

To: SSSP Board of Directors and the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee
Cc: Richard Dello Buono, Hector Delgado, David Fasenfest, Alison Griffith, Tom Hood, Shirley Jackson, and Javier Trevino
From: John Dale, Chair, SSSP Transnational Initiatives Committee
Date: July 12, 2013
Re: Report from the Ad Hoc Transnational Initiatives Committee

hector.delgado49@gmail.com
ricardo.dellobuono@manhattan.edu
tomhood@utk.edu
jacksons1@southernct.edu
agriffith@edu.yorku.ca
jtrevino@wheatonma.edu

At the 2012 SSSP Annual Meeting in Denver, Richard Dello Buono, Hector Delgado, David Fasenfest, Alison Griffith, Tom Hood, Shirley Jackson, and Javier Trevino, and John Dale agreed to a plan to have John Dale co-organize (with David Kyle) a one-day SSSP mini-conference on “Re-Imagining Human Rights” at the Westin at Time Square in New York City (the site of the 2013 SSSP Annual Meeting). Richard Dello Buono and David Fasenfest agreed to play an advisory role, and suggested that we pay a \$500 stipend to Michelle Koontz to help offset the cost of her administrative assistance in organizing the hotel conference rooms and registration.

The purpose of this conference is to highlight perspectives on human rights from the global South, and invites scholars and practitioners to discuss the challenge of creative action within the context of significant power inequalities embedded in current institutional arrangements and practices of human rights. We also set out to attract participants from outside the United States to create a transnational dialogue on the meaning of human rights practices in cultural contexts outside the global North, and to explore the rich research and scholarship on (as well as activism on behalf of) global justice that is influencing diverse civil society actors across the global South in their efforts to shape the unfolding institutional development of human rights. Finally, we hope to attract new international members to the SSSP who register for the conference, and continue developing these contacts into broader networks of association for developing future SSSP activities and events.

John Dale and Richard Dello Buono met with the SSSP Board of Directors and the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee that same day to request two rooms and \$500 to help with the conference, which they approved.

Since that meeting in August, John Dale and David Kyle organized the conference around the theme, “Re-Imagining Human Rights: The Challenge of Agency, Creativity, and Global Justice.” The Conference will take place at The Westin New York at Time Square on August 12th, from 8:45 am to 5:00 pm in the Plymouth and Pearl Rooms.

Dale and Kyle put out a call for papers in January, 2014 (see Attachment A), and induct volunteer labor from graduate students at GMU to help set up a Gmail site reimagininghumanrights@gmail.com and Facebook page for managing paper submissions.

The response to the call for papers was much greater than we had expected, and the quality of the submissions was excellent. We had to turn down two-thirds of our submissions. Nearly half are coming from, or conducting extensive research, outside the United States. To access the program with a full list of panelists and presentations, visit <http://www.sssp1.org/ReimaginingHR> (or see Attachment B). We have 77 people pre-registered for the conference through the SSSP, and an additional 20 who have communicated with us by e-mail that they will be attending.

Camilo Pérez-Bustillo and Karla Hernandez Mares will present the keynote address. Camilo Pérez-Bustillo is Research Professor of the Graduate Program in Human Rights and the Faculty of Law, at the Autonomous University of Mexico City (UACM), and is currently a visiting researcher at the University of Bergen, Norway, hosted by the [Comparative Research Program on Poverty](#) (CROP). His colleague and co-presenter Karla Hernandez Mares is a documentary photographer and video producer who has worked closely in Mexico with the [Tlachinollan Human Rights Center](#) and the [Mexican Section of Amnesty International](#) in the Highlands of Guerrero, where grassroots movements have flourished in response to militarization in the wake of the "drug war" and the depredations of mega-projects related to mining and hydro-electricity.

The Conference offers thirty presentations distributed across eight panels exploring wide-ranging debates and innovative themes:

(1) "Human Personhood and the State of Human Rights"; (2) "The Human Rights Enterprise: The History and Future of Human Rights as Revolutionary Praxis"; (3) "Beyond Hegemonic Human Rights?"; (4) "Locating Human Rights: Values, Institutions, and Creative Action"; (5) "Social Agency and the Cultural Work of Global Justice"; (6) "(Re)Capturing the Range of Imagination: Reflexive, Rational, and Measured Creativity"; (7) "The Multiple Dimensions and Principles of Global Justice"; and (8) "Interrogating Expert Knowledge: The (Un)Making of Torture as a Human Rights Violation."

