

# *The Women's & Gender Studies Program Presents*

## **Free from Slavery, Bound by Historical Traumas: The Economic Bondage of Chronic Health Issues Among African American & Native American Women**



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Dean  
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**Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>  
12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Henning Hall 113**

From the beginning of the colonial period in the America, the life altering effects of enslavement and oppression shaped the genealogical journeys of African American and Native American women. Historical reports going back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century indicate the codes and policies that were developed and enforced to create a stratified society in the newly formed colonies. Such stratification relegated enslaved Africans and Native Americans as invalidated sub-humans worthy to only serve as the tools of their oppressors.

A critical and vital thread of this analysis is the role of African American and Native American women, not only as the bears of life, but as the carriers of traditions and values that are essential to the existence and longevity of a people. The various forms of genocide that were inflicted on African American and Native American people have left residues of cultural practices and identities. The holes in the tattered memories have forced these two groups to assimilate substitutions from their oppressor. Substitutions such as familial structures and roles, economic sustainability, the exchange of culture and knowledge were disseminated such that the new dominant group could enforce its ideologies on all. Hence, the women of both groups were forced with each generation to adjust causing the loss of indigenous practices of survival, health, and wellness.

Women of African and Native American descent have experienced a consistent decline in their personal health and their ability to impart care based on traditional cultural practices. The rise in chronic illnesses, infant mortality, mental illness, and substance abuse for both groups is tied to the parallel oppressions experienced for generations. This talk examines the span of over 500 years of specific and deliberate socioeconomic policies that have impact the health of African American and Native American women of the present. A historical cross analysis of African American and Native American women will be done to show the connections between the groups based on the different forms of oppression experienced.

For more information or to reserve space of a class, please contact Dr. Bonillas at [cbonilla@kean.edu](mailto:cbonilla@kean.edu)