

Project

Title: Conference **Coloniality, raciality, punishment and reparation in the Americas, 19th-21st centuries.**

Start date: 27/11/2024

End date: 30/11/2024

Area of Knowledge: interdisciplinary

Event homepage: www.iea.usp.br

State of event: São Paulo

Event city: São Paulo

Venue: Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo (IEA-USP)

Type of event: semi-presential

Conference committee

President: Paulo Endo (IP-USP)

Andrei Koerner (UNICAMP/IEA-USP); Giulia Manera (Univ. Guyane); Diana Mendes Machado da Silva (IEA-USP/British Columbia-Ca); Alessandra Teixeira (UFABC); Dirceu Franco Ferreira (USP/CoPALC); Samuel Tracol (Sorbonne Univ. /CoPALC); Luis González Alvo (UNT/CoPALC); Camila Similhana (IF-MG/CoPALC); Patrick Lemos Cacicedo (USP); Marcelo Ferraro (UNIRIO); Raissa Wihby Ventura (UNICAMP); Matheus de Carvalho Hernandez (UFGD); Paulo César Ramos (CEBRAP).

Scientific committee

Fernando Afonso Salla (NEV-USP). Marcos César Alvarez (NEV-USP). Andrei Koerner (UNICAMP). Monica Duarte Dantas (IEB-USP). Maria Cristina Gonçalves Vicentin (IP-USP). Charlotte Floersheim (Aix-Marseille Université). Jules Falquet (Univ. Paris 8/IdA). Natalia Guerellus (Univ. Jean Moulin Lyon 3/IdA). Thiago de Souza Amparo ((FGV/Núcleo de Justiça Racial e Direito). Carla Osmo (CAAF/UNIFESP). Edson Luis de Almeida Teles (CAAF/UNIFESP). Frederico Normanha Ribeiro de Almeida (IFCH/Unicamp). Wania Pasinato (IEA-USP). Claudio Aparecido da Silva (Ouvidor das Polícias de São Paulo). Maria Cristina Cortez Wissenbach (FFLCH-USP).

Aims and objectives

The purpose of the Conference is to expand debates and reflections on the intersection between coloniality, race, punishment and reparation with a transnational and interdisciplinary approach, which demands considering the connections between past and present and the similarities and differences between distinct national experiences in the Americas. We are interested in understanding the making of systems of punishment in the Americas, based on one shared experience of colonization and racialization of national populations. What justifies the geographic scope is the historical experience of the Americas and the legacy of European colonialism, slavery, the brutality against indigenous populations, and the fact that this continent became a "metropolitan purgatory", in the words of historian Laura de Mello e Souza. In this sense, the experience of plantation slavery, for example in Brazil and the USA, but also in other regions of the Americas, such as the Antilles or the Guiana plateau, influenced not only the making of racial hierarchies, but also the heart of the legal-penal system in these countries.

The American continent also reveals how the liberal and democratic order did not end with the imperial and slave order, but assured its a legal and social continuity. This experience partly explains the conflictual and violent nature of the political conquests of minority populations in this region, as well as the violence of reactionary phenomena. Thus, the most advanced progressive initiatives coexist with police and paramilitary brutality, the expansion of fascist speeches, mass incarceration, and the construction of mega prisons across the continent, especially in Brazil and the USA.

Therefore, it is worth asking: does this punitive tradition of the Americas become more evident when we compare the formation of punitive systems of different countries, especially those where slavery was an important institution? How essential are "devices of raciality" in the making of punitive systems in the Americas? What strategies of insurgency have been established by social movements, prisoners', civil society organizations, and other institutions that resist the destructive logic of punitive systems? How can we decolonize and de-racialize punitive systems in the Americas? How can we repair violations and injustices committed in the name of the legal or punitive apparatus in the Americas? These are some of the questions we intend to explore at the Conference "Coloniality, raciality, punishment and reparation in the Americas, 19th and 21st centuries".

Starting with the Caribbean archipelagos and then throughout the American continent, European colonizers established a new ecological era, the Plantationocene (TSING, 2015). Based on the same model of exploiting both nature and native people, the colonizers exploited natural resources throughout the continent, based on coerced labour and the enslavement of Africans and indigenous people. They established an economic model that defined the American continent as an exporter of commodities, occupied by migrants seeking to meet the demands of the capitalist world economy, and who established a paradigm of socio-racial domination that continues to this day. This legacy influenced the making of racially-oriented systems of punishment.

From the old colonies to the republics founded during the 19th century, there was no discontinuity of regime or governmentality of the old empires. The penal colonization adopted by the European empires in the modern era was used as an instrument to consolidate the sovereignty of the national states of Latin America over a population considered degenerate, according to the ruling class. Influenced by medical sciences developed in tropical and colonial areas and nascent criminology, scientific discourses legitimized the stigmatization of poor people and colonial environments: "misery, vice and crime" came to be seen as pathological manifestations of a criminal gene.

Different forms of coerced labor were constantly renewed and expanded, even after the abolition of slavery in the 19th century. Thus, the indentured servitude of Asian workers contributed to an important flow of labor to the Antilles and the Guiana plateau during the second half of the 19th century. In the Amazon, rubber tappers experienced a similar form of legal servitude.

