



Gastvortrag

Malathi de Alwis

# Feminist Reflections on Forced Disappearance and Political Community

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in Kooperation mit der  
Landwirtschaftlich Gärtnerischen Fakultät  
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Forced disappearance is one of the most insidious forms of violence as it seeks to obliterate the body and indefinitely extends and exacerbates the grief of those left behind. In this paper, I consider how such chronic mourners 'inhabit the world' in the face of continuously deferring loss, and seek to theorize what might be its political outcome(s). Arguing that this inhabiting is a constant tracing of traces given the ambiguous nature of the disappeared's status of absence, and thus presence, I explore a particular 'identification with suffering' that is embraced and embodied by Sinhala women whose children were 'disappeared' during the second People's Liberation Front (JVP) uprising (1988-1993). In such a context, visual and tactile objects such as photographs and clothing, I suggest, become especially meaningful by reasserting the presence of the disappeared. In conclusion, I engage Judith Butler's contention that grief is a tie that binds and thus enables the imagining of alternative political communities to reflect on how such a conceptualization might be helpful to re-invigorate political communities in Sri Lanka.

Malathi de Alwis has a Phd in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from the University of Chicago and teaches in the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Her publications include the co-edited volumes *Tsunami in a Time of War: Aid, Activism and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka and Aceh* (South Focus, 2009), *Feminists Under Fire: Exchanges Across War Zones* (Between the Lines, 2003) and *Embodied Violence: Communalizing Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (Zed/Kali for Women, 1996). She is a founding member of several feminist, anti-war groups, among them, the Women's Coalition for Peace (Sri Lanka) and the Women Against War Coalition (Chicago). She is also a member of the Women in Conflict Zones Network (WICZNET) and the South Asian Feminist Research Association (SAFRA).

WEITERE INFORMATIONEN

<http://www.gender.hu-berlin.de/zentrum/aktuell>

VERKEHRSVERBINDUNGEN

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U6 (Friedrichstraße)  
Bus 100, 147, 200, TXL (Staatsoper)  
Tram M1, 12 (Am Kupfergraben)