DNA, HEGEMONY AND COUNTER-HEGEMONY: UNCOVERING THE TRUTH ABOUT POLITICAL CRIMES AFTER THE GENETIC TURN

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

March 27-28, 2016
The Sonia Kossoy Conference Room (307), The Faculty of Law, Trubowicz Building, Tel Aviv University

Conference Abstract
In the last few decades victim groups all over the world have had recourse to new genetic technologies in order to counter politically motivated forms of “forgetting”, by which societies have attempted to repress memories of murderous mass crimes committed in their recent or more distant past. The search for the “living disappeared” in Argentina and the excavations of mass graves in Spain constitute but two paradigmatic examples of such counter-hegemonic uses of DNA evidence, which has made it possible to shed new light on dark pasts. Although the use of scientific means to solve historical questions is by no means new, this recent genetic turn has allowed a new group of scientific experts to enter political debates about the past. Moreover, it has endowed a new form of technology with the power to define social identities and relationships in terms of biology instead of economic hierarchies or cultural ties. The impact of genetic technologies on historical and legal debates and procedures in societies that attempt to redefine their perspective on the past is the focus of this conference. Bringing together legal scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, historians and geneticist, this interdisciplinary conference aims to reflect upon the claim of genetics to provide a truth about collective crimes of the past that is both indisputable and counter-hegemonic. Among other issues, we will explore the question of whether a seemingly incontrovertible biological truth, to be discovered by scientific means rather than negotiated in legal and historical debate, may not have turned into a new hegemonic form of truth, constricting the space of personal testimony, political discussion and plural visions of history.

Academic Organizers: Leora Bilsky and José Brunner

Sunday, 27 March 2016
10:00-12:30 Panel I: Scientific Truth and Humanism
Chair: Alon Harel
10:00-11:15 Paco Ferrándiz and Luis Ríos
Forensic and DNA truths and rituals in contemporary Spanish Civil War exhumations
Commentator: Ian McGonigle
11:15-12:30 Sarah Wagner
Hierarchies of knowledge: DNA and the politics of forensic intervention in post-conflict societies
Commentator: Shai Lavi
12:30 – 14:00 Lunch
14:00-16:30 Panel II: Materiality and Identity
Chair: Daphna Hacker
14:00-15:15 Leora Bilsky
Between return and restitution: Recovering memory by claiming property rights
Commentator: Haim Hazan
15:15-16:30 Ari Gandsman
Mistaken identity: human rights, scientific truth, and emotional appeals in post-dictatorship Argentina
Commentator: Gerardo Leibner

Monday, 28 March 2016
10:00-12:30 Panel III: Recovering the Past between Local and Global
Chair: Shai Lavi
10:00-11:15 Natan Sznaider
Antigone in Leon: The drama of trauma politics
Commentator: Raanan Rein
11:15-12:30 Noa Vaisman
Relational human rights: Shed-DNA and the identification of the “living disappeared” in Argentina
Commentator: Renana Keydar
12:30-14:00 Lunch
14:00-16:30 Panel IV: Citizen Politics and Forensic Truth
Chair: Dani Filc
14:00-15:15 Ernesto Schwartz-Marin
Citizen-led forensics: DNA and databases as technologies of disruption, novel ways to learn and intervene in the search for the disappeared in Mexico
Commentator: Michael Birnhack
15:15-16:30 José Brunner
Forensic truth and resentment: DNA evidence and the conflict over agency in Argentine post-dictatorial politics
Commentator: David Heyd

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