



Minerva Center for Human Rights
The Buchmann Faculty of Law
Tel Aviv University



מרכז אדמונד י' ספרא לאתיקה
The Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics

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 Sznajder

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

For Further Details: Minerva@post.tau.ac.il