**Upcoming Talks**

**Friday, March 4th, 3:00-4:30pm**
KAIROS Blanket Exercise in collaboration with Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D411, 49 Bader Lane

**Thursday, March 10th, 1:00-2:30pm**
“Cultural Challenges to Criminal Court Mental Health Initiatives: Lessons From the Arctic”
by Dr. Priscilla Ferrazzi
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D214, 49 Bader Lane

**Thursday, March 10th, 2:30-3:30pm**
“Leaning in or Hunkering Down? Contact, Trust, and Civic Engagement Among Immigrants and the Native Born”
by Michael Jones-Correa
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room B313, 49 Bader Lane

**Thursday, March 17th, 1:00-2:30pm**
“Cuban Economics in Transition: Changes, Vulnerabilities, Challenges”
by Dr. Laneydi Martinez Alfonso
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D214, 49 Bader Lane

Kingston’s City Park was met with great uncertainty on my part. Growing up in the countryside of Quebec where protests and social movements are non-existent, I felt unfamiliar with activist culture to the point that I seriously questioned my ability to deal with this new situation that inevitably would involve a certain degree of confrontation. The shift from problematizing past and current Indigenous and Canadian relations while sitting behind books and articles, to actually lending my voice and physical presence to a protest that condemns the celebration of Sir John A. Macdonald’s legacy, one which is invested in white supremacy and dismisses a real history of colonial genocide, felt both exciting and extremely daunting.

Anxieties set aside, I marched over to the protest and joined the INMK supporters in their effort to create a more equitable world that is invested in decolonization and reconciliation. This experience was eye-opening and life-changing for me. There are a few key things I came to realize. First, that I was not alone. If you have a desire to invest your time, energy, and emotion in a cause that you feel strongly about, you will likely meet an entire community of people who are on the same page as you and who you can look to for guidance and support. Second, my voice, our voice, is powerful and is meant to be heard. Protests are opportunities to share ideas that may otherwise be muffled in mainstream society, such as Indigenous demands for recognition of harmful colonial practices that still persist today.  

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Academic careers have a way of evolving. After a decade of publishing on school choice and then on critical whiteness, in 2011, I turned to Romani Studies. I began a large ethnographic research project on the Roma in Toronto; my book on the subject will be released soon. I am often asked: “How did you get involved in Romani Studies?” As a non-Romani woman and sociologist, it is a good question. In 1998, I met a young jazz pianist who had recently arrived from Hungary as a refugee claimant. Like most Roma, his family’s claim was rejected. My family joined others who mobilized help. We started a petition, found a pro bono immigration lawyer, and attracted the media. A CBC team made a documentary about the case after visiting our home where we hosted a dinner for everyone. It took four years, but the musician’s claim, along with that of his brother’s family, was finally accepted on humanitarian and compassionate grounds in 2002. As for the pianist, Robi Botos went on to become one of Canada’s best jazz musicians.

The experience taught me a great deal about the refugee determination system, a lesson I held on to for some years before making it part of my new research focus. When in 2011, I joined the Toronto Roma Community Centre as a researcher, my learning broadened to include the Roma as a diasporic people, their origins, their historical and current conditions in Central and Eastern Europe, their systemically unjust treatment, the multiplicity of their identities and practices, and their community building efforts. I continue to work at the Centre as its grant-writer, and I enjoy the many friends I have made there. My work with them continues to evolve and new projects are in progress.
Third, that I have much to learn about activism and protesting. Learning how to deal with situations that often arise when protesting, such as dealing with police presence, bias, confrontation, and rejection, is something that comes with time and practice. Notably, you will find yourself meeting new people whose passion and kindness is inspiring.

Following the protest, I had the chance to debrief with Natasha Stirrett, a key organizer in the INMK protest. Natasha shared important insight on the nature of activism, explaining that being an activist can be risky and oftentimes comes at a cost. This cost may come in the form of backlash, which she encourages is something that one must learn to accept and feel at peace with. In the case of this peaceful protest, like many others, the police presence was problematic. Prior to the protest, supporters of the IDMK movement were confronted by members of the Kingston Police Force in a manner that made clear that there was bias towards the protestors. Many of those who opposed the protest have an invested stake in maintaining social order and power. This type of intimidation, Natasha reinforces, is to be expected when attempting to disrupt colonial legitimacy by obliging others to acknowledge Sir John A. Macdonald’s key role as a Canadian leader in the culture genocide of Indigenous peoples.

