caltech historically. Caltech’s history has not been one of consistent progress towards greater inclusion, diversity, or justice, but rather of continually shifting distributions of resources and respect. […] These past 12 months have been equally important in the history of inclusion and exclusion at Caltech. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, in June 2020 Black Caltech faculty, staff, and students convened events to share their experiences of injustice and exclusion. […] This organizing has led to formal commitments from Caltech’s leaders, and to what appears to be some real successes in recruiting. It also inspired many others, myself included, to be more vocal, active, and engaged in efforts to make Caltech a more just institution. Caltech’s future will depend on how we organize ourselves to sustain these greater commitments.

What does receiving this award mean to you? This award means, first of all, an opportunity to express gratitude to the many Caltech students, postdocs, staff, and faculty more courageous than I who have spoken about experiences and histories of injustice, especially the members of the BSEC and allied organizations. It is also an opportunity to thank my many collaborators over in programming events related to histories of diversity and justice. […]
What does this award mean to you? Response continued:

Last summer, I and my Caltech Archives colleagues Heidi Aspaturian, Loma Karklins, Elisa Piccio, and Judith Goodstein presented "Becoming Caltech, 1910–1930: Presentations from the Archives" after we closed our related exhibition due to COVID-19. (We're looking forward to opening it again in the fall, and hope you'll visit it in the Beckman Institute.) I particularly want to thank Elisa here for her contributions “Women at Early Caltech” and “The Cosmopolitan Club and Students of Color,” which convey how women and people of color participated in Caltech even in its most exclusionary moments. Building on that experience, I collaborated with HSS faculty Maura Dykstra, Jennifer Jahner, and Hillary Mushkin to organize “Critical Intersections: Conversations on History, Race, and Science.” One goal of the series was to provide the Caltech community some tools from the humanities for grappling with injustices in Caltech’s own history and the questions of how to address them raised by BSEC’s request that Caltech rename buildings. We moved outward over the year from Caltech’s own historical entanglements with the movement for eugenic sterilization to broader discussions of the use of science to create and maintain hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability. In addition to my co-organizers, I’m grateful to the 37 other presenters who shared their expertise throughout the series, and particularly to the 11 Caltech students and postdocs who presented at "Sitting Down with Uncomfortable Things in the Caltech Archives," which was a highlight of my career. I do not think that programming or education alone can create justice. I do think, though, that understanding the history of Caltech, and the history of science, can help us understand how our predecessors chose to distribute their resources and respect, and thus who has those assets now and who has been denied them. It can be a step towards deciding to redistribute them differently.