CSLS SPEAKER SERIES
Monday, April 15, 2019

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“Res Nullius Loquitur:
Black Life and the Problem of Self-Evidence”

This paper examines a rhetoric of self-evidence underwriting the current public critique of racial profiling and police violence captured by audio-visual recording devices and disseminated across news and social media outlets. Analyzing this rhetoric allows us to think more deeply about why, despite a certain ubiquity of evidence of historical and institutionalized racism in policing available to us, the civil rights gains of the mid-twentieth century continue to be administratively weakened and made seemingly obsolete. In this talk, I hope to demonstrate how the rhetorical demand that the law submit to the self-evident nature of audio-visual recordings of racial profiling and police violence, like that of Sandra Bland’s 2015 arrest, produces its own structure of blindness and deafness. This presumption of a form of evidence so obvious it negates further evidence or inquiry occludes and distorts the fact that this evidence, upon closer examination, effaces the “self”, an ipsa, on behalf of which such evidence is thought to speak. This effacement, an ex nihilo, is formally, if bizarrely, encoded into the very audio-visual, legal and philosophic discourses circling around each every recording.

PLACE  Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Avenue
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/
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