

Call for Papers

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS



IV Biennial Conference of the International Association of Inter-American Studies

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The Americas, as a global and cultural phenomenon, have been at the forefront in the struggle for human rights since their inception into European history in 1492 and the cultural transformations that ensued due to this pivotal and dramatic encounter. As early as the 1500s on the Island of Hispaniola (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic), the *Taíno* Cacique Hatuey confronted the Spaniards and resisted the enslavement of his people and that of other Africans. The Dominican Friar Antonio de Montesinos likewise criticized the enslavement of the *Taíno* Amerindian people under Spanish rule and inspired Bartolomé de las Casas to launch his internal critique of the ethics of colonialism even if ultimately the Dominican missionary did not succeed in preventing the progressive, for all practical purposes, enslavement of Indigenous peoples through the infamous *encomienda* system of forced labor. Nevertheless, five hundred years later, in the context of what international migration scholars have called “The Age of Migration” some consider the social reformer, Las Casas, to be one of the first advocates for universal human rights.

Celebratory narratives erroneously posit that racism has been overcome; that we are living in a 'post-racial society,' and that by now human rights are recognized as self-evident. It is commonly believed that we live in a post-World War II ‘Age of Human Rights’ that was articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The history of the Americas, however, equally demonstrates that the 20th and 21st centuries did not invent mass migrations. In the context of the Americas, e.g., just to mention a few, 12 million of enslaved Africans were brought to work on plantations as a result of the slave trade. In addition, approximately half a million Asians from China, Java Sri Lanka and other Asian countries were contracted to work as laborers following the end of Caribbean slavery. Equally devastating for thousands of Indigenous communities across the American hemisphere has been the dispossession of their lands and their relocation in what may be described as forced migrations.

Other events transpiring during the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, (such as the sociopolitical turmoil produced by the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan, Middle Eastern, and North African countries), pushed Arabs and Muslims, as well as hundreds of thousands of Arab Jews, Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, and Sephardim Jews to migrate to the American continent in order to escape deteriorating economic circumstances and persecution. Not surprisingly, throughout modern history an unspecified number of millions of Europeans have been migrating to the western hemisphere in search of a better life. And yet, in the context of the globalized neo-liberal economic order of the 21st century, ethnic minorities, old and new, composed of citizens and non-citizens, as well as migrants and refugees searching for new opportunities, or escaping poverty, conflict, persecution or environmental disasters are viewed as anomalies worldwide.

At a neoliberal juncture reminiscent of the European conquest of the American hemisphere and Euro-American imperialism, human rights vocabulary is regularly co-opted and deployed in the name of western civilization and enlightened secular progress or to justify wars. Euphemistically denominated as “humanitarian interventions,” these are perceived as the price to pay for the expansion of democracy, and socio-economic equality.

The present transdisciplinary conference seeks to better articulate the complex social processes by which societies in the Americas oppress and occlude difference. It equally proposes to update our understanding of resistance strategies and the struggles for human rights of Indigenous peoples, peoples of African and Asian ancestries, and other ‘peoples of color,’ disabled people, whites (e.g., white women sex trade), women, children, LGBTQ, immigrants, Christian and non-Christian communities throughout the American continent taking into consideration issues of race, class, gender and sexuality. We intend to explore, analyze, complicate, reaffirm, contest, interrogate, or redefine western ideas of the subject and the ‘human’ in human rights at a time when allegedly the legal rights of the above-mentioned constituencies can no longer be denied on the basis of their probable inhumanity.

This cross-disciplinary forum of academic exchange invites contributions from all academic disciplines concerned with human rights in the Americas. Scholars are invited to propose presentations and/or panels on a wide variety of topics including but not limited to those highlighted below. **We plan to publish selected papers from the proceedings. Please note that the participation of doctoral students is strongly encouraged.**

- Racism, Pigmentocracies, and Politics of Exclusion
- The War on Terror; the War on Drugs; the War on Fat
- Black Lives Matter
- Cultural Genocide
- Corporate Attempts to Privatize Water
- The Onslaught on Education and Ethnic Studies
- Multiculturalism, politics of recognition and cultural classification
- Migrating Faiths/Religions
- Environmental destruction, privatization of land, transgenic crops, and the effects of global warming on marginalized communities
- Education as a human right; health as a human right

- Negotiations of hegemonic cultural discourses by marginalized communities with Middle Eastern, Asian, Eastern European or non-Christian heritages in the Americas
- Imperialism and neo-imperialism, colonization and neo-extractivism
- Social movements, environmental groups, human rights movements, indigenous movements, civil activism, activists
- Problematization of (white, affluent) Jewishness that seems to preclude the possibility that Jews can be, e.g., Latin American, Arab, Sephardim, Mizrahi, brown, black, poor, women, children, disadvantaged.
- Ecotourism, advertising tourism, colonization of nature, hotel chains, sex tourism, tourist circuits and their racialized nature as global commodities
- Trade and integration agreements
- Human rights related to migration and immigration of adults and children
- Dependence, deterritorialization, and regulation of racialized migrant labor
- The militarization of the American continent and low intensity war zones
- The growing gap between the haves and the have-nots throughout the hemisphere, i.e. income inequality
- The disproportionate number of women (single mothers), people of color, children, the young, and indigenous peoples affected by poverty as they are incorporated into the global workforce as flexible and cheap laborers
- Neo-colonialism vs. post-colonialism
- Transnationalism and the issue of borders
- Labor practices in maquiladoras and other venues such as agriculture

Please send proposals for individual papers or for panels with a chairperson and three to five presentations to iasucsb2016@chicano.ucsb.edu

Please include your name, the title of presentation and/or panel, an abstract (200-400 words per presentation) and e-mail addresses. Presentations can be in English or in Spanish.

The deadline for submissions is March 15, 2015.

For more information please visit our website:

http://www.interamericanstudies.net/?page_id=5851

Organizing Committee:

Professor María Herrera-Sobek, Co-Chair (UCSB)
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