

JOEL JONES MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

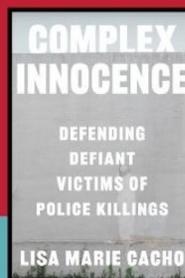
“IT’S NOT EVEN LOADED”

Suicide-by-Cop or Indigenous Self-Defense?

Lisa Marie Cacho - Associate Professor of American Studies - University of Virginia

This talk analyzes the police killing of Renee Davis, who was a Black Indigenous mother shot during a wellness check. Officers claimed she threatened their lives while her family’s legal suit represented her as suicidal. This strategic representation was used in part because, as Cacho argues, we have no legal narratives that would be able to frame law enforcement as the initial aggressors against Natives. When we suspend the need of legal recognition, Renee Davis’ final actions read less like evidence of self-destruction and more as evidence of self-defense.

Lisa Marie Cacho is an associate professor of American Studies at the University of Virginia. Her most recent book, *Complex Innocence: Defending Defiant Victims of Police Killings* (NYU press, 2026), offers a comparative race/ethnic studies approach to five cases of police killings in the United States, Hawai’i, and the Muckleshoot Nation. The book examines how victims of police killings have been criminalized for defending themselves in law and practice, while law enforcement officers are exonerated for killing them by claiming self-defense.



Lecture and Author Book Signing
Thursday, February 12th, 2026
4:30-6:30PM
Hodgin Hall - Bobo Room - UNM

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 DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN STUDIES