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The New Disappeared: Illegality, the Deportation Regime, and the Resurrection of State Violence

Miranda Cady Hallett

University of Dayton, mhallett1@udayton.edu

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The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

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Research Panel: The Marginalized and Minorities: Interrogating Rights

Presenter: Miranda Hallett, University of Dayton

Title: The New Disappeared: Illegality, the Deportation Regime, and the Resurrection of State Violence

Abstract:

President Donald J. Trump's executive actions expanding immigration enforcement and reproducing stigmatizing discourses about immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers are not a new direction in immigration enforcement. While the racist dimensions of the approach are more unmasked in his rhetoric, current enforcement is merely the expansion of an entrenched project of state violence. The current panic, in other words, is the culmination of the buildup of the *deportation regime* (De Genova and Peutz 2010), an interconnected web of systems of incarceration and exile that serves as a broad mechanism of social control and repression.

In the U.S., this system has been built over the past several decades and expanded during the past four presidential administrations, including President Barack Obama's tenure. This regime "disappears" migrant bodies and enacts state violence on them in a way that resonates with past state repression and terror regimes facilitated by U.S. military aid to Latin America throughout the "American Century." Detainees today occupy the position of *los nuevos desaparecidos*, "the new disappeared."

In this paper, I provide a theoretical framing for the contemporary regime of detention and deportation that links the system to historic practices of state violence and delineates three ways in which the state can be said to engage in disappearing. Expanding the concept from its typical usage referencing kidnapped and tortured victims of state repression in Latin American civil struggle, I bring the idea of *los desaparecidos* to bear on the regime of exploitation, detention, and deportation causing suffering and precarity among Latin American migrants in the United States in the contemporary moment.

By incorporating the concept of disappearance, I emphasize the continuities between forms of imperialist and neocolonial violence and contemporary intersectional oppressions that reproduce the continued marginalization of people of color both in the United States and globally.

About the presenter:

Miranda Cady Hallett (assistant professor of cultural anthropology, University of Dayton) is a legal anthropologist who has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in El Salvador since 1998 and with Salvadoran immigrant communities in the U.S. since 2004. Her interests, training, and expertise lie at the intersection of Latin American studies (with a particular focus on El Salvador and the Central American region); migration studies and border theory; law and society; labor studies; research on Latinx identities; and the history and anthropology of state violence. Her dissertation (Cornell University, 2009) examined Salvadoran migrants' subjectivities and neoliberal ideologies in a small poultry industry town in central

Arkansas. Her recent work focuses on mass detention and deportation as components of the regime of mass incarceration in the contemporary United States, exploring how these systems uphold broader mechanisms of labor exploitation and intersectional oppression. She has published on immigration and immigrants' rights in numerous peer-reviewed journals, including *Latino Studies* and *Law and Society Review*. Hallett is also an engaged public anthropologist with a commitment to human rights and social justice movements.