

We are pleased to invite you to LatCrit XIII, the Thirteenth Annual LatCrit (Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory) Conference, which starts in Seattle, Washington at Noon on Friday, October 3 and concludes Saturday night, October 4, 2008.

Please note the earlier Conference start time.

This year's theme is "Representation and Republican Governance: Critical Interrogation of Electoral Systems and the Exercise of the Franchise."

JUNIOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

As usual, we also will hold our Sixth Annual Junior Faculty Development Workshop, sponsored jointly with the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT), beginning at 9:00 a.m. Thursday, October 2 (the day before the conference program kicks off).

Please note the earlier Workshop start time.

SUNDAY EVENTS

Our Annual Board Meeting will take place Sunday, October 5. All LatCrit community members are invited to attend the open session and community luncheon starting at 1:00 p.m. after the board meeting and hear about our exciting portfolio of projects.

CONFERENCE THEME

Representation and Republican Governance: Critical Interrogation of Electoral Systems and the Exercise of the Franchise

A classic response to strivings for social justice, and a traditional antidote to subordination and political oppression, is reliance on the republican mode of government. In its purest form, this type of representational system promises that each individual, and each community organized around familiar identity markers or by shared interest, will have equal opportunity to advocate for their well being and equal access to the channels for expression of political choice. However, the republican form of government may also present a siren song, attracting adherents to embrace a model which inherently tends toward replicating and reinforcing essentializing hierarchical social structures. The promise of social and political equality seemingly offered by this model of ultimate popular authority can easily be thwarted without respect for certain external or transcendent principles. Without centering itself on egalitarianism and critical anti-subordination activism through interrogation of sociopolitical processes, republican government too often devolves into a tyranny of the majority that is then sustained by regressive restriction on electoral participation.

How is it that so many political communities around the world continue to fail in the effort to guarantee true political inclusion and to disrupt manifest patterns of subordination for all members? Is the premise that republicanism, or even liberal democracy in general, can ensure individual freedom fallacious, or have we yet to overcome the hurdles of human selfishness that

stand in the way? What explains this failure, and what are the specific obstacles we must clear? What pathways to change remain open, and how can coalition building be refocused on consensus for systemic change as well as substantive change through existing systems? In a survey of our current world situation, the case for change is clearly made.

Indeed, republican political models are universally vulnerable to majoritarianism, even when they aspire to advancement of traditionally subordinated interests. Dislodging embedded power differentials requires more than nominal guarantees of electoral access, and relies on actual and robust participation by all stake-holders at the political bargaining table, and yet this is precisely what we do not presently enjoy on a global scale. Electoral systems, domestic and international, are fraught with uncertainty and allegations of fraud. Political systems are manipulated by militarized juntas, entrenched oligarchies, and even pseudo-monarchical political families, with the result that essentialized and intersectional "others" are consistently and increasingly disenfranchised.

Such failures to include crucial constituencies, and to balance competing needs and interests, are destructive of the social condition generally, and raises particularly troubling issues in a wide variety of areas, ranging from racial and gender equality and class-based subordination to local, national and global governance. LatCrit XIII offers an opportunity to explore how the tension between representation and subordination plays out in different settings, and how the practice of silencing and exclusion has gone hand-in-hand with a professed commitment to equal access to political decision-making through representation. We seek to illuminate the processes by which socio-legal equality and transparency in government, which are pre-conditions for effective democratic representation, are forced to yield to hierarchies, subordinations, and disenfranchisement. The gender, class and race-based qualifications of yesterday, the spectacle of hanging chads in Florida, the debacle involving faulty voting machines in Ohio and elsewhere, the international insistence on "correct" electoral results in Gaza, the Russian oligarch/intelligence complex's engineering of the elections to the Duma, the influence of entrenched Representation and Republican Governance: Critical Interrogation of Electoral Systems and the Exercise of the Franchise family "vote-banks" in the global south, and the resurgence of xenophobic majoritarianism in Europe and the US, are but examples of the same foundational problem, namely, the disconnect between the promise of democratic representation and the actual operations of power.

LatCrit XIII, to be held in Seattle in 2008, presents the perfect place in space and time to consider the implications of these converging political crises-the issues of who speaks for whom, by what process the spokespersons are selected, and how these processes do or do not reinforce subordination. As we head into the 2008 election, and simultaneously move into a new era of sensitivity to the vulnerability of democratic systems, we seek to inquire into the limits of republican virtue and representational practice, the blind spots in liberal democratic theory, and the elusive balance between respecting an individual's right to political power and protecting individuals from the marginalizing effects of the exercise of political power.

