Public Lecture:

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“Never Again a Mexico Without Us”: Gender, Indigenous Autonomy, and Multiculturalism in Neoliberal Mexico

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) rose up in the southeastern state of Chiapas on January 1, 1994. Rather than wait for a legal resolution of their demands, they created their own form of autonomy in practice by constructing and consolidating self-governing townships, parallel to official ones. Since the beginning, the Zapatista movement has been marked by presence of significant numbers of indigenous women in leadership roles and a continued discursive commitment to gender equity. At the center of their autonomy process are changes in gender equity and gendered relations of power that are crucial to the gains of the project.

This talk will focus on women’s participation in local autonomy projects, examining the extent to which Zapatista women have forged new subjectivities (affirming both gender equality and collective cultural difference) in defiance of local patriarchal control, gendered state violence, and of discourses that characterize them as victims of their culture. How has this emerging configuration of gendered rights bolstered the Zapatista autonomy project’s challenge to the Mexican state and individual modes of inclusion, such as ethnic citizenship and globalized forms of multiculturalism?