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Memory Bound:

The Implicated Subject and the Legacies of Slavery

How are we bound to histories of violence that preceded our birth? How has the contemporary world inherited the histories of slavery and colonialism as well as those of abolition and decolonization? In what ways are contemporary subjects descendants of these histories? I propose to explore such questions in this talk through the notion of *the implicated subject*. This deliberately open-ended term is meant to extend beyond the participants generally discussed in discourses on violence, trauma, and restitution: namely, *victims* and *perpetrators*. Instead, the notion of implication encompasses a range of differentially situated subjects, including bystanders, beneficiaries, latecomers, and others connected to pasts they did not directly experience and to contemporary contexts that might seem distant. A focus on implicated subjects opens up a broad and murky terrain in which we can locate many dilemmas of remembrance, responsibility, and reparation.

This talk will consider the challenge of thinking redress at a (temporal) distance by reflecting on the legacies of Atlantic slavery. What can the history and memory of slavery teach us about problems of transnational memory and restitution? What kinds of implication in the history of slavery define contemporary subjects in the Americas, Europe, and Africa? How can we align the differentiated forms of implication of contemporary subjects with claims for justice emanating from the past? I will consider these questions by reflecting on a variety of materials, including the work of Jamaica Kincaid and the *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership* project.