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“Non-Indigenous Others”: Racial Hierarchy and Settler Colonialism in the United States Today

Presented by Professor Natsu Taylor Saito

Date: 12 August 2015
Time: 4:30 – 6:30
Location: Moot Court (67.202)
RSVP: Online

Settler colonial theory has focused, quite appropriately, on the relationships between Indigenous peoples and the settlers who occupy their territories. Given the history of the United States, is it appropriate to characterize African Americans, Chicana/os, and other peoples of color as internally colonized? How do we account for, and begin to deconstruct, racial hierarchy in a “multicultural” settler state without decentering Indigenous sovereignty?

Theorizing racialized disparities and injustices in the U.S. in terms of the settlers’ perceived need not only for land but also for a labor force that is not intended to become part of the settler class helps explain why rights and remedies framed in terms of equal rights have failed to dismantle racial hierarchy. Clarity about the functions served by various peoples of color in settler societies allows us to incorporate disparate forms of subordination into a coherent framework and, therefore, to find common ground in our struggles for self-determination.

Natsu Taylor Saito (J.D. Yale, 1987) is a professor of law at Georgia State University’s College of Law in Atlanta, where she has taught Race, Ethnicity and the Law; Immigration; Criminal Procedure; International Law; Human Rights; and Professional Responsibility. Her scholarship focuses on questions of race, citizenship, and the rights of indigenous peoples; national security and political repression; and international human rights remedies for race-based injustices. She has published over twenty law review articles as well as two books, Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law (NYU Press, 2010) and From Chinese Exclusion to Guantánamo Bay: Plenary Power and the Prerogative State (Univ. Press of Colorado, 2006). Professor Saito is currently writing a book on racial hierarchy as a function of American settler colonialism (forthcoming, NYU Press).