

## ◆ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ◆

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Professors Tawia Ansah, Allison Dussias, John Cerone  
& Dina Haynes

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United Nations

We hope you enjoyed today's symposium and found the discussions interesting and thought-provoking.

Sincerely,

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&  
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*Present*

# DIVERSE VOICES DIFFERENT STRATEGIES:

## Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

March 31, 2011

Radisson Hotel

200 Stuart Street

Boston, MA



The International Law Society (ILS) is a non-profit association of students and young lawyers dedicated to the study and promotion of international law. ILS's mission is to promote awareness, study and understanding of international law and related issues. Generally, legal education in the U.S. and elsewhere focuses upon domestic or local law. ILS is dedicated to supplementing this traditional approach with opportunities for study, research and career networking which concentrates on international and transnational law. By combining the resources of our law-school chapters worldwide, ILS seeks to make available to our members resources that each individual school may not be able to provide. ILS seeks to encourage communication and cooperation among law students and other interested individuals internationally; increase opportunities to learn about other cultures and legal systems worldwide; and publicize career opportunities in international law.

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**Adonia R. Simpson:**

Adonia R. Simpson joined Masferrer & Associates in October 2010. She was born in Long Beach, California and grew up abroad in Peru, Colombia and Algeria. After obtaining her Bachelors of Arts from the University of Kansas, she attended New England Law in Boston, Massachusetts. Prior to joining Masferrer & Associates, Adonia served as the Fellow for the Center for Law and Social Responsibility at New England Law. She worked with Special Immigrant Juveniles in conjunction with Greater Boston Legal Services. Adonia has also served as an international observer during a murder trial in Popayán, Colombia for Rights & Democracy.

Adonia represents clients in Immigration Court, Family and Probate Court, Juvenile Court and before United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Long committed to immigrant rights, her focus is on defensive and affirmative petitions for immigration benefits.

magazine, which he helped earn the coveted Utne Independent Press Award for General Excellence in 2004. From 1997 to 2003, he was editor of Terrain magazine, a Berkeley-based environmental news quarterly, where his writers won two Project Censored awards.

**Jennifer Weston:**

Jennifer Weston (Hunkpapa Lakota) is a program officer for Cultural Survival's Endangered Languages Program: Revitalizing Native American Languages. Jennifer coordinates fundraising and outreach activities with 6 tribal language programs, maintains a network of contacts among more than 300 Native language programs throughout the U.S., and organizes annual language summits with a coalition of national and intertribal organizations. Jennifer grew up on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in the Dakotas, and has served her tribal government as environmental outreach coordinator, grant writer, and executive assistant to the tribal chairman. As a student and employee at Brown University, Jennifer developed American Indian studies curricula and community programs to support Native student recruitment and retention. Prior to joining CS in 2008, she worked as a correspondent for the Lakota Nation Journal, an associate producer for the PBS Native history documentary series and website, "We Shall Remain," and as a researcher and assistant producer for Makepeace Productions.

***New England Journal of International and Comparative Law  
and the International Law Society***

March 31, 2011

Dear Guest,

We would like to welcome you to New England Law | Boston. The school began in 1908 as Portia Law School. When the school was founded it was the only law school in the United States that provided a legal education exclusively to women. For decades, most of the women that passed the Massachusetts bar exam were Portia graduates.

New England Law | Boston has changed dramatically over the last 100 years, including new and updated facilities and a curriculum that has expanded to include international issues. Enrollment has grown from just two women in 1908 to more than one thousand male and female students.

This year, we will be reviewing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes both the collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples to fully enjoy basic human rights, which include Indigenous cultural rights, the right to education, health, employment, and language. The treaty was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 and endorsed by the Obama administration on December 16, 2010.

In approaching this topic, we will present two panels followed by discussion. The first panel will be composed of legal practitioners with expertise in Native and Indigenous Rights. The second panel will be composed of members of the media, academics, and advocates whose work has been centered on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This conference will offer diverse viewpoints regarding the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and different strategies for its successful implementation.

Sincerely,

***The New England Journal of International and Comparative Law and the International Law Society***

## ◆ PANEL TWO ◆

The UNDRIP protects many of the basic human rights that have been denied to indigenous peoples for hundreds of years. Some of these human rights are the freedom from discrimination, of autonomous government, from forced assimilation, to their traditional culture, to their traditional religions, and to use their traditional medicines. Many of the world's indigenous populations had been denied these basic human rights, as we view them today, from the days in which they were colonized.

