



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND SOCIETY BERKELEY LAW

CSLS SPEAKER SERIES

Monday, September 19, 2016

Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve

Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, Temple University

“Crook County: Racism and Injustice in America’s Largest Criminal Court”

Numerous accounts have identified the racialized nature of mass incarceration and its impact on minority communities, poverty, crime, inequality and even, daily life. Yet, we know little about how mass imprisonment and its racially disproportionate features affect criminal justice apparatuses themselves. Through ethnography of the criminal courts in Chicago-Cook County, this research examines how the racial divides and segregation that define mass incarceration manifest within our criminal courts and transform them from central sites of “due process” to central sites of “racialized punishment.” In these sites, the mostly black and Latino defendants confront a workgroup of white professionals who are charged with classifying and deliberating on the criminality of a racialized offender pool. Despite a host of due process protections and professionals who espouse colorblind ideologies, the court process relies on a *legal habitus* entangled with racial ideologies and practices. Court professionals use racialized tropes and narratives regarding the immoral character of criminal defendants to efficiently sort and process the backlog of cases caused by mass incarceration. By mobilizing a moral rubric to encode racial difference, professionals maintain court processes as “race-neutral.” In their view, disdain for defendants is not based on the color of their skin but the moral violations they embody – allowing racist narratives to become integrated into one’s criminal defense with impunity. Ultimately, this account reveals the courts as “the cultural engine” and crucial gateway for the racialization of criminal justice - where racism and discretion collide with dire effects to both the experience and appearance of justice.

The Introductory Chapter of Professor Van Cleve's book, *Crook County: Racism and Injustice in America’s Largest Criminal Court* (Stanford 2016), is available to download on the CSLS website and in hard copy at the Center.

PLACE Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Ave.
TIME **12:45 – 2:00pm**. Coffee and water provided. Bag lunches welcome.
INFO <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/>
EMAIL csls@law.berkeley.edu

Jonathan Simon, FACULTY DIRECTOR | **Rosann Greenspan**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR