



## Rethinking Health and Power During Times of Crisis

October 29, 2020 | 12 PM PDT – 3 PM EDT – 8 PM CET [REGISTER HERE](#)

Part 2 of Panel Series “Racism in History and Context”, organized by German Historical Association, the German Historical Institute Washington with its Pacific Regional Office, and the Institute of European Studies at University of California, Berkeley

**Panelists:** Manuela Boatcă, (University of Freiburg), Teresa Koloma Beck (Bundeswehr University Munich), Monica Muñoz Martinez (UT Austin), Kathryn Olivarius (Stanford)

**Moderators:** Elisabeth Engel (GHI Washington) & Leti Volpp (UC Berkeley)

The risk of physical harm posed by both the coronavirus pandemic and US police officers’ ongoing willingness to use violence against African Americans has been quickly conceived as a major feature of the current crisis. Governments and citizens in the U.S., Europe, and beyond squarely agree that ethnic and racial minorities are disproportionately imperiled due to longstanding and systemic disadvantages. We observe a long tradition of this phenomenon. Crises and, foremost, pandemics reveal predetermined breaking points of societies, including structural racism. Going back to the 14th century with the outbreak of the bubonic plague, pandemics have exposed social bias. Due to such structures, people have shaped starkly different and clashing responses to pandemics. Currently, apparent racial disparities in access to physical safety prompt fierce protest movements among citizens, on the one hand, and strong measures to control them on the part of governments and local authorities, on the other. Thus, health and power are at stake on either side of the conflict.

The panel aims to inquire into the role of racism in the history of epidemics and the history of state violence. This brings to light very specific problems in the various countries. Even though the overall phenomenon has characteristic features in every society, it is the result of specific historical processes and must therefore be understood and discussed in the respective historical contexts. Thus, the German Historical Association (Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands e.V., VHD), the German Historical Institute Washington with its Pacific Regional Office, and the Institute of European Studies at University of California, Berkeley, have invited Manuela Boatcă (University of Freiburg), Teresa Koloma Beck (Bundeswehr University Munich), Monica Muñoz Martinez (UT Austin), and Kathryn Olivarius (Stanford) to trace the ways in which racism has figured as an aspect of their respective subjects of research.

The event is part two of the panel-discussion series “Racism in History and Context,” which brings together scholars from various fields to explore the histories of racism that have been constructed in current debates about the coronavirus pandemic and violent police confrontations. What and who defines the deeper and historically longer-term contexts of the present phenomenon? How do the various discourses and memories of racist violence differ in quite diverse national contexts and narratives, and what interdependencies can we discern? How do social and cultural tensions take form under the pressure of condemning racism in moments and historical narratives of crises? The first panel, “Rethinking Memory and Knowledge During Times of Crisis”, is available to [watch on Vimeo](#).

## Panelists



**Manuela Boatcă** is a professor of sociology and head of school of the Global Studies Programme at the University of Freiburg, Germany. Her work deals with world-systems analysis, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, gender in modernity/coloniality and the geopolitics of knowledge production in Eastern Europe and Latin America. She is author of *Global Inequalities beyond Occidentalism* (2016) and co-editor (with Vilna Treitler) of *Dynamics of Inequalities in a Global Perspective, Current Sociology* (2016). She is currently finishing a book (with Anca Parvulescu) on inter-imperial and transimperial dynamics in 20th century Transylvania.



**Teresa Koloma Beck** is a sociologist studying globalization and everyday life under conditions of crisis. Since 2017, she has been a professor for the sociology of globalization at Bundeswehr University Munich. Before this she worked in international and interdisciplinary research and teaching at Humboldt University Berlin, Marburg University, Erfurt University, and the French-German Marc Bloch Center in Berlin. For her work on everyday life in internationalized armed conflicts and postwar societies, she has undertaken ethnographic field research in Angola, Mozambique and Afghanistan. In 2016, she received the Thomas A. Herz Award for Qualitative Social Research of the German Sociological Association. Regularly, she engages in exchanges beyond academia, collaborating with public institutions as well as civil society initiatives.