As this will be the first LatCrit Conference held in Seattle, we also invite you to address questions that have particular salience for this city and region. Some examples might include: climate change/environmental balance, and the dominant position humans have assumed with

respect to the living ecosphere; the continuing challenges faced by domestic First Nations and the vitality of tribal political and social culture; the place of fish, and salmon in particular, in our area's history, mythology, and current social context; the influence of the Pacific Rim on domestic situations; and the many ways in which bio- and other technological innovations can disrupt or/and contribute to systems of exclusion and patterns of subordination. LatCrit's shifting area focus ensures that the geographic rotation of the conference helps to illuminate local and regional issues, and helps us incrementally to show and understand how local particularities produce inter/national patterns of privilege and subordination.

Everyone is encouraged to use these guideposts to draft a proposal, and then to submit a Program Proposal Proposal through our online process at the LatCrit website no later than March 14, 2008.

Standing LatCrit Conference Themes

Every year, LatCrit conferences also seek to feature and balance four basic perspectives in organizing the substantive program. These four perspectives are listed as themes below. They have, thus far, served as useful lenses of LatCritical inquiry, enabling LatCrit scholars to develop an impressive body of work that is increasingly linking issues of identity to the substantive analysis of law, policy and process. This effort to link identity issues to substantive analyses has been particularly fruitful in revealing the way race and ethnicity are implicated precisely in those areas of law and policy that are ordinarily thought not to be about race and ethnicity: for example, in the operations and assumptions of international law and legal process, foreign affairs, liberal democracy, religion and sexuality, to name just a few areas of recent LatCrit attention.

To build on these accomplishments, everyone is encouraged to develop their proposals with a view to: (1) expanding our understanding of the impact of race and ethnicity in substantive areas of law and policy ordinarily thought to be about "something other than race" (e.g. issues of sovereignty, labor rights, globalization, intellectual property, antitrust law); and (2) deepening our analysis of the various ways in which identity issues intersect, conflate and conflict in our self-understandings and coalitional efforts. The following four themes are offered, therefore, as possible points of reference for thinking in new ways about familiar issues (like affirmative action and bilingual education), as well as for encouraging critical forays into new substantive areas (like communications or antitrust laws):

- 1) Papers or panels that focus on the multidimensionality of Latina/o identity and its relationship to current legal, political and cultural regimes or practices. The ideal is to explicate aspects of the Latina/o experience in legal discourse, both domestically and internationally. Nonetheless, you are free to address identity issues that do not specifically touch upon Latina/o identity or the law.
- 2) Papers or panels especially salient to this region (the Northwest). Regional emphasis ensures that the Conference's geographic rotation will illuminate local issues, helping us understand how local particularities produce (inter)national patterns of privilege and subordination.

3) Papers or panels that elucidate cross-group histories or experiences with law and power, such as those based on the intersections of class, gender, race, sexuality and religion. In this way, each Conference aims to both elucidate intra-Latina/o diversities and contextualize Latina/o experience within inter-group frameworks and Euro-Heteropatriarchy. Accordingly, we constantly ask how we can create progressive movements, communities and coalitions that meaningfully recognize difference.

4) Papers or and panels that connect or contrast LatCrit theory to other genres of scholarship, both within and beyond law and legal theory, including but not limited to the various strands of critical outsider jurisprudence (critical race theory, feminist legal theory, queer legal theory) that critique class, gender, race, sexuality and other categories of social-legal identities and relations.

THE SPONSORING INSTITUTION

Seattle University School of Law is one of the nation's most innovative and respected law schools, known for training outstanding lawyers who are leaders for a just and humane world. The school is dedicated to the twin priorities of academic distinction and education for justice. Home to a talented and diverse faculty of committed teacher-scholars and among the country's top-ranked Legal Research and Writing programs, it is the largest and most diverse law school in the Pacific Northwest. The School of Law is located on Seattle University's beautifully landscaped, 46-acre urban campus in the lively Capitol Hill neighborhood just steps from downtown Seattle, one of the nation's leading legal, business, and cultural hubs. As one of the country's Jesuit law schools, Seattle University School of Law prides itself on its academic rigor, its devotion to social justice and its commitment to personal and practical education that prepares its graduates for a lifetime in law at the service of justice.

THE CONFERENCE SITE

As in past years, the conference site is designed to be accessible, comfortable, self-contained and affordable in order to promote both formal and informal interaction, and to foster a relaxed community ambiance even as we engage in our serious work. This year, we will be staying at the Silver Cloud Hotel-Broadway, located across the street from Seattle University and just 3 blocks into that campus to the law school where many of the conference events will take place. Because of the immediate proximity, we will not be providing organized transportation to the law school. The hotel is a 180-room modern facility with a fitness center and complimentary wired and wireless high speed internet in the guest rooms. We will send the hotel contact information to you, together with the conference registration materials, in the spring, so that everyone can make their hotel reservations directly at the same time you register for the conference. As usual, child care services will be facilitated, and partners and family members are warmly welcome to join us.

Save the dates ... and make your plans

¡ALL RESPONSES DUE: ASAP, and no later than March 14, 2008!