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[Conference Proposal Form Link](#)

Conference Theme, UNLOCKING RACE & CLASS FOR JUST TRANSITIONS

The Civil Rights Era of the mid-20th century brought about reforms designed to establish formal legal equality for African Americans and other people of color. Thanks to what some have called the Second Reconstruction, it is no longer lawful to forcibly segregate children by race in public schools or to discriminate privately on the basis of race in public accommodations, housing, or employment. However, these reforms have not produced substantive equality for people of color, and in particular for the African American, Latinx and Native American communities. The wealth and income of these communities are far below that of whites, their poverty and unemployment rates are far above the national average, and they are far underrepresented among college graduates and in professions requiring higher education. There is still widespread de facto racial and ethnic segregation in schools and residential living patterns. And people of color are often harassed and brutalized by police and private citizens when engaged in normal human activities.

For several decades, scholarship in Critical Race Theory and LatCrit Theory has examined the role of ongoing racial discrimination in perpetuating these injustices and inequalities. Part of the explanation is the persistence of outright bigotry on the part of many whites. Despite laws prohibiting it, much private discrimination still occurs, as shown by the thousands of successful complaints of housing and employment bias annually filed with enforcement agencies. In addition, public officials and media personalities increasingly promote and engage in bigotry for political and economic advantage. Implicit bias is a second factor underlying ongoing racial inequalities. As research in cognitive psychology has demonstrated, awareness of racial stereotypes negatively affects the perceptions of and behavior toward people of color even among those who claim and may believe themselves to be colorblind. Finally, structural and institutional racism perpetuate the ongoing discrimination. Inequalities within and interactions among housing markets, the educational system, labor markets, and the carceral state magnify the effects of conscious and unconscious bias, producing “locked-in inequality.” In a very troubling way, the very study of these issues has come under political attack as state legislatures across the country have enacted laws to censor a broad range of ideas that loosely align with Critical Race Theory. Teachers are being fired and threatened with termination for teaching and speaking about implicit bias, structural discrimination, and racial privilege.

A somewhat different perspective is found in the literature on “racial capitalism.” Inspired by scholars in the Black radical tradition such as W.E.B. DuBois, Cedric Robinson, and Sylvia Wynter, historians and theorists of capitalism have begun to trace the relationship between global capitalism and white supremacy. From the dispossession of indigenous people in the “New World” to the establishment of Atlantic slavery, through the construction of empires of cotton, sugar, bananas, and other commodities that pulled colonized and racialized peoples around the globe into new supply chains designed to serve the European metropolises, the cheap land and labor produced by white supremacy has been central to the emergence of capitalism. The climate crisis, which currently threatens the well-being of the entire world and of which people of color and other marginalized communities bear the brunt, is an outcome of a globalized economic system based on extraction from and exploitation of these communities and of the planet at large. Indeed, new historical research suggests that capitalist tools and mechanisms—from accounting and management practices to mortgages, the corporate form, and private property itself—are the products of a mindset that has distributed the privileges of “humanity” unequally. This account

refuses the conventional question of “Is it race or class?” and suggests that the two are intimately intertwined.

This backdrop poses several questions. Is it possible to overcome white supremacy with the existing tools of American law? Can white supremacy and capitalism be disentangled? Is it possible, given what DuBois called the “wages of whiteness,” to build a more egalitarian society with minimal wealth and income disparities, high quality education and guaranteed employment for all, and comparable opportunities to seek fulfillment in life? Despite the enormous power of the moneyed elite, is it possible and what would it take to transform our society from one based on competition, profit, and individual satisfaction to one whose core values are working cooperatively, meeting people’s needs, and fairly sharing what society collectively produces among all its members? What might this “Just Transition” look like? And how do we equip lawyers to facilitate the transition?

Highlighting the Conference’s Co-Sponsors

It is particularly appropriate to have Thurgood Marshall School of Law host a conference revisiting the intersection of race and class. TMSL, whose primary mission is to afford opportunities to the disenfranchised and underserved of all ethnicities to enter the legal profession, is rated as one of the country’s most diverse law schools. One quarter of the African-American attorneys in the State of Texas are graduates of the law school. Many of its graduates have served in Congress, state legislatures and local governing bodies, in the federal and state judiciaries, and as leaders in non-governmental and grassroots organizations.

In keeping with ClassCrits’ recognition of the importance of linking theory and practice in the effort to create a more just society, we are excited to have TapRoot Earth as a participant in the conference. TapRoot Earth (formerly the Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy) is “a non-profit, public interest law firm and justice center with a mission to advance structural shifts toward climate justice and ecological equity in communities of color on the frontline of climate change.” TapRoot Earth’s many grassroots projects include: co-chairing the Water Equity and Climate Resilience Caucus to develop strategies to advance water equity for frontline communities; providing disaster legal services through its Disaster & Human Rights Legal Clinics in partnership with local public-interest legal service providers and social justice organizations; providing legal services to help establish Black and Indigenous owned small businesses with missions rooted in sustainability and long-term social good; and funding fellowship and internship programs to develop leadership skills for folks working in the unique landscape of the Gulf South.

This year’s ClassCrits special keynote speaker, Colette Pichon Battle, who has developed advocacy initiatives that intersect race, systems of power and ecology, will speak to a number of these issues. A Louisiana native, Colette Pichon Battle is the founder of Taproot (formerly the Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy). She has developed programing for and raised awareness on equitable disaster recovery, migration, economic development, climate justice and energy democracy. Working with elected officials, national funders and frontline communities since 2005, she also managed Taproot’s legal services for immigration law and disaster law. Colette Pichon Battle was named an Obama Fellow for her work with Black and Native communities on the frontline of climate change in 2019 and an Echoing Green Climate fellow in 2015. (The

conference will also host a toxic tour of Houston). Her Ted Talk, *Climate Change Will Displace Millions*, can be see [here](#).

