October 12th is known as el día de la raza or the day that ‘la raza’ was born. The term continues to unambiguously accept and uphold mestizaje as a nationalist construct. This lecture will deconstruct the colonial origins of the term ‘la raza’ while unveiling the gendered violence in its origins. What are the implications of uncritically embracing mestizaje 530 years after ‘discovery’? How can we reframe Latinidad through a critique of the gendered nationalist violence which produced the term ‘la raza’ and the colonialist gendered stereotypes that accompany it? Dr. Spears-Rico’s talk will read ‘la raza’ through a feminist critique of malinchismo while highlighting Mexican Indigenous women’s contemporary fight for respect and visibility.

Dr. Gabriela Spears-Rico, University of Minnesota

Dr. Gabriela Spears-Rico is a Mexican Indigenous and Chicana feminist anthropologist and poet who currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Chicano Latino Studies and American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Her scholarship can be found in in The Chicana Motherwork Anthology (University of Arizona Press, 2019) and in Transnational Chicana Perspectives on Ana Castillo (Pittsburg University Press, 2021). Dr. Spears-Rico is a former Mellon Fellow and Woodrow Wilson Fellow and was also awarded a fellowship with the Institute for Advanced Study and a McKnight Land Grant Professorship by her institution. Her book manuscript Mestizo Melancholia and the Legacy of Conquest in Michoacan offers an ethnographic analysis of indigenized Mexican cultural events to examine how ‘going native’ or ‘playing Indian’ functions in Mexico. In 2022, she was one of ten Indigenous artists in North America to win the Radical Imagination Grant from the NDN Collective. Her poetry has been published in Sing: Poetry from the Indigenous Americas (2011), Chiricú Journal (2021), Ethnic Studies Review (2021) and Feminist Anthropology (2022). She won the Sidewalk Poetry Contest in the City of Saint Paul (2021) and was recently a finalist for the Bougainvillea Poetry Prize (2022). Her collection of poems Deer Hide Eulogies, Reclamos y Remedios will be published next year by FlowerSong Press.

Sponsors

University of Kentucky
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Anthropology
Department of Hispanic Studies

Martin Luther King Center
Office for Institutional Diversity

UK Gaines Center