



**THE INAUGURAL SPANPORT  
BIENNIAL SYMPOSIUM:**

# **CONTESTING VIOLENCE(S)**

**February 14, 2025**

Joseph W. Jones Room  
Woodruff Library  
Emory University  
**9 AM - 5 PM**

**CLAUDIA CALIRMAN**

Professor of Art History, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY

**OMAR G. ENCARNACIÓN**

Charles Flint Kellogg Professor of Politics, Bard College

**ROBERT MCKEE IRWIN**

Professor of Spanish and Deputy Director of Global Migration Center, UC Davis

**EDUARDO MONCADA**

Claire Tow Associate Professor of Political Science, Columbia University

**KIMBERLY THEIDON**

Henry J. Leir Professor in International Humanitarian Studies, Tufts University

Co-sponsored by The Department of Spanish and Portuguese • Hightower Fund  
• Laney Graduate School • The Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality  
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Department of History • The Department of Political Science • The Fox Center •



# Contesting Violence(s) Symposium

**February 14, 2025 | Emory University, Atlanta, GA**

The Biennial SpanPort Symposium at Emory University invites attendees to engage with some of the most pressing issues of our time, fostering meaningful dialogue across disciplines and fields of study in the Hispanic and Lusophone worlds. This year's theme examines violence and its contestation through topics including femicides, environmental crises, disappearances and displacement, and the dynamics of narco and human trafficking. Speakers and discussants will grapple with how violence intersects with politics, social media, LGBTQ communities, race and ethnicity, indigeneity, migration and Latinx peoples. Our guest speakers come from Art History, Professor Claudia Calirman (CUNY); Politics and Political Science, Professors Omar G. Encarnación (Bard College) and Eduardo Moncada (Columbia University); Hispanic Studies, Professor Robert McKee Irwin (UC Davis); and Environmental and Humanitarian Studies, Professor Kimberly Theidon (Tufts University).

The symposium addresses systemic violence, social inequality, and gender discrimination, emphasizing the resistance of marginalized groups against oppressive structures. It explores the multifaceted impacts of state-sponsored violence, organized crime, narco-violence, and armed resistance, shedding light on victims' agency and their complex roles in both challenging and perpetuating violence(s). The program addresses the historical legacies of violence against LGBTQ individuals, women, and indigenous communities, along with their lasting effects on justice and societal reconstruction. Furthermore, it underscores the intersections of human violence and environmental rights, positioning the ecological crisis as a crucial avenue for sustainable recovery. By connecting local and global contexts, the symposium aims to offer innovative frameworks for understanding violence(s) and addressing their interconnected challenges.

# Schedule

## **9:00-9:15 Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola, Emory University, Department Chair

Hernán Feldman, Emory University, Programming Committee Chair

## **9:15-10:15**

Claudia Calirman, CUNY, **“What Else Could We Talk About?: Women Artists and Resistance in Brazil”**

Discussant: Marília Ribeiro, Emory University

## **10:15-10:30 Break**

## **10:30-11:30**

Omar G. Encarnación, Bard College, **“Gay Marriage Wars: Spain, Brazil, and the United States”**

Discussant: Donald Tuten, Emory University

## **11:30-12:30**

Robert McKee Irwin, UC Davis, **“Between Hitmen and the Displaced: Masculinities in Contexts of Narcoviolence”**

Discussant: Xochiquetzal Marsilli-Vargas, Emory University

## **12:30-1:30 Break**

## **1:30-2:30**

Eduardo Moncada, Columbia University, **“Victims in the Study of Organized Crime”**

Discussant: Jeffrey Staton, Emory University

## **2:30-3:30**

Kimberly Theidon, Tufts University, **“Ecologies of Justice: The Rights of Nature in Colombia”**

Discussant: Thomas Rogers, Emory University

## **3:30-3:45 Break**

## **3:45-4:45 Roundtable Discussion**

Co-chairs: Hazel Gold, Emory University, and Karen Stolley, Emory University

## **5:00 Reception**

# Abstracts

**Claudia Calirman**, CUNY, “What Else Could We Talk About?: Women Artists and Resistance in Brazil”

In 2009, the Mexican artist Teresa Margolles represented her country in the Venice Biennale with the installation *What else could we talk about?*, referring to the escalating violence generated in Mexico by the drug cartels. Similarly, during that period the violence perpetrated in Brazil spiraled due to militias, extermination groups, and police brutality. This talk will explore how a group of Brazilian contemporary women artists who became active in the first two decades of the twenty-first century created strategies of resistance to counter this repressive apparatus of violence. They pushed back against social inequality, systemic racism, gender discrimination, corruption, and the abysmal conditions of the prison system. Acting as agent provocateurs, they conveyed a sense of urgency to address the harsh realities that surrounded them. They also questioned compulsory motherhood while fighting for women’s reproductive rights and access to abortion. These artists claim their right to occupy public spaces while erasing the lines between the private and the public.

**Omar G. Encarnación**, Bard College, “Gay Marriage Wars: Spain, Brazil, and the United States”

As the U.S. marks nearly a decade since legalizing same-sex marriage, support for LGBTQ+ rights coexists with mounting conservative backlash, including restrictive laws and revived anti-gay rhetoric. This presentation offers a critique of the modest framing of the American gay marriage campaign, which emphasized rights and benefits rather than broader cultural and moral transformation. Unlike countries like Spain and Brazil, where activists linked marriage equality to dignity, citizenship, and historical justice, the U.S. approach did not challenge entrenched biases or assert the morality of LGBTQ+ equality. The presentation advocates for a shift in LGBTQ+ activism in the U.S., moving beyond

a legalistic focus to embrace ambitious narratives centered on dignity and public persuasion, drawing lessons from global successes to foster deeper societal change.