Proposals

We invite proposals for individual paper presentations and panels that speak to this year's theme of *Unlocking Inequality: Revisiting the Intersection of Race and Class* as well as to general ClassCrits themes.¹ We anticipate at present that our conference will be live and in-person, although that could easily change with new developments in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Individual Proposals. Individual paper proposals should include a title and short abstract, along with the presenter's name, contact information, institutional affiliation (if any), and a short speaker bio (1-3 sentences). Individual papers (other than works-in-progress submissions, see below) will be grouped by the conference organizers into panels.

Panel Proposals. Panel proposals may use a variety of formats, including traditional paper presentations, roundtables, and audience discussions. Please indicate the format of the proposed panel, and include a proposed panel title, a short description of the overall topic, and a list of confirmed panelists, with contact information. For panels comprised of individual presentations, please include titles and short summaries of each presentation and a short bio (1-3 sentences) for each panelist or panel organizer.

Works in Progress. We extend a special invitation to junior scholars (*i.e.*, graduate students, aspiring faculty members, or faculty member with less than two years of experience in a full-time position) to submit proposals for *works in progress* (WIPs). A senior scholar as well as other scholars will comment upon each work in progress in a small, supportive working session. Due to the increasing popularity of our WIPs program, we may need to limit capacity. We anticipate selecting WIP papers on a first-come, first-served basis. Scholars submitting WIPs who are not selected to workshop their paper will have the opportunity to participate on a regular conference panel. Works-in-progress submissions for junior or emerging scholars seeking individualized presentations and comments should be clearly identified as "Work-in-Progress" and should similarly include a title, short abstract, name and contact information, and a 1-3 sentence bio

¹ ClassCrits themes include:

- ☐ The legal and cultural project of constructing inequalities of all kinds as natural, normal, and necessary.
- ☐ The relationships among economic, racial, and gender inequality.
- ☐ The development of new methods (including the interdisciplinary study and development of such methods) with which to analyze and criticize economics and law (beyond traditional "law and economics").
- ☐ The relationship between material systems and institutions and cultural systems and institutions.
- ☐ The concept and reality of class within the international legal community, within international development studies and welfare strategies, and within a "flattening" world of globalized economics and geopolitical relations.

identifying their current status as a student or new or aspiring faculty member (see details on previous page).

Please submit your proposal using the [application form](#) by August 1, 2022.

Logistics & Fees

The venue for the gathering is the Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Houston, TX. The conference will begin with a continental breakfast on Friday October 21, 2022, and continue through the evening reception on Saturday October 22, 2022. Arrangements are being made for conference hotels.

For updates, check www.classcrits.org, where you can also sign up as a ClassCrits member to be on our contact list and to post a profile that will build our network and showcase your work. Associate membership is free; full membership dues are \$25 for 2022 (includes ClassCrits, Inc. voting rights and 2022 conference discount).

The registration fee is \$275.00 for accepted presenters who are full-time faculty members; ClassCrits members get a discounted registration fee of \$250.

Scholarships for Travel Expenses.

ClassCrits has approximately 50 Scholarships to help defray expenses for attendance at the Conference. The Scholarship covers the registration fee (\$275) and up to 3 days of hotel room costs (it does not include airfare or other travel expenses). Activist, independent scholars, students, adjunct, clinical and other faculty with limited travel budgets will be prioritized, particularly those who wish to participate on panels, as discussant in roundtables, commentators on works-in-progress or in other formats.

To apply for a scholarship, go to the ClassCrits.org website and fill out the application.

Travel Information:

The Conference has reserved a block of rooms at the Hilton Houston Medical Center hotel, 6633 Travis Street, Houston, TX 77030, from October 20-23, 2022 at \$119 per night plus taxes. The reduced rate for most of the rooms expires on September 8, 2022, although ten will be available through September 29, 2022. Hotel contact info: 855-680-3239, www.guestreservations.com/hilton-houston-plaza-medical-center/booking?msclkid=7802779190331126c18915f38e5e9abc.

There are two airports in Houston, Bush Intercontinental Airport and Hobby Airport, the latter of which is closer to the hotel. Transportation is available between the airports and the hotel via taxi or van services. The conference will provide transportation between the hotel and the University.

For those with cars, parking is available at the hotel and University. Those planning to park at the University should contact Thomas.Kleven@tmslaw.tsu.edu to arrange a parking spot.

Who We Are

Fifteen years ago, a group of scholar-activists organized a series of conversations about law and economic class. Building on “outsider” jurisprudence that has moved inequalities of race, gender, and sexuality from the margins to the center of law, the group proposed a jurisprudence of economic inequality. To foreground economic justice, the group sought to critique mainstream law and economics and to focus on the lives of poor and working-class people.

Rejecting the neoliberal ideology of scarcity, and reclaiming the possibilities presented by the commons and by collective action, ClassCrits was born. Our name “ClassCrits” reflects our ties to critical legal analysis and our goal of addressing economic class in the multiple intersecting forms of subordination. We confront the roots of economic inequality in divisions such as race and gender and in legal and economic systems destructive to the well-being of humanity and the planet.

ClassCrits Conference Planning Committee

Shelley Cavalieri, University of Toledo College of Law
Antonia Eliason, University of Mississippi School of Law
Victoria Haneman, Creighton University School of Law
Angela Harris, U.C. Davis School of Law & U.C. Davis Center for Poverty Research
Danielle Kie Hart, Southwestern Law School
Lucy Jewel, University of Tennessee College of Law
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Athena Mutua, University at Buffalo School of Law
René Reich-Graefe, Western New England University School of Law
Lua Kamal Yuille, Northeastern University School of Law

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