The panels will highlight projects or research within local, regional, and transnational contexts that offer insight for democratizing the production of human rights. Do understandings of justice in the Global South meaningfully shape those institutionalized as human rights, or do human rights in the name of "global justice" emanate only from the North to the South? How does the social organization of transnational solidarity actors across communities of the Global North and South reflect the values they pursue? What is the quality and value of the social relationships upon which such solidarities are formed? How is the creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship of local NGOs "measured" and constrained by the performative expectations and "best practices" of philanthropic donors and impact investors who provide the resources for human rights work? How do our negotiated understandings of human agency and personhood across transnational cultural and political fields shape the (re)production and (trans)formation of human rights?

We will be digitally recording these panels so that we can You-Tube and use them on the SSSP website, and invite educators in universities around the world to consider using them in courses that they are teaching on human rights.

In addition to the SSSP and the journal of [Critical Sociology](#) who originally agreed to co-sponsor the conference, Dale and Kyle garnered co-sponsorship and raised an additional \$3500 from the [Section on Human Rights](#) of the American Sociological Association, George Mason University's international [Consortium on Global Problem Solving](#) and [Office of Global and International Strategies](#), [University of California, Davis' Office of University Outreach and International Programs](#) and [Department of Sociology](#), University of Connecticut's [Human Rights Institute](#). These funds enabled them to offer \$1000 to offset the keynote speaker's travel expenses from Mexico, and to pay for the hotel costs of making available AV equipment and coffee for participants during the proceedings.

Registration is free for anyone who is already registered for the annual meetings of the ASA or Society for the Study Social Problems, but Co-organizers John Dale and David Kyle request that those planning to attend please RSVP by e-mail: ReimaginingHumanRights@gmail.com to help them organize seating and budget for refreshments. The Conference is open to the public, but for those not registered we ask for a minimum donation of \$20 at the door to help offset the hotel charges for additional seating and refreshments.

Following the conference, John Dale will be creating a database of these conference participants (including also registrants) with an eye toward following up with international participants in particular. We plan to have the Committee maintain this database moving forward, enabling us to contact them and encourage their future participation – including their involvement in co-organizing panels around topics of transnational interest, serving on award committees, attending the SSSP's annual Award Banquet, and contributing to the SSSP newsletter. We would also like to have *at least one* such member serving on the Transnational Initiatives Committee. (This year's keynote speaker might be a good candidate.)

Finally, we plan to publish some of the papers of this conference as an edited collection either in *Critical Sociology* or in a separate book with Brill/Haymarket, helping to disseminate the work and identity of the SSSP's commitment to fostering the development of transnational research with serious implications for progressive, egalitarian social change, public policy and social justice.

In addition to organizing this mini-conference, the Transnational Initiatives Committee also worked with the Chair of SSSP Global Division Tony Samara to develop a Thematic Session on Human Rights Practice for the 2013 Annual Meeting (which we co-sponsored with the Law & Society Division). We also organized a panel addressing issues relating to economic and social rights and the politics of corporate as well as NGO accountability, "Transnational Social Movements, Markets, and Change." John Dale was the co-organizer (with Paul Dean, a member of the Global Division's Executive Committee) and will be the discussant.

Re-Imagining Human Rights – The Challenge of Agency, Creativity, and Global Justice

Conference Co-Sponsored by *Critical Sociology*,
The Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the
Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association

August 12, 2013 (8:45 am to 5:00 pm)
The Westin New York at Times Square
New York, NY

CALL FOR PAPERS

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS MARCH 31, 2013

This one-day conference on “Re-imagining Human Rights” invites scholars and practitioners to discuss the challenge of power and inequalities embedded in current institutional arrangements and practices of human rights.

The production of human rights is not immune to the effects of inequalities across the global North and South. Conference panels will highlight projects or research within local, regional, and transnational contexts that offer insight for democratizing the production of human rights. Do understandings of justice in the Global South meaningfully shape those institutionalized as human rights, or do human rights in the name of “global justice” flow only from the North to the South? Does the social organization upon which transnational solidarity links actors across communities of the Global North and South reflect the human rights values that they pursue? What is the quality of the social relationships upon which such solidarities are formed? To what extent is the creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship of NGOs “measured” and constrained by the performative expectations of philanthropic donors and impact investment brokerages that provide the resources for their human rights work? How do our understandings of human agency and personhood shape the (re)production and (trans)formation of human rights?

