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Interim Law Dean's Welcome Message

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Welcome



INTERIM LAW DEAN'S WELCOME MESSAGE

January 18, 2021 • by Eric C. Christiansen • comments (0)

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Golden Gate University Race, Gender, Sexuality, & Social Justice Law Journal*. There has never been a more appropriate or important time to inaugurate a journal dedicated to the law's capacity to advance social justice than right now. And there is no better institution to inaugurate this new journal than *Golden Gate University School of Law*. Thank you to all our readers—now and in the years to come—who will help us move the values, principles, and ideas in this journal into communities and courtrooms in pursuit of equality and true justice.

BEYOND 2020

Here at the start of 2021, we stand – as a nation and a global community – facing a hopeful dawn after putting the challenging and overwhelming year of 2020 behind us. The year that is ending saw catastrophic environmental harms arising from the climate crisis, a global pandemic facilitated by political division and weak leadership, horrific public acts of racist violence and emboldened white supremacy drawn from our nation's incomplete reckoning with systemic racism. Although 2021 began with appalling and unprecedented attacks on democratic constitutionalism and the rule of law I am hopeful that as we address these challenges head on and educate ourselves and community through scholarship we will produce sustainable change and understanding.

This journal will offer principled insights about social justice and how the law and lawyers can advocate and work for a more inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist future.

A LAW SCHOOL AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

It is wholly appropriate that such a hopeful and ambitious project would originate with law students at GGU Law. More than a century ago GGU Law was formed to transform the legal profession. With historical roots that extend as far back as the California Gold Rush, the YMCA Evening Law School (later the Golden Gate Law College, and now Golden Gate University School of Law) has been expanding access to the legal profession for as long as it existed. At the turn of the last century, the legal profession was an elite and exclusive club. GGU Law was created to open the profession to those previously excluded – because of their family background, their social class, their religion or gender or race. GGU Law believed then –and now—that a profession that welcomed all persons would better advance justice for all communities.

Our history not only animates that mission and purpose, but it also demonstrates our capacity to survive and thrive in challenging times. In 1906, in the earliest years of this institution, the Great San Francisco Earthquake struck the city and, in the fires that followed, our school buildings were destroyed. We did not close, nor even pause our work. Instead, GGU Law moved the school to safer surroundings and taught classes in tents in Golden Gate Park. Our community knew then, as the launch of this journal affirms now, that times of crisis and conflict beg for our active engagement. It is the wrong time to sit back and watch the news happen. Rather, such moments call for our skills and our commitment to a better world.

These founding principles and resourceful traits still mark the institution we are. The mission to expand access to the legal profession remains an animating principle. Even today, GGU Law remains one of the most diverse law schools in the country; the most recent entering class consists of 60% students of color, 55% women, and 19% members of the LGBTQ community.

LOOKING TOWARD, AND STRIVING FOR, A MORE JUST FUTURE

If it is not abundantly evident, I am immensely proud of this journal, a labor of love inspired to a passion for justice. The journal's founding leaders—Bacilio Mendez II, Silvia Chairez-Perez, and Tiffany Avila—and its inaugural faculty sponsor—Professor Jyoti Nanda—have exhibited the values, commitment, and professionalism that ensure the long term success of the journal and the justice movements they support.

At GGU Law, we are a community that seeks to stand shoulder to shoulder with persons and communities that have experienced and continue to experience marginalization, discrimination, violence, and other forms of injustice. My wish for this journal is that it will give voice to those whose stories are too often overlooked; it will empower legal advocates to pursue inclusive, meaningful equality in necessary and novel ways; and it will connect a broad community of scholars and activists for years to come.

Eric C. Christiansen
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