Reflection on the pathologies affecting society at the end of the 19th century was closely linked to thinking about races and the effect of racial mixing on the formation of people and nations. At the end of the 19th century, for example, Alphonse Bertillon was excited about the possibility of measuring pathological differences between Europeans and Africans in order to support a policy to combat crime. But it was Joseph Orgéas, a doctor in the French Navy, in his famous essay on "The pathology of human races and the problem of colonization", who launched a comparative framework of references based on the population of the penal colony of French Guiana, made up of European, North African and Asian prisoners.

Penal colonization was updated and combined with the effort to colonize the hinterland, which led to the persecution and attempted genocide of populations classified as degenerate. Indigenous peoples were subjected to forced labor, as an ethnocidal practice; meanwhile Black peoples were subjected to genocide through colonization in other countries, in "geographical voids", but also through whitening, death by starvation, disease and, perhaps more frequently, direct

physical violence by agents of the state (police and prisons), but also by landowners and their agents. This structural racism in Latin American societies " compared working classes and the 'stateless' of the industrial world with 'savages' of the colonial world" (TRAVERSO, 2002).

The scientific relevance of the proposed event is directly linked to the project's capacity for international articulation and its potential for future developments. The issues raised above have been developed within the framework of the research group Penitentiary Colonization in Latin America and the Caribbean (CoPALC), formed in 2020 by young researchers from Brazil, Argentina, Peru and France, in collaboration with other researchers in the United States, England, British Guiana and Mozambique.

This has resulted in intense academic collaboration between France and Brazil, through the regional center of the Institut des Amériques located at the Université de Guyane, which has signed a bilateral collaboration agreement with São Paulo state universities, including the University of São Paulo (USP). Therefore, holding this Conference with the Human Rights, Democracy and Memory Group (GPDH), at USP's Institute for Advanced Studies, the only international IdA hub in Brazil, aims to deepen the network formed in 2020 and advance research and reflection on the relationships between central problems in the formation of American societies.

Argument and axes

By seeking to offer an unprecedented contribution on: **a)** the relationship between coloniality and raciality in the formation of punitive systems in the Americas, **b)** the place of insurgencies in this system and **c)** the formulation of reparatory responses to the countless types of violations committed, the Conference seeks to achieve academic objectives and sociocultural impact. With a transnational and interdisciplinary approach, the proposal is to promote encounters between different forms of knowledge, engagement and experience - political, social organization and research - for a critical and potentially transformative reflection on the relationship between coloniality, raciality, punishment, and reparation in the Americas.

The interlocution between the different lines of decolonial thought and the history of the formation of punitive systems in the Americas has been the subject of increasingly frequent studies in recent decades (GROSFOGUEL, 2007 and 2016; MBEMBE, 2018; ZAFFARONI, 2007). Especially in countries where national formation was carried out by updating the instruments of internal colonization, as has already been examined by a vast historiographical and sociological tradition

(CASANOVA, 1963). The intersection between decolonial perspectives and scholars specialized on raciality still lacks more in-depth work, especially in 20th century historiography, which has neglected the subject. By bringing together researchers and social movement activists, the Conference intends to encourage political and social engagement and interdisciplinary scientific research by bringing together the most recent contributions.

In this sense, coloniality is understood as the permanence of elements of colonialism in politically emancipated societies on the American continent. Raciality is understood as a power device, as a dimension of coloniality, which operates in determining the other as a non-being (CARNEIRO, 2023). Here, one of the main focuses is to think about the formation of punitive systems based on the experience of slavery, the post-emancipation era, in the context of projects to whiten societies in the Americas. Different strategies of control and punishment were selectively employed by the systems of order and repression in these societies to ensure that racialized populations remained socially segregated, thus reinventing the expedients widely used in the colonial period. From the "black codes" and segregation laws (Jim Crow Laws) in the US, to the criminalization of vagrancy and systematic arrests for investigation in Brazil (TEIXEIRA, SALLA and MARINHO, 2016), each society has erected an institutional architecture, legal or extralegal, to keep Black populations, Indigenous peoples, descendants of enslaved people, and racialized people in general under continuous surveillance and scrutiny, as the most effective way to produce their "social barring" (MOURA, 2019).

The intersection between coloniality and raciality will also be explored in order to understand the processes of borderization of Latin American national states. The necropolitics (MBEMBE, 2018) that have been exercised over time in the Americas have contributed to shaping the contours of a prison-continent whose internal and external borders have been reinforced, through punishment and violence, until contemporary times. In post-colonial America, the Atlantic frontier is reinvested in national territories, feeding dialectical segregation between center-periphery dialectic. The borders and the geographical margins (the Andes, Patagonia, Amazonia...) became the pioneering frontiers of violent expansion, to the detriment, above all, of the Indigenous populations. Prisoners were victims of the creation of penal colonies, and racialized populations and urban proletarians were subjected to free or forced economic emigration (rubber tappers in the 19th and 20th centuries, for example). They all participated in the national expansion of the newly independent American states.

