From Security to Weaponization: the Power of Citizenship

By: Lilith Acadia

This episode brings together five remarkable scholars, lawyers, and activists to discuss how the concept of ‘citizenship’ creates power.

The January 6th insurrection in Washington DC inspired this episode, yet it has much broader relevance in the US (such as Trump’s family separation policy and the ongoing deportation of children under the Biden administration), Europe (from post-Brexit questions about the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland to the frequent tragedies in the Mediterranean), and globally, as the world grapples with an influx of climate and political refugees.

The topic is also rooted in my research, which asks how concepts like ‘religion’ or ‘citizenship’ that we take for granted are actually modern (or European Enlightenment) constructions that enjoy epistemic privilege, which means that knowledge related to those concepts have more power. I’m particularly interested in how those concepts are used as pretexts, excuses for imperialism, and injustice. From global migration to voting rights, we can see in our world today how governments or even certain fringe groups are imbuing a naturalized concept of citizenship with special power, which they then use to justify denying some people rights, or even as a pretext for violence.

These notes aim to give the audience a sense of how you might learn more about the topics our guests addressed; if you have further questions, you are welcome to contact the host, whose email and twitter handle are listed below.
Our speakers and their most recent books:

Amy Liu; associate professor in the Government Department at the University of Texas at Austin. Twitter: @dramyhliu

Evelyn Tsao; public interest lawyer with Patricia Ho & Associates in Hong Kong.

Jeremy Bierbach; immigration lawyer with Franssen Advocaten, and associate fellow of the Amsterdam Center for European Law and Governance at the University of Amsterdam. Twitter: @basilok

Michael Bellesiles; US legal historian living in Connecticut. Website: www.inventingequality.com/

Sahar Ahmed; PhD candidate in the School of Law at Trinity College Dublin. Twitter: @saharisright

(Host) Lilith Acadia; Assistant Professor of Literary Studies at National Taiwan University. Email: Acadia@ntu.edu.tw Twitter: @L_Acadia

Maisie; listen closely to hear our special guest kitten mewing in the background.


Inventing Equality: Reconstructing the Constitution in the Aftermath of the Civil War by Michael Bellesiles (2020, St. Martin’s Press) [https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250091918](https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250091918)

Other links and information:


If you want to read more about the category of ‘foreign domestic helpers’ in Hong Kong that Evelyn discusses, you may want to start here:
And if you want to learn about the ‘right of abode’ Evelyn names as a core feature of HK citizenship, here is the government page about that:
https://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/roa/eligible.html

Amy mentions anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia in 1965, 1998, and 2016; you can read more about that here:
2016 protests: https://www.newmandala.org/echoes-past-violence-haunt-indonesia/

Sahar discusses India’s Citizenship Amendment Act; learn more about what has happened in the intervening year here: https://www.dw.com/en/one-year-of-indias-citizenship-amendment-act/a-55909013

Here’s an article about Rihanna and Greta Thunberg standing in solidarity with the Indian farmers’ protests, which Sahar mentioned:
https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/05/rihanna-greta-thunberg-india-modi-farmers-protests/

And here’s an article if you want to understand more about the Hindu Nationalism of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, India’s ruling party):

The Valedictory Lecture of Prof. dr. René de Groot Jeremy mentions is viewable online here: https://macimide.maastrichtuniversity.nl/valedictory-lecture-of-prof-dr-rene-de-groot-video/


You can watch the TV commercial Sahar mentions:
https://youtu.be/9KzmZ17uD1M

Court cases and treaties mentioned include:
Dred Scott v. Sandford, 60 U.S. (19 How.) 393 (1857)
Minor v. Happersett, 88 U.S. (21 Wall.) 162 (1875)
Maastricht Treaty (1992)
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)
Finally, we’re happy to share with you that between recording and release, Sahar and her Irish boyfriend, Aonghus, became engaged.

**Topic keywords:**

**Countries addressed:**
Ireland, US, EU, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Hungary, Romania, China, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, Morocco, Iran, Philippines, Puerto Rico