We are particularly interested in learning from organizations and practices founded in the global South or affiliated transnational partnerships. In the shadow of the United Nations, the conference also will devote special attention to grassroots human rights projects and collaborative alliances operating in New York City. Participants will engage in a transnational dialogue and reflexive engagement across scholarly and activist communities (though not exclusive categories). Thus, the role of a common human rights imagination, or multiple co-existing human rights imaginations, may be a starting point for a new dialogue on academic and other approaches.

We invite submissions of 300-500 words on a broad range of topics related to human rights. We are especially interested in submissions that address the following themes: the inclusion of marginalized identities; making room for alternative conceptions of justice; developing creative narratives of agency and ontologies of human personhood; alternative transnational imaginaries; strengthening collaborative relations between critical academic research approaches and NGO

activism; and identifying existing local and alternative institutional arrangements for building human rights.

- **Deadline for submission of abstracts: Midnight, March 31, 2013**
- Selected participants will be notified by April 15, 2013. **Full drafts of accepted papers are due June 30, 2013.**
- **Papers presented at the conference will be considered for publication in a planned special issue of *Critical Sociology* and/or in a separate edited book.**
- The Conference will be free and open to the public. Conference participants will be responsible for covering their own travel and lodging expenses.
- Please send abstracts to conference organizers and guest editors John Dale and David Kyle at ReimaginingHumanRights@gmail.com by midnight, March 31, 2013. Include your name, institutional affiliation (if applicable), and a short biography of not more than 80 words.
- Keep in touch:
 - Twitter: @ReimaginingHR
 - Facebook: Reimagining Human Rights
 - Website: http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/531/Mini-Conference_on_Re-Imagining_Human_Rights/

Please circulate to networks, organizations, departments, colleagues, activists, students, and other interested parties.

Conference on Re-Imagining Human Rights

Re-Imagining Human Rights – The Challenge of Agency, Creativity, and Global Justice

Conference Co-Sponsored by *Critical Sociology*, The Society for the Study of Social Problems, the Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association, George Mason University's Consortium on Global Problem Solving and Office of Global and International Strategies, the University of California, Davis' Office of University Outreach and International Programs and Department of Sociology, the University of Connecticut's Human Rights Institute

Monday, August 12, 2013

8:30am-5:15pm

The Westin New York at Times Square, New York, NY
9th Floor

Conference Schedule

Coffee: 8:30 – 9:00am

Opening Plenary: 9:00 – 9:20am

Welcoming Remarks from Conference Co-organizers:

“Human Rights and the Sociology of the Imagination”

John G. Dale /*George Mason University* and David J. Kyle /*University of California, Davis*

Keynote Speakers: 9:20 – 10:00am Camilo Pérez-Bustillo and Karla Hernandez Mares, *Human Rights from Below: Indigenous Peoples, Migration, Poverty, and Human Rights*

Pearl Room: Panel 1A - 10:15am – 12:00pm

Human Personhood and the State of Human Rights

Discussant: John Dale /*George Mason University*

Presentations:

“The Transnational Challenge: Why the Human Rights Paradigm Cannot Save the World (or Even Itself)”

Tomer Shadmy /*Tel Aviv University*

“International Relations in a Community of Human Rights States”

Benjamin Gregg /*University of Texas at Austin and Europa Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany*

“International Human Rights for Refugees: The Difficult Case of Xenophobic Discrimination”

Tendayi Achiume / *University of California, Los Angeles*

“Reconstructing the Human: How Social Justice Initiatives Can Re-Imagine Anti-racist Strategies”

Camille Solá /*George Washington University*

Plymouth Room: Panel 1B - 10:15am – 12:00pm

The Human Rights Enterprise: The History and Future of Human Rights as Revolutionary Praxis

Discussant: Davita Glasberg /*University of Connecticut, Associate Dean of Social Sciences, Professor of Sociology, Gladstein (Human Rights) Committee Member*

Presentations:

“The Human Rights Enterprise, Human Rights Praxis, and Struggles to End the Global ‘War on Drugs’”

William T. Armaline /*San Jose State University*

“Beyond Co-optation: Shadow Reports, Funding, and Human Rights Praxis”

Shweta Adur, Roseanne Njiru, Bandana Purkayastha, and Farhan Yusaf (equal co-authors) /*University of Connecticut*

“Direct Action as Guarantor: Food Justice and the Human Rights Enterprise”

Deric Shannon /*San Jose State University*

“Undoing the Reasonable Middle: Gender and Sexuality in the Anti-austerity Movements and the Human Rights Enterprise”

Abbey Willis /*University of Connecticut*

“Doing Human Rights: The Human Rights Enterprise as a Model for Studying Grassroots Level Activism”

Barret Katuna /*University of Connecticut*

Lunch Break: Noon – 12:45pm

Pearl Room: Panel 2A - 1:00pm – 2:15pm

Beyond Hegemonic Human Rights?

