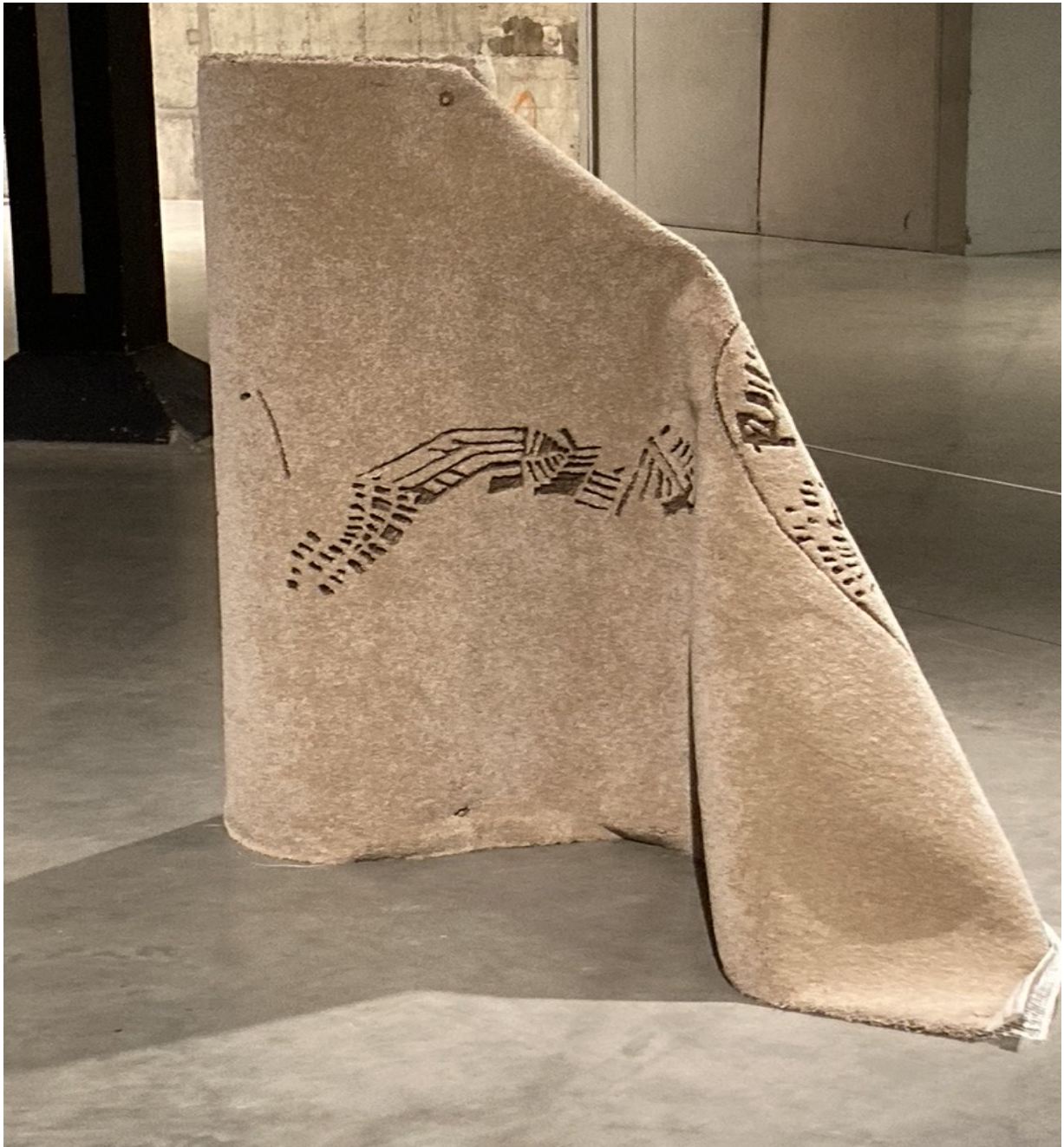


COALITIONAL POSSIBILITIES

WORKSHOP AND PUBLIC LECTURE



Anti-Racism
and the Law
Initiative



Cover image:

Hera Büyüktaşıyan, *Reveries of an Underground Forest* (2019), photograph by Brenna Bhandar



Coach House, Green College
6201 Cecil Green Park Road
Vancouver, BC
V6T1Z1

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1

This one-day workshop, composed of two sessions, will explore critical methods, political formations and psycho-affective orientations that create 'coalitional possibilities.' Across two panels, scholars from law, political theory, literature and geography will explore practices – both historical and contemporary – that present a multitude of possibilities for resistance and refusal of institutional, structural and state forms of racialized-gendered violence and dispossession, and the revitalization of anti-colonial and liberatory spaces. Green College Visiting Professors Roderick Ferguson and Gail Lewis will moderate and convene the proceedings.

