“Queer statelessness: Redefining Indigenous Sovereignty”

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DESCRIPTION The critique of Israeli pinkwashing demonstrates that sexualization shapes state sovereignty and international relations. Yet queer Palestinians focus this critique not as a narrow sexual politics but as a contribution to decolonizing Palestine. When such critique arrives in the U.S. or Canada, it synergizes with work by queer / trans and Two-Spirit Indigenous people who challenge settler colonization in the Americas. This event’s panelists will address how linked commitments to decolonization inform the critique of sexualization and settler colonialism, and theories and practices of transnational alliance. The panelists diversely represent the overlapping roles of teachers, activists, and scholars whose work challenges settler colonization in the Americas and in Palestine with insights drawn from gender and sexual politics. Furthermore, as Native Americans, diasporic Palestinians, and white settlers who live and work in the United States and Canada, the panelists’ alliances surrounding settler colonization in the Americas are reciprocal to our commitments to decolonization in the Middle East -- illustrating how the Americas become transnational in relation to Palestine. Finally, while sexualization (pinkwashing) forces us into allied work, critiquing sexualization also facilitates alliance: for jointly addressing sexuality, gender, nation, and colonialism deepens our understanding of and our contributions to decolonization. We intend our dialogues with one another and with the audience to act in the legacy of Said, by fostering comparative accounts of colonial power and by expanding effective methods of allied work for decolonization.  

FORMAT This event proposes an innovative format -- combining very brief paper presentations with the conversational structure of a roundtable -- to help participants create new knowledge, examine knowledge dialogically as alliance work, and then open both acts to audience discussion. Panelists will address a set of common questions (below) when preparing written statements of no more than 4 pages in length, or up to 10 minutes when read. At the event, after reading the five panelist statements, panelists will dialogue for 15-20 minutes to identify and address ties, tensions, and potentials in their contributions. Finally, the event will open to discussion with the audience, who will be able to engage both the content of the statements and the collective work modeled by the panelists’ conversation. After the CASAR conference, the panelists’ statements will be published online alongside a joint reflection on insights gained at the CASAR event, to ensure that our work can inspire further allied criticism and action among scholars and activists worldwide.

QUESTIONS (TO BE ADDRESSED BY PANELISTS) - How is pinkwashing produced by the specific power relations of settler colonialism? How does pinkwashing shape not only Palestine/Israel, but also the United States and Canada? - How do queer Palestinian critiques of pinkwashing compare to work by queer / trans and Two-Spirit Indigenous people, who also work on behalf of their nations to challenge settler colonialism and to practice a politics of decolonization? - How do diasporic Palestinians and Native Americans form solidarity in North America? How do the critique of pinkwashing or broader critiques of sexualization inflect such alliances? - How can decolonial alliances among Native Americans and Palestinians contribute to challenging Israeli settler colonialism and decolonizing Palestine? How can such alliances be engaged by other non-Natives in North America, and notably by white settlers? What risks or potentials attend on this work? - How are transnational American studies and studies of the Middle East transformed by critiques of pinkwashing, and by transnational alliances against settler colonialism?