The First Amerasians: Mixed Race Koreans from Camptowns to America

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Brandeis University

February 19, 2020
11am-12:30pm
RAWLS 3058
*Lunch provided*

Professor Yuri Doolan is a historian of race and empire in the twentieth century United States and an interdisciplinary scholar of Asian American Studies, transnational Korean Studies, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. In this talk, Dr. Doolan tells the powerful story of how Americans created and used the concept of the “Amerasian” to remove nearly 5,000 mixed race children from US-occupied South Korea to adoptive American homes during the 1950s and 1960s. He explores how the narrative construction of the “Amerasian” and its rescue was used by Americans to promote the dominant ideologies undergirding the Cold War. Further, he shows how these ideas shaped the lives of actual people—mixed race Koreans and their mothers—as children were placed into adoptive homes during an era where few regulations or safeguards existed to protect them from abuse, negligence, or racial hostilities in the US and many mothers were coerced, both physically and monetarily, to relinquish their children to American authorities.

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