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

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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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.

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