Carol Edelman Warrior, assistant professor of English in the College of Arts and Sciences, died July 4, 2018 in Montana. She was 56.

Dr. Warrior’s scholarship centered on Native American, First Nations and Alaska Native literatures, indigenous philosophies, worldviews and critical theory. She researched the “fearsome” in indigenous literatures and representation, as well as the formation and assertion of indigenous group identity and sovereignty outside of the treaty context.

“Carol was a bright light in our department and our college. Her brilliance and expertise was only matched by her kindness and generosity,” said Ella Diaz, associate professor of English and Latina/o studies. Gretchen Ritter, the former Harold Tanner Dean of Arts and Sciences, called Dr.Warrior “one of the rising stars of our faculty.”

In 2018, Dr.Warrior was recognized as an inspirational mentor by a Merrill Presidential Scholar. “She managed to strike a rare balance between generosity and rigor, kindness and tough-mindedness, and I
know she made a huge difference in the lives of a number of students,” said Derek Chang, associate professor of history and Asian American studies. “She’ll be missed.”

Dr. Warrior began at Cornell as a postdoctoral fellow in 2016 and became assistant professor in 2017. She taught Introduction to Native American Literature, Native American Poetry of Resistance and Indigenous Literary Criticism and Theory.

Prior to Cornell, Dr. Warrior was an instructor in the departments of English and of American Indian Studies at the University of Washington. In 2008, she was a fellow of the Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program at the University of Washington.

Born March 19, 1962, Dr. Warrior was enrolled with the Ninilchik Village Tribe and was of Alutiiq (Sugpiaq), Dena’ina Athabascan and A’aniiih (Gros Ventre) descent. She was committed to indigenous community-building and activism and was involved with gathering and processing traditional foods and medicine, visiting indigenous communities for relationship-building and ceremony and helping with urban Native American youth organizations. At Cornell, Dr. Warrior was actively involved in the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program and served as an adviser for indigenous graduate students at Cornell, and as a faculty fellow for Akwe:kon Residential Hall.

“Carol’s approach to life was wholistic in the indigenous way, seeking balance in all things, extending kinship to all the life around her. As such, she had a deep commitment to social justice. It is people like Carol, and they are rare, who are the conscience of the institutions within which they work. Her loss to Cornell, then, goes much deeper than her admirable scholarship, advising and teaching. It is of a profound moral, ethical, and political dimension,” said Eric Cheyfitz, the Ernest I. White Professor of American Studies and Humane Letters and former director of the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program.

In a script for the “What Makes Us Human?” podcast, Dr. Warrior
reframed the question as, “What does it mean to be a human being in the world as we know it?” The answer, she wrote, “can be found in indigenous value systems, since concern for all relations in that web of life, and those who will come after us, are paramount, and are foremost in our minds.”

Said Sofia Villenas, associate professor in the Department of Anthropology: “She lived out her scholarship in her relationships with others and the natural world. Carol was all about love, healing, resistance, relationships, and community.”

Dr. Warrior received an M.A. in 2010 and a Ph.D. in 2015 in English language and literature from the University of Washington, and a B.A. in 2008 in English and American Indian studies, magna cum laude, with distinction in English, also from the University of Washington.

She enjoyed hiking and late-night Dungeons and Dragons sessions with her large family. She liked to make clothing, quilts, jewelry, paintings, and ceremonial items. In “A Meditation on Fixity and Flexibility” published in Indigenous Collectives, she described how she became “enamored with the process of glassblowing.” She learned to make paperweights, Christmas tree ornaments, cups, vases and bowls, and how to use color, an exacting process with glass.

Carol Warrior is survived by her husband, Shaawano Chad Uran, and eight children.

Written by Linda Glaser
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