*Places limited. To register, please email burchill@allard.ubc.ca

9:00 AM **Introduction**

Brenna Bhandar, Peter A. Allard School of Law

9:15 AM - 12:15 PM **Panel I: Law, Colonialism, Race and Resistance**

THE OLD PEOPLE ARE THE SONG, AND WE ARE THEIR ECHO: WSÁNEĆ LAW REVITALIZATION AND CLIMATE CRISIS

Robert (YELKATFE) Clifford, Peter A. Allard School of Law

This presentation is of a book proposal. The book attends to pressing questions of strategy and tactics in relation to Indigenous law revitalization in the context of the climate crisis. Grounded in my own WSÁNEĆ legal order, I provide an accounting of the context in which the resurgence of WSÁNEĆ law is occurring, and clarity regarding what we hope to accomplish with the revitalization of WSÁNEĆ (and more broadly, Indigenous) law, both locally and in response to global climate crisis. Doing so prompts questioning of the very foundations of Canadian constitutionalism, and indeed, our most basic ideologies and conceptualizations of our place and relationships within the world. From a position that our theory and methodology of Indigenous law revitalization, and our diagnosis and approaches to the climate crisis must be intricately entwined and mutually reflective, the book sets out to argue that nothing short of a fundamental reimagining of our relationships within the world, and thus the social, legal, political, and economic structures those relational understandings condition, is required. For example, I offer a critique of capitalism not simply as an economic system, but as a way of understanding and organizing our relationships and place within the world. As I argue for a foundational re-imagining of our relationships and place within the world, my analysis also reveals that we are not left groundless in this re-imagining as we can draw upon the wisdom and practices housed within our respective Indigenous traditions.

COUNTERING COLOUR-BLINDNESS IN CANADIAN LAW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: LESSONS FROM *R V. RDS*

Sara Ghebremusse, Peter A. Allard School of Law

In *R v RDS*, Canada's first Black woman judge, Justice Corinne Sparks, acquitted a young Black man for assaulting a white police officer. Citing the troubled relationship between police and racialized groups, especially Nova Scotia's African-Canadian community, Justice Sparks believed the testimony of the accused over the officer. Her oral reasons set off a series of appeals that ended with the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in a 5-4 decision that Justice Sparks was not racially biased at trial. Rather, the majority wrote that relying on personal experience and knowledge, including racism, is within the bounds of a judge's role. The Court even went so far as to speak in favour of a diverse judiciary that better represents the Canadian population. This paper discusses these lessons from *RDS* — race consciousness and the need for improved judicial representation — in the context of Canadian common law school admissions. As gatekeepers to the legal profession, greater judicial diversity can only be achieved if more diverse students are being admitted to law school. However, a review of admissions policies reveals a colour-blind trend that has hindered, and continues to obstruct, racial diversity in the profession. Using critical race theory and the judicial history of *RDS*, this paper makes the case for countering colour-blindness in Canadian law school admissions.

RACIAL EQUALITY COMPROMISES

Yuvraj Joshi, Peter A. Allard School of Law

Can political compromise harm democracy? Black advocates have answered this question for centuries, even as academics have ignored their wisdom about the perils of compromise. This Article argues that America's racial equality compromises have systematically restricted the rights of Black people, and have generated inequality and distrust, rather than justice and unity. In so doing, these compromises have impeded the achievement of a multiracial democracy.

Using unpublished archival documents, the Article examines how Black advocates throughout history approached compromises on equal rights. It examines how figures like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bayard Rustin, and Fannie Lou Hamer conceived of historic compromises, what kinds of compromises they were willing and unwilling to make, and when they were prepared to sacrifice more ambitious goals for modest gains. This historical account shows that even "compromising" figures like King and Rustin distinguished between principled and unprincipled compromises, and how pressures from "uncompromising" Black activists sometimes facilitated more just and effective outcomes—findings that prove useful for modern-day equality debates.

12:15-
2:00 PM

Lunch break

2:00 -
5:00 PM

Panel 2: Critical Methods

THE NATIVE ALLIANCE FOR RED POWER AND GLOBAL MAOISM: THIRD WORLD CURRENTS IN FOURTH WORLD ANTI-COLONIALISM

Glen Coulthard, Political Science and First Nations and Indigenous Studies

This presentation will provide a history of Red Power radicalization and Indigenous-Marxist cross-fertilization. It examines the political work undertaken by a small but dedicated cadre of Native organizers going by the name Native Alliance for Red Power (or NARP) in Vancouver, British Columbia (BC), from 1967 to the 1975. It argues that their political organizing and theory-building borrowed substantively and productively from a Third World-adapted Marxism which provided an appealing international language of political contestation that they not only inherited but sought to radically transform through a critical engagement with their own cultural traditions and land-based struggles. Not unlike many radicalized communities of color during this period, NARP molded and adapted the insights they gleaned from Third World Marxism abroad into their own critiques of racial capitalism, patriarchy, and internal colonialism at home.

