“Not Contraband But Soldier”
the Fugitive Justice of Harriet Jacobs's Loopholes of Abolition

January 7, 2016 4-5:30pm  INTN 2043

This talk advances a radical abolitionist politics inspired by the practical and analytic import of Harriet Jacobs's critique of both slavery and the kinds of emancipation slavery precipitated. Syedullah's manuscript-in-process thinks the gendered protocols of testimony, solidarity, and retreat authored by Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* alongside the inaugural moments of the prison abolition movement in the 1970s. This talk connects the struggles of the slave girl, the criminal, the contraband, and the fugitive that converge during the American Civil War. Its argues that black inhabitations of the national democratic order represent a distinctly gendered politics of liberation that seeks freedom, not merely as a human right or as a redemptive resurrection of the revolutionary spirit, but as acts of seeming assimilation that reorder the domestic space of modern freedom from the inside out.

**Jasmine Syedullah** is a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the English Department at UC Riverside. Her current book project, “No Selves to Defend: living in the loopholes of legal recognition” is an activist-driven political theory of abolition rooted in the antislavery writings of Harriet Jacobs, the anti-prison testimonies of political prisoners Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, and narratives from the 1971 uprising at Alderson Federal Reformatory for Women.

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