



"We were planting corn and they were planting crosses." - Faithkeeper Oren Lyons

The Religious Origins of White Supremacy: Johnson v. M'Intosh and the Doctrine of Christian Discovery.

8-10 December 2023
at Syracuse University

In the 1823 US Supreme Court decision, **Johnson v M'Intosh**, Chief Justice John Marshall wrote, "...discovery gave title to government...[and] the sole right of acquiring the soil from the natives." This decision underpins US property law. Marshall's deliberate use of the word "discovery" is an intentional reference to 15th Century Catholic Papal Bulls, which stated that any Christian who "discovers" a land populated by non-Christians has superior title, or rights of ownership, over that land. In essence, Johnson codifies into US law the principle of Euro-Christian domination over Indigenous Peoples. In the most devastating sense, the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DoCD) legitimized exploitation, extraction, and enslavement globally and enshrined these practices as the basis of U.S. property law still cited today as recently as 2005 (in **Sherrill v. Oneida**) and 2020 (**McGirt v. Oklahoma**).

In the 200th year of Johnson, there is an urgent need for global recognition of the decision's implications as reifying the DoCD and its exploitation of Indigenous Peoples and their connection to land, regarded as a living being (Mother Earth in English.) This conference builds on the history of collaboration at Syracuse University with Indigenous communities across Central New York by expanding dissemination of the pernicious ideologies of DoCD and Johnson, leading to further repudiation of these ideologies and towards healing and repair.

The project's key collaborators include **Syracuse University, American Indian Law Alliance (AILA), Indigenous Values Initiative (IVI), The Skä-noñh – Great Law of Peace Center, and others.** For more see the **Doctrine of Discovery Project site** (doctrineofdiscovery.org).

Call for Papers

We are interested in paper and session proposals from scholars, students, activists, artists, lawyers, policy makers, religious leaders, Indigenous leaders, and more. Our conference seeks to bring together a broad coalition of people working on examining not only the Doctrine of Christian Discovery but also the

religious origins of white supremacy.

We are interested in creating thematic panels on the following topics:

- What are the mythic origins of white supremacy within the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DoCD)?
- International implications of Johnson v. M'Intosh
- International implications of the DoCD and white supremacy
- The continuing impact of Johnson, DoCD, and white supremacy on Indigenous peoples
- Continuing Environmental impact of Johnson, DoCD, and white supremacy
- The rise of Christian Nationalism around the world
- Religious dimensions of racism
- Religious repudiations and resistance the DoCD
- Legal resistance to Johnson and the DoCD?
- How do we address and resist Johnson and settler colonialism today?

Guidelines

- Please send in a 300-word abstract of your paper and/or panel using the form on doctrineofdiscovery.org.
- CV/Resume
- Proposals should be received by **August 15**
- Acceptance notices will be sent on **September 1**
- Papers from graduate students are encouraged.
- Undergraduate panels with a professor are also encouraged.
- For questions, please email Prof. Philip P. Arnold at info@indigenousvalues.org
- Please submit your papers using the form on doctrineofdiscovery.org

Sponsored by: Syracuse University and the Henry Luce Foundation
Learn more at doctrineofdiscovery.org