As for activism in the Queen’s community, I have come to recognize that there is a strong critical consciousness on campus. This activist spirit has fostered learning and teaching practices conducive to advancing social justice agendas, such as a collaborative process between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples towards reconciliation and renewed relationships. You too can be part of this process. As my Master’s supervisor Sarita Srivastava put it “Don’t underestimate your ability to make change — going to a demonstration is not the only form of activism and change we are involved in.” For me, my research and my role as an editor and contributor to Equity Talk is my own creative form of activism. What is yours?
“Space Invaders at Queen’s University: The Racialization of Social Spaces on Campus” was a research study conducted in the winter of 2015 as a course requirement for DEVS892, a research methods course with Dr. Villia Jefremovas. Our research team, consisting of myself, Sumit Sameer and Amy Krull, planned and conducted a phenomenological qualitative research project to analyze the intensity and forms of discrimination at Queen’s University to better understand the lived experiences of, and discriminatory attitudes towards persons identified by Nirmal Puwar (2004:7) as being ‘out-of-place’ or ‘space invaders.’

This was not an extensive study and we acknowledge that our methodology and results have many flaws. Our research study fieldwork included: three interviews, sixteen campus observation sessions, and the distribution of a questionnaire to explore the experiences of students. We interviewed three key informants: a Queen’s tenured faculty member and two graduate students; two of these informants were persons of colour. The data collected from these interviews allowed us to explore the history and struggles related to racialization at Queen’s University; the factors influencing racial and ethnic discrimination; and our informant’s racialized experiences as members within the Queen’s University community.

Sixteen randomly approached students agreed to participate in our research survey. Eleven survey respondents were undergraduate students (one was a person of colour), and five were graduate students (four were persons of colour and not raised in Canada). These respondents shared their opinions on the diversity of the university’s student body, departments and faculty and regarding the forms and frequency of the racialized discrimination that they experienced personally or had witnessed on Queen’s University property. In general, we discovered that Queen’s University has struggled with racialization on campus for more than two decades; while overt forms of racialized discrimination are rare on campus, covert and subtle forms of racialized discrimination can occur daily on campus. 63% of our respondents indicated that the Queen’s University campus was “not particularly ethnically diverse” and 75% of respondents indicated that their faculty or program was “not particularly ethnically diverse.” Only one survey respondent (a male student of colour) indicated experiencing racialized discrimination, in varying forms from both students and faculty members. However, eight respondents indicated that they had witnessed racial or ethnic discrimination in a variety of forms perpetrated by students against either students or faculty members.

Our observations explored the representativeness of visible minorities during sixteen different observations within public spaces on Queen’s University campuses. The representation of visible minorities varied from 13% to 71% in our three observation locations: the Athletics and Recreational Centre (ARC), Mackintosh-Corry Hall and the An Clachan Residence’s Children’s Park. Statistics Canada (2011) reports that Kingston, Ontario has a visible minority population of 7%. As a result, our findings suggest that Queen’s University might have a higher visible minority percentage within its campus community.

Our data allowed us to consider who might feel ‘out-of-place’ or like a ‘space invader’ as defined by Puwar (2004). Queen’s University has worked hard to develop an inclusive community, but our findings suggest that some students are experiencing discomfort and feel out-of-place within the Queen’s University community due to a lack of significant ethnic diversity within some Queen’s departments. For some students, the lack of ethnic diversity within Queen’s University’s traditions were a source of discomfort and promoted a feeling out-of-place within campus social activities. Our key informants felt that these discomforts could be addressed by increasing the ethnic diversity within the faculty and student body; increased education and racialized discrimination awareness training for all employees and students; and the development of more ethnically diverse traditions on campus.