

The Master's in Hispanic Studies
Lecture Series Presents

THE AWAKENING OF BLACK IDENTITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA

With Professor María Inés Martínez
University of Manitoba

March 7, 2013 4:15 pm
H-767, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W.

This lecture will focus on black communities in Colombia, with particular emphasis on the adoption of Law 70 in 1993, which established the principle of collective rights of black communities. In spite of this law, the extreme violence of the 1990s disrupted communal territories, and left black communities vulnerable and at the mercy of paramilitary groups. This has effectively blocked the implementation of Law 70 and demonstrates that Colombia remains a deeply divided country, and racism and the exclusion of black communities lie at the centre of this division. Prof. María Inés Martínez will show how the leadership of black communities remains mobilized, capable of challenging the Colombian state in the name of collective rights, while they remind us all of the necessity of building an inclusive democracy.

María Inés Martínez (Associate Professor; University of Manitoba) is an expert in testimony and human rights in Colombia. She is the author of *El despertar de las comunidades afrocolombianas* [The Awakening of Afro-Colombian Communities] (LACASA University of Houston and Centro de Investigaciones Sociales [Centre for Research on Social Sciences] of the University of Puerto Rico, 2012), a ground-breaking book which features five testimonies of Afro-Colombian leaders. Anthropologist Arturo Escobar considers the book to be “an impressively vivid and profound portrayal of the emergence of collective black identities, one of the most important developments in Latin American social movements of the past decades”. The book was 5th on the Best Seller List in Colombia during the week of July 30, 2012. Dr. María Inés Martínez currently teaches 20th-century Latin American literature, literary theory, popular culture, oral literature and testimony. She is already preparing a second major research project based on interviews with Fabiola Lalinde, one of the most prominent Colombian human rights activists.

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