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# Racial Rankings and US Imperialism

The United States has served as an imperialist power in certain Asian nations, and particularly since World War II. Drawing on research in Seoul, South Korea and Los Angeles, California -- a multi-site methodology -- this talk investigates how US imperialism in South Korea has racialized in American fashion a Korean society. US imperialism has yielded not just White American dominance over Koreans/Asians but racially triangulated the society in a way that also involves Black Americans. I call this state-led system an “imperialist racial formation,” one that Koreans navigate through a subordinate and partially present social position and through cultural lenses of ethnonationality and Confucianism, among others. It is also a system in which Koreans resist racial/national injustices, redefine ideologies, and contradict themselves. The broader implications of my findings are that immigrants, especially in recent decades, engage American “race” hierarchies before they depart for the United States and, as a transnationally racialized people, continue to do so in their new racial landscape. Such findings push scholars to move beyond US borders as well as U.S.-delimited thinking on race/ethnicity, immigration, and the state.

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