Based on historical events that have marked the evolution of punitive systems in the Americas, this initiative intends to explore the concept of insurgency in a broad way. Thus, in addition to political movements organized and led by prisoners to violently confront the situation of incarceration, non-violent

experiences will also be appreciated, such as literary production and artistic workshops in prisons. In this sense, literature produced by prisoners, or about prisoners, is of particular interest, especially when it is linked to social movements fighting for decarceration.

The conference will offer an opportunity for participants to shared experiences in their struggle for decarceration, which today has a well-articulated and consistent national agenda from a theoretical and political perspective. Alongside with prisoners' families, social organizations have been formed to denounce the violations promoted by the state. By bringing together researchers and activists from social movements (Amparar, Nós por Nós, Cooperativa Libertas, Mujeres de Frente, Yo No Fui, etc.), the event will promote political, social, and interdisciplinary scientific research by bringing together the latest contributions to the issues at hand.

The conference also aims to discuss the coloniality of gender, focused on the processes of power and subjectivation, which are a decisive part of the dehumanization of colonized subjects. It is understood that this process obfuscated the punishment directed at racialized women in societies across the Americas, with the thesis of the subsidiarity of women's criminality and punishment in modern societies prevailing (TEIXEIRA, SALLA and JORGE, 2021). The dimension of police control and segregation directed at racialized and impoverished women in colonial and post-colonial societies, especially those that have experienced both the kidnapping and enslavement (of African peoples), as well as the genocide and ethnocide of their original populations, has not been problematized enough, as well as its role in understanding urgent phenomena in the present, such as the significant increase of female incarceration in the last 20 years on a global scale.

In view of these arguments, we have defined the following thematic axes to guide the proposals for Working Groups (WGs) and Mini-courses:

1. Coloniality and raciality as devices of punishment.
2. Coloniality, raciality and punishment in the formation of borders
3. Strategies of insurgency: decolonizing and de-racializing punitive systems in the Americas
4. Memory, justice and reparation
5. Gender and punishment
6. Insurgencies in the Americas: from anti-slavery struggles to struggles for rights
7. Coloniality and raciality as social markers for Reparations and Justice

Contribution to people involved in the event

The conference will contribute in different ways to the people involved in the event. Through the Working Groups (WGs), professionals at different stages of their respective academic training will be able to present their researches and share their experiences with national and foreign researchers. These activities are fundamental for the development of postgraduate programs in the country (PPGCP/Unicamp; PCHS/UFABC; PPGFDH/UFGD; Brazilian Cultures and Identities/IEB-USP; Lettres-Université Guyane; Philosophie/Univ. Paris 8), and the international scope of the event will allow us to highlight, beyond national borders, what is being produced in national institutions. Moreover, the experience and references of research projects developed outside the country will be closer to the reality of master's students, doctoral students, junior and senior researchers who are already working on the development of their programs.

This exchange is fundamental for the maturing of theoretical concepts, academic debates and methods in ongoing research and could, in the future, contribute to the creation of academic networks between national programs and t foreign institutions involved in the event. With regard to the construction of new ways of thinking about ethnic-racial relations and the role they have played in the construction of punitive systems in the Americas, the role of the Research Group on Human Rights, Democracy and Memory at USP's Institute of Advanced Studies (GPDH-IEA/USP) is central. Created in 2016, the group works in the field of human rights training and the promotion of memory and reflection on state human rights policies, according the developments of the National Truth Commission's report. This exchange will contribute to the formulation of new research, and also new public policies. In this way, it is hoped that the event will contribute to a broader education regarding the articulation between human rights and ethnic-racial relations, focusing punishment being a privileged area for this approach.

Concerning the construction of new ways of thinking about ethnic-racial relations and the role they have played in the construction of punitive systems in the Americas, this event proposes the challenge of bringing together academics and activists internationally involved the debate on Human Rights in the Americas. In the light of the history of events and research activities that the GPDH has been developing for years, it is positioning itself as an institution that articulates other groups that, inside and outside academia, are daily involved with the theme of the event. This exchange, which is both challenging and creative, will contribute to the formulation of new research and new public policies, and also to the consolidation or questioning of practices that have already been established, whether in research or activism. Thus, we hope to contribute to a broader training in the articulation between human rights and ethnic-racial relations.

Universities have been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual platforms for meetings, classes, courses, and other academic events were both a refuge for the continuity of academic work during this most critical period, but they also kept people away from common university spaces. In this sense, the event aims to attract students, early career researchers, and postgraduate students to university spaces. The heterogeneous profile of the participants is expected to encourage the development of new research and other ways of working in academic life.

Expected audiences

The conference will be held at USP's Institute for Advanced Studies and is designed to reach a wide audience of students, researchers, teachers at primary and higher education levels, as well as activists, social movements, and civil society organizations.

The inclusion of mini-courses aims to promote the exchange of research and activist experiences with students and professionals in the Human Sciences.

Broadcasting on IEA-USP's YouTube channel also makes it possible to reach a national and international audience that will not be able to attend the Conference's activities. In this sense, international partner institutions in Latin America and France will be able to share with their audiences synchronously.