

Tuesday 8 June 2010
Time: 18:30-20:30
Venue: Seminar Room 1
The Institute for Research in Humanities
KYOTO UNIVERSITY

Host: "Representations of Differences in Japan" Project
Co-Host: The International Research Center for Humanities Studies
ISEAS (Italian School of East Asian Studies)
EFEO (École française d'Extrême-Orient)
ECAAF (European Consortium for Asian Field Study)

京都大学人文科学研究所
人文学国際研究センター公開講演会

What Blood Won't Tell **A History of Race on Trial in America**



Prof. ARIELA JULIE GROSS
The University of Southern California

Is race something we know when we see it? In 1857, Alexina Morrison, a slave in Louisiana, ran away from her master and surrendered herself to the parish jail for protection. Blue-eyed and blond, Morrison successfully convinced white society that she was one of them. When she sued for her freedom, witnesses assured the jury that she was white, and that they would have known if she had a drop of African blood. Morrison's court trial—and many others over the last one hundred fifty years—involved high stakes: freedom, property, and civil rights. And they all turned on the question of racial identity.

Over the past two centuries, individuals and groups (among them Mexican Americans, Indians, Asian immigrants, and Melungeons) have fought to establish their whiteness in order to lay claim to full citizenship in local courtrooms, administrative and legislative hearings, and the U.S. Supreme Court. Like Morrison's case, these trials have often turned less on legal definitions of race as percentages of blood or ancestry than on the way people presented themselves to society and demonstrated their moral and civic character.

Unearthing the buried legal history of racial identity, Ariela Gross's lecture, based on her acclaimed book, *What Blood Won't Tell*, examines the paradoxical and often circular relationship of race and the perceived capacity for citizenship in American society. This lecture reminds us that the imaginary connection between racial identity and fitness for citizenship remains potent today and continues to impede racial justice and equality.

Prof. ARIELA JULIE GROSS

Gould School of Law, University of Southern California, Los Angeles
John B. and Alice R. Sharp Professor of Law and History, 2007-present. Co-Director, Center for Law, History and Culture, 2004-present. Prof. of Law and History, 2001-2007. Assoc. Prof., 1998-2001. Asst. Prof., 1996-1998.

Prof. Gross is the author of the following two books;

What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America
(Harvard Univ. Press, 2008). The winner of the Hurst Prize, Smith Award, and APSA Race, Politics & Ethnicity Award)

Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom
(Princeton University Press, 2000)

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