**Robert McKee Irwin**, University of California-Davis, “Between Hitmen and the Displaced: Masculinities in Contexts of Narcoviolence”

A comparative analysis is proposed of the personal stories of some members of Mexican organized crime, specifically the hitmen interviewed by Arturo Chacón Castañón for his book *Listening to Sicarios*, and a sector of their victims: men who, fleeing narcoviolence, relocate to the northern Mexican border in order to seek asylum in the United States (digital narratives published in the Humanizing Deportation/Humanizing Asylum archive). Special attention will be given to their expression of emotions related to power, resistance, and masculine fragility. Who are more “men”: the narcos or the refugees?

**Eduardo Moncada**, Barnard College, Columbia University, “Victims in the Study of Organized Crime”

Much social science research on organized crime in Latin America focuses on how relations between states and criminals and among criminal groups shape patterns and levels of violence. But recent work challenges us to not relegate victims to a “black box” and instead unpack the ways in which they exercise agency in the context of insecurity, fear, and violence. In this talk, I map the emerging points of consensus and debate on the role of victims in the study of organized crime. I then provide insights into one way in which victims in the region are paradoxically contributing to violence as they seek out security: armed resistance to criminal victimization.

**Kimberly Theidon**, Tufts University, “Ecologies of Justice: The Rights of Nature in Colombia”

In 2016 the Colombian government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) signed Peace Accords that marked the official end of the longest armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere. More than fifty years of war had left 200,000 people dead, 150,00 disappeared, 6 million internally displaced, and 8.6 million registered victims. In addition to the human casualties of war, the environment itself was one component of a “wounded warscape,” with landmines, deforestation, bombed oil pipelines and toxic chemicals leaching into the soil and waterways. It is clear that armed conflict can contribute to an environment that is toxic to human health and well-being, but to leave the argument there is to reduce more-than-human entities to mere resources that exist to satisfy human needs and desires, and to measure their destruction as unfortunate but collateral damage. In my research, I aim to move beyond this instrumentalized concern for the more-than-human to consider the interspecies entanglements that make life possible in the best and the worst of times. From toxic chemicals to land mines, from rivers tinged with blood to vengeful mountain gods, there are multiple environments and actors that play a role in post-war reconstruction and coexistence. To capture these assemblages, I will focus on the Atrato River, Colombia’s longest and most-polluted waterway. On this river, lifeways and waterways converge; as the Atrato winds through the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities of Urabá, the river gives and is life.

# Speakers

**Claudia Calirman**, Professor of Art History at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Chair of the Department of Art & Music, CUNY.

She specializes in Latin American, Modern, and Contemporary Art. Her most recent book, *Dissident Practices: Brazilian Women Artists, 1960s-2020s* (Duke University Press, 2023), explores how women artists responded to political repression, processed trauma following the military dictatorship, challenged gender norms, and resisted the objectification of women through their art. She has been an art educator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and has curated several exhibitions, including *Dissident Practices* (The Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery) and *Berna Reale: Right Now* (Nara Roesler Gallery, São Paulo); *Basta! Art and Violence in Latin America* (The Anya and Andrew Shiva Gallery), and *Antonio Manuel: I Want to Act, not Represent!* (Americasa Society).

**Omar G. Encarnación**, Charles Flint Kellogg Professor of Politics, Bard College.

His research areas include Latin American and Iberian Studies, Human Rights, Global and International Studies. His comparative approach explores the distinct yet interconnected forms of LGBTQ-based violence in Spain, Brazil, and the US, shedding light on how political regimes and civil rights intersect across these regions. He is the author of *The Case for Gay Reparations* (Oxford University Press, 2021), *Out in the Periphery: Latin America's Gay Rights Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2017), *Democracy without Justice in Spain: The Politics of Forgetting* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), and *Spanish Politics: Democracy after Dictatorship* (Polity Press, 2008).



**Robert McKee Irwin**, Professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies, and Deputy Director of the Global Migration Center, UC Davis.

He specializes in the US-Mexico Border, migration, and human trafficking. His work merges literary analysis with socio-political research, offering a critical look at how border dynamics, violence, and migration shape identities and experiences across national lines. He is the author of *Bandits, Captives, Heroines and Saints: Cultural Icons of Mexico's Northwest Borderlands* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007), *Mexican Masculinities* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), and co-editor of *The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, 1901* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and *Hispanisms and Homosexualities* (Duke University Press, 1998).

**Eduardo Moncada**, Claire Tow Associate Professor of Political Science, Barnard College, Columbia University.

His research on urban violence and crime in Latin America focuses on the state's response to criminality in places like Colombia, El Salvador, and Mexico. By blending political science with urban studies, his work provides a critical lens on how violence shapes everyday urban life and governance across Latin America. He is the author of *Resisting Extortion: Victims, Criminals, and States in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and *Cities, Business, and the Politics of Urban Violence in Latin America* (Stanford University Press, 2016).

**Kimberly Theidon**, Henry J. Leir Professor in International Humanitarian Studies, Tufts University.

Her expertise spans Latin American studies and transitional justice. By integrating Anthropology, Psychology, Ecology, and Human Rights Law, her work explores the impacts of political and domestic violence, as well as the role of truth commissions and post-war reparations in healing fractured societies. She is the author of *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) and *Entre Prójimos: el conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú* (Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1st edition 2004; 2nd edition 2009).

# Acknowledgments

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- The Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry

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