Presentations:

“Human Rights Industry: Humanitarian Imperialism Toward the Global South”

Tugrul Keskin /*Portland State University*

“The Rise of Human Rights in the Citizenship Discourse among Religious Minorities in Egypt”

Hyun Jeong Ha /*University of Texas at Austin*

“Hijacking Rights: Using Local Context and Language to Refigure Human Rights Demands in the Arab Uprisings”

Nev Dzamonja /Columbia University

“The Human Rights of Empty Persons: Buddhist Any-foundationalism and the Dalai Lama’s New Conception of Human Rights”

Christopher Kelley /Columbia University

Plymouth Room: Panel 2B - 1:00pm – 2:15pm

Locating Human Rights: Values, Institutions, and Creative Action

Presentations:

“Human Rights: How and Where Do We Learn What They Are?”

Judith Blau /*Director of the Human Rights Center of Chapel Hill and Carrboro (North Carolina) and Former Chair of the Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association*

“Building a Rights-Based Framework in “Non-Immigration” Regimes: Ethnography of Labor Migrants’ Rights Activism in Israel and Singapore”

Nelly Kfir /*Tel Aviv University*

“Interpretive Communities, Contesting Rights”

Ishita Sharma /*Columbia University*

“Whose Imagination Is It Anyway? Tomatoes, Agricultural Labor, and Border Crossing Creativity”

Melissa Gouge /*George Mason University*

Pearl Room: Panel 3A - 2:30pm – 3:45pm

Social Agency and the Cultural Work of Global Justice

Presentations:

“From Principle to Pragmatism: The Motivational Life Cycle of Transnational Democracy and Human Rights Movements”

Tsveta Petrova /*Harriman Institute at Columbia University*

“Constructing Themselves as Rights-Bearing Subjects”

Federico Oliveri /*Sciences for Peace Interdisciplinary Centre, University of Pisa, Italy*

“Human Rights and Participatory Democracy in Venezuela”

Anderson Bean /*George Mason University*

“Collaborative Barriers and Cultural Brokers: Competing Conceptions of Gender Equality and Human Rights in Norte de Potosi, Bolivia”

Jenny Cockburn /*University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada*

Plymouth Room: Panel 3B - 2:30pm – 3:45pm

(Re)Capturing the Range Imagination: Reflexive, Rational, and Measured Creativity

Discussants: David Kyle /*University of California, Davis* and John Dale /*George Mason University*

Presentations:

“Eyes in the Sky: Satellite Technology and Human Rights”

Virginia K. Dixon /*Open Society Foundations*

“Picturing Atrocity”

Anna Gaarde /*Columbia University*

“Intervention and Non-Intervention on the Way to U.S. Same-Sex Marriage: African Sanctions, Trans* Employment, and Political Cost Containment Via Human Rights Globalism”

A.J. Juskewycz /*Princeton University*

Pearl Room: Panel 4A - 4:00pm – 5:15pm

The Multiple Dimensions and Principles of Global Justice

Presentations:

“Re-conceptualizing Transitional Justice”

Matiangai Sirleaf /*University of Pennsylvania*

“From Victims to Actors: Participation, Agency, and Power in Transitional Justice Processes”

Simon Robins /*Independent practitioner, researcher, and consultant who holds a Ph.D. from the Post-War Reconstruction Unit of York University, United Kingdom*

“Human Rights, Environmental Sustainability, and Social Power: Evaluating Principles of Justice in the Adjudication of Sao Paulo’s Water Conflicts”

LaDawn Haglund /*Arizona State University*

Plymouth Room: Panel 4B - 4:00pm – 5:15pm

Interrogating Expert Knowledge: The (Un)Making of Torture as a Human Rights Violation

Presentations:

“How Torture Became a Violation of Human Rights: Expert Knowledge and State Cruelty in the Twentieth Century”

Lisa Stampnitzky /*Harvard University*

“Policing, Violence and Justice: Understanding Police Response to Human Rights Education in India”

Rachel Wahl /*New York University*