

You're Invited to:

Diversity & Justice Speaker Series

Michael Ralph

Associate Professor, New York University

"Before 13th: The Origin of Convict Leasing"



Monday, January 27, 2020

3:00-4:30pm

SBSG 1517

Light refreshments will be provided

Please RSVP by NOON
on Wednesday, January
22, 2020 at:
<https://cls.soceco.uci.edu/webforms/diversity-justice-michael-ralph-research-talk>

Abstract:

Before 13th revises the scholarly consensus on the history of convict leasing, demonstrating that it did not begin with the 13th amendment, but several decades prior. In the decades following independence, debtors fled their obligations in places like Virginia, seeking solace in places like Kentucky in search of what the pioneer Daniel Boone earnestly called a “second paradise.” Kentucky’s first settlers erected a penitentiary soon after they arrived, inspired by Thomas Jefferson’s proposed legal reforms which sought to end the use of capital punishment for all serious offenses. Yet, when the wealthy textile merchant, Joel Scott persuaded the state legislature to lease the penitentiary to him and began experimenting with having inmates farm hemp—a crop so grueling it had only been worked by slaves until that juncture—he created the nation’s first convict lease system. Before 13th combines political, economic, and medical anthropology to explore this intersection of incarceration, slavery, and illicit substances, and to dissect the anthropological ramifications of a discourse on race, punishment, and expertise that led Kentuckians to call hemp a “nigger crop.”

Questions? Reach out to the DJSS Committee:

Hillary Berk (hberk@uci.edu), Lee Cabatingan (lcabatin@uci.edu), Navjyot Gill (n.gill@uci.edu)

If you require ADA-compliant accommodations, please contact the CLS Dept. front office at (949) 824-5575