RACE AND THE SUBJECT OF COALITION: THE ASIAN CASE

Sharon Luk, Geography, Simon Fraser University

Recent directions in Asian/-American activism in the U.S. provide occasion to interrogate logics, contradictions, and contemporary problems embedded in coalition politics. Looking briefly across three recent case studies, my reflections thus revisit arguments regarding the positioning of Chinese and Asian Americans in anti-Black state violence as well as in social movements forged under the banner Black Lives Matter (BLM). My analysis outlines the perils of hegemonic critical race discourse within both academic and popular media, a neoconservative genealogy of ongoing “#StopAsianHate” campaigns, and their complex ties to an “Asian for Black Lives” platform. Ultimately, my thinking suggests that the problems discretely attributed to the Asian racial case are those that have been displaced from both prevailing progressive understandings of race and broader movements for “racial justice.” In this regard, I offer alternative ways of thinking and action that may help reinvigorate the aspirations embedded in the language of coalition.

WRITING LIFE THROUGH/IN/AGAINST THE ACADEME'S EPISTOLARIUM

Nisha Nath, Equity Studies, Athabasca University; Rita Dhamoon, Philosophy and Political Science, University of Victoria; Anita Girvan, Cultural Studies, Athabasca University; and Davina Bhandar, Political Science, Athabasca University

Our contribution to this workshop is to present on a collaboration that began in 2020 between the four of us, Anita Girvan, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, Davina Bhandar and Nisha Nath that was based loosely within the terms of a “poetics of care.” Grounded in a feminist and anti-racist politics, we began texting short “prompts” or poetic gestures through the platform of WhatsApp. The prompts were spontaneous, sometimes deeply reflective and other times highly reactive to the day to day conditions and ecologies that we were living. In responding to these prompts we were emboldened to put feelings and thoughts, sometimes only partially digested, into words and connect through figurative speech. As the pandemic raged, and the global systems were seemingly heading to a crisis point, in between working, caring for families and friends, raising children and animals, we found these sips of time to connect and rely on forms of feminist friendship that were both deeply supportive and restorative.

As an extension of this work, we have been inspired by our friend Nisha Nath's emerging body of writing on “The Letters.” Nath began to take note of the laborious work that was also being hailed by the institutional setting of the academy, which took the form of letter writing, or as she frames it, an important reservoir of life writing. The epistolarium, as she has pointed to, acts as a form of an archive that holds “a body of analytically rich, intentional, strategic, undocumented, unpublished work written by those who experience the academy in the most precarious ways.” Instead of forgetting, absenting out or erasing the volumes of work that seem to be generated and demanded of colleagues, who are often struggling to defend or hold accountable the institutions to which we purportedly belong, Nath - building off the assertions of Dhamoon's intervention in 2020 of how racism in the university is its own workload issue - demands that we take a closer look at the life writing that is held in this archive. What is the purpose of it? What are our intentions? Who does the letter-writer consult in drafting a letter, and how do contexts of power shape the wringing/uncertainties/contortions of speaking up or speaking back to ‘the institution’? How are letters being met by the institution? How are letters sent by the institution also forms of life writing that require examination?

We invite participants to bring one or more letters that they have written - or that they have received from their institution - over the past year to this workshop, whether written on paper or electronic form (e.g. an email). Think of a letter as something with an opening salutation and a signing off, and something that anticipates a corresponding response. Following Nisha Nath, we specifically ask participants to bring letters in which they advocate for something or someone in the academy, in which they felt risk or if it is a letter received, something demanded of them from the institution. Together, we will explore the practices we are engaging in reading our letters for this manuscript, including (re)reading, sifting, dis/re-assembling letters as bodies of knowledge.

PUBLIC LECTURES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 3
5-7 PM

LEW FORUM
PETER A. ALLARD SCHOOL OF LAW

COALITION AS SPACE OF INTER-GENERATIONAL LEARNING

Gail Lewis, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Yale
University

Drawing on work with a feminist Muslim community organisation based in London, this talk considers the extent to which inter generational dialogue around queer desire opens a space for changing modes of mutuality and respect outside registers of hetero-kinship, that so easily and often frame inter generational encounter.

THE ANTAGONISMS BETWEEN BOURGEOIS AND COALITIONAL FORMATIONS

Roderick Ferguson, American Studies, Yale University

This talk uses the histories of black, queer, and labor formations to theorize the internecine relationships between bourgeois and coalitional practices, particularly as they pertain to race, sexuality, and the critique of capital.