Human Rights at a Crossroads? A Time for Critical Reflection on the Human Rights Project

This workshop brings together prominent experts from academia, leading human rights NGOs, and the United Nations to consider the challenges facing human rights, competing ideas about how human rights can address inequality and suffering, and what the agenda for the movement should be to confront the world's pressing human rights challenges.

Thursday, November 12, 2020
Panel 1 – The Nature of the Problem

The first session will consider a range of questions investigating the current crisis of human rights. How should we characterize the challenges facing the human rights movement today? Are these of a different nature than in the past? If so, what is new here? What are the manifestations of new challenges versus intensification of old ones? This discussion will be grounded in contemporary examples and consider their defining characteristics. Are the challenges of popular nationalism, digital technologies, counter-terrorism governance, etc., separate or related phenomenon? Is there a theory that explains the state of the field?

MODERATOR / COMMENTATOR:

- Naomi Roht-Arriaza
  Distinguished Professor of Law, Hastings College of the Law

PANELISTS:

- Philip Alston
  John Norton Pomeroy Professor of Law, New York University School of Law
  Director and Chair, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice

- Karen Engle
  Minerva House Drysdale Regents Chair in Law, University of Texas at Austin Law School
  Founder and Co-director, Bernard Audre Rapoport Center for Human Rights and Justice
Friday, November 13, 2020
Panel 2 – Is Human Rights Part of the Problem?

The second session asks us to consider the relationship between our conceptions of the human rights movement and our theories of social change on the one hand, and the strategies we deploy to defend human rights on the other hand. For example, one of the foundational assumptions driving a great deal of human rights work is that law, legal institutions, and rule of law are key drivers of progressive change. Yet pursuit of legal solutions has had consequences for how defenders conceptualize problems and develop a praxis to address them. To what extent do rights-based strategies complicate efforts to secure human rights? What is the role of human rights law in human rights as a social movement?

MODERATOR /COMMENTATOR:

• Jim Silk
  Binger Clinical Professor of Human Rights, Yale Law School
  Director, Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic
  Director, Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights

PANELISTS:

• Tendayi Achiume
  Professor of Law, UCLA School of Law
  Faculty Director, Promise Institute for Human Rights

• Brad Adams
  Asia Director, Human Rights Watch
Panel 3 – Where should the movement be headed?

In the final session, we look forward and ask what does a human rights agenda suited to this moment look like? What are the theories of change that are its scaffolding? What are the strategies that advance human rights in light of current challenges? What are alternatives to the current conceptions and strategies for human rights realization? What might replace conventional human rights strategies such as the “name and shame” model or promoting legal frameworks-enforcing legal rights and standards-strengthening “rule of law”?

MODERATOR /COMMENTATOR:

• Zinaida Miller
  Assistant Professor, International Law and Human Rights
  School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University

PANELLISTS:

• Roxanna Altholz
  Clinical Professor of Law, UC Berkeley School of Law
  Co-Director, International Human Rights Law Clinic
• **David Kennedy**  
  Manley O. Hudson Professor of Law, Harvard Law School  
  Faculty Director, Institute for Global Law and Policy

• **Viviana Krsticevic**  
  Executive Director, Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

• **Iain Levine**  
  Senior Human Rights Advisor, Facebook

• **Cesar Rodriguez-Garavito**  
  Director, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice  
  New York University School of Law

• **Meg Satterthwaite**  
  Professor of Clinical Law, New York University School of Law  
  Faculty Director and Co-Chair, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice  
  Faculty Director, Robert L. Bernstein Institute for Human Rights