**Monica Muñoz Martinez** is an associate professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of the award-winning book, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas*, and the primary investigator for *Mapping Violence: Racial Terror in Texas 1900-1930*, a digital research project that recovers histories of racial violence in Texas. In 2017 Martinez was selected for the prestigious Andrew Carnegie Fellows Program, recognizing her as one of the “country’s most creative thinkers”. She is a founding member of *Refusing to Forget* a non-profit organization that calls for a public reckoning with racial violence in Texas. She helped develop an award-winning exhibit for the Bullock Texas State History Museum that marked the first time a cultural institution acknowledged state responsibility for a period of racial terror in the twentieth century. Martinez collaborated with the Texas Historical Commission to secure four state historical markers along the US-Mexico border. Born and raised in Texas, Martinez received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University.



**Kathryn Olivarius** is an historian of nineteenth-century America, interested primarily in the antebellum South, Greater Caribbean, slavery, and disease. She joined the faculty at Stanford University in 2017 right after she received her DPhil in history from the University of Oxford. Her research seeks to understand how epidemic yellow fever disrupted Deep Southern society. She is also interested in historical notions of consent (sexual or otherwise); slave revolts in the United States and the Caribbean; anti- and pro-slavery thought; class and ethnicity in antebellum America; the history of life insurance and environmental risk; comparative slave systems; technology and slavery; the Haitian Revolution; and boosterism in the American West.

## Moderators

**Elisabeth Engel** is a research fellow at the German Historical Institute Washington DC. She is a scholar of US religious and economic history in the nineteenth and twentieth century. She received her PhD in 2014 from the Freie Universität Berlin. Her first book explored entanglements between African American missionary work and British imperialism in Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century. Her current book project traces the origins of insurance in the wake of the American Revolution, aiming to shed light on the ways in which Americans constructed and acted upon ideas of risk and security in the course of the nation's founding.

**Leti Volpp** joined the Berkeley Law faculty in 2005. She researches immigration and citizenship law with a particular focus on how law is shaped by ideas about culture and identity. Her most recent publications include "Protecting the Nation from 'Honor Killings': the Construction of a Problem" in *Constitutional Commentary* (2019), "Refugees Welcome?" in *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal* (2018), and "Passports in the Time of Trump" in *Symplike* (2018). Volpp currently directs the campus-wide Center for Race and Gender, and is an affiliate of the Jurisprudence and Social Policy Program, the Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory, the Center for the Study of Law and Society, Gender and Women's Studies, and the Institute for European Studies, and is a core faculty member of the Berkeley Interdisciplinary Migration Initiative.

## About the organizers

The **German Historical Association** (VHD) is the representative organ of German historical scholarship in the public. The core task of the VHD is to organize the Biennial Convention of German Historians ("Historikertag") – one of the largest conferences in the humanities in Europe, most recently with more than 4,000 participants. As a lobby group, the VHD is committed to the interests of its members in a variety of ways and, as a professional association, is in constant dialogue with universities, university-related institutions, and society. The VHD currently has about 3,400 members. ([www.historikerverband.de](http://www.historikerverband.de))

The **German Historical Institute Washington** (GHI) is a center for advanced historical research. Working with junior and senior scholars around the world, the GHI facilitates dialogue and scholarly collaboration across national and disciplinary boundaries. The GHI was established in 1987 as an independent non-profit foundation. Since 2002 it has been part of the Max Weber Stiftung – Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland (Max Weber Foundation – International Humanities Institutes Abroad), funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which coordinates an international network of humanities institutes. In 2017, the GHI opened its Pacific Regional Office on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, to foster cooperation with a myriad of world-class scholars and renowned research institutions on the West Coast, and to extend its public outreach effort there. (<https://www.ghi-dc.org>)

The **Institute of European Studies** (IES) at the University of California, Berkeley, is the leading center for research and education on Europe in the Western United States, and among the top three such organizations in the U.S. Through interdisciplinary public events, research programs, grant opportunities, and community outreach, IES seeks to enrich America's understanding of Europe – its people, developments and challenges – at Berkeley and throughout the state of California.