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“Wounded Futures: Pain and the Possibilities of Solidarity”

This paper explores international political solidarity as a project of commensuration, achieved in work, depending on authority, and subject to the productive hazards of failure. In 2006 seven sanitation and tannery workers traveled from Tokyo, Japan to Chennai, India to meet a group of people they saw as similar: Dalit outcastes. Over four days, these representatives from the Japanese Buraku minority group toured Dalit industries, met with employees and political leaders, and traded experiences of political success and ongoing struggle against discrimination, all in an attempt to suss out the similarities of their experiences and build a stronger foundation for transnational solidarity. This paper explores the material and symbolic labor entailed in these moments of commensuration, asking how similarity is projected across acknowledged differences, what demands such similarity places on those who must display it, and how ethical and political imperatives are fashioned in the assertion of a similarity built around discrimination. Key here, it is argued, are the inroads and blockages of “fellow-feeling” formed in moments of sharing pain.

Thursday May 3, 2012
12:15-1:45 P.M.
Haines 352

Coffee and Refreshments Provided