

Burning Bright: The Smoke and Mirrors of Mumbai's Industrial Fires

BY

MAURA FINKELSTEIN

*Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Muhlenberg College*

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MAURA FINKELSTEIN is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Muhlenberg College. She received her Ph.D. from Stanford University's Anthropology program. She is a socio-cultural anthropologist whose research engages with deindustrialization, labor and housing rights and identity formation in Mumbai, India. Her work intersects with urban studies, feminist theory and queer studies and thinks through memory and place-making in modern South Asia.

About the Lecture:

Mumbai's textile industry, once the largest in the world, is now generally understood to exist in the past tense of a postindustrial city. This seminar examines the November 2009 industrial fire at Dhanraj Spinning and Weaving, Ltd., the last privately owned functional textile mill in Mumbai. Based on two years of ethnographic research, Dr. Finkelstein argues that while industrial fires usually result in the clearing of land for postindustrial development, in the Dhanraj case, the fire instead allowed for a seemingly public mill death while simultaneously enabling lucrative extra-legal production to continue within the mill compound. This public death obscured much of the reality bubbling below the surface: that mills still function and workers still produce, even if on a small scale and invisible to the majority of the city. This results in the exclusion of current mill workers as a legitimate presence within the transforming mill lands.

VENUE: CASI – 3600 Market Street, Suite 560 (5th floor) Philadelphia, PA 19104-2653

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