### **Sylvia Escárcega:**

Sylvia Escárcega is Assistant Professor of Latin American & Latino Studies at DePaul University. She is the author of several articles on the politics of indigenusness at the United Nations and the Global Indigenous Movement. She is also the co-editor of a book on the ethno-political impacts of indigenous transnational migration. Her current work focuses on the empowerment of different sectors -women, youth, migrants- within the Global Indigenous Movement, the networking strategies with other social movements and NGOs, and the proposal of Indigenous paradigms as solutions for the challenges posed by climate change. Another issue of interest has been the role of academia in activism and Indigenous struggles. She has worked extensively with different Indigenous activists participating at United Nations processes since 1997 and at the World Social Forum process since 2007. Throughout the years, she has also followed many other Indigenous meetings and encounters throughout the Americas. At DePaul, Sylvia has developed curricula in relation to Indigenous struggles and activism and has led students' trips to the United Nations, Chiapas, Hawai'i and the Mexico-U.S. border.

### **Laird Townsend:**

Laird Townsend is the director of Project Word, a nonprofit organization that advances media diversity in the United States. Operating as a grant-funded editor at large, Project Word identifies and develops stories about marginalized communities—and by ethnically diverse journalists. Its articles have appeared in Mother Jones, The Boston Globe, The Nation, National Geographic News Watch, Atlantic on-line, and other media outlets. Townsend, an Associated Press-trained journalist, has edited upwards of 100 journalists of all levels, from New York Times reporters to beginners. Before founding Project Word in 2007, he was features editor at Orion

promote human rights for his people in Nicaragua. In 1981, Mr. Wiggins was forced into exile. It was at this time that he began working for the Center as the Director of its Central and South American Program. For the past two decades he has worked on numerous human rights cases involving indigenous peoples throughout the Americas including the Yanomami in Brazil, the case against Nicaragua in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 1984, which led to changes in the constitution of Nicaragua for the recognition of indigenous rights and the creation of autonomous indigenous regions in Nicaragua. He worked on a case for the Maya in Belize. Then on behalf of the Center, Mr. Wiggins played a leading role in the precedent-setting Awas Tingni case within the Inter-American system. He has also played a critical role in the Center's standard-setting work with the United Nations and the Organization of American States, particularly regarding the Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Currently, as the Director of the Washington DC Office, Mr. Wiggins supervises the work of the Center dealing with human rights, standard setting and Multi-lateral Development Banks.

## ◆ SCHEDULE ◆

### Panel 1: 9am – 11am

#### **Legal strategies and viewpoints on the successful implementation of UNDRIP**

*Allison Dussias – New England Law | Boston*

*Kristen Hite – Center for International Environmental Law*

*Siegfried Wiessner – St. Thomas University School of Law*

*Armstrong Wiggins – Indian Law Resource Center*

### Panel 2: 11am – 1pm

#### **Journalism, academia, and activism: Diverse perspectives on global indigenous movements, marginalized communities, and the importance of UNDRIP**

*Sylvia Escárcega – DePaul University*

*Laird Townsend – Project Word*

*Jennifer Weston – Cultural Survival*

## ◆ PANEL ONE ◆

### **Allison Dussias:**

Professor Dussias teaches American Indian Law, Business Organizations, Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Property, and Religious Freedom at New England Law | Boston. She is the author of articles on American Indian law, on topics including religious freedom, property rights, and tribal sovereignty. Before joining the New England Law faculty in 1991, she was an associate at Sullivan & Cromwell in New York, where her principal practice areas were corporate and securities law.

### **Kristen Hite:**

Kristen Hite is an attorney in the Climate Program of the Center for International Environmental Law. Prior to joining CIEL, she worked at Environmental Defense Fund to help craft laws and policies to channel international financial flows towards more sustainable development. From 2005-2007 she served as Assistant District Counsel for the Army Corps of Engineers in New Orleans, assisting with rebuilding efforts following Hurricane Katrina. While in law school, Ms. Hite was an executive editor of the Georgetown International Environmental Law Review for which she co-directed a symposium on International Responses to the Environmental Consequences of War. A founding member of SustainUS, she has been a spokesperson for international youth during UN negotiations on sustainable development.

### **Siegfried Wiessner:**

Siegfried Wiessner is a Professor of Law at St. Thomas University School of Law and the Founder and Director of its LL.M. and J.S.D. Programs in Intercultural Human Rights. He holds a law degree (1977) as well as a Dr. iur. (1989) from the University of Tübingen and an LL.M. from Yale (1982). He is the Editor-in-Chief of Martinus Nijhoff's STUDIES IN INTERCULTURAL HUMAN RIGHTS. In fall 2009, he was a Fernand Braudel Senior Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. From 2007 to 2010, he was a member of the Executive Council of The American Society of

International Law. Since 2008, he has served as the Chair of the International Law Association's Committee on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, tasked with writing an authoritative commentary on the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Professor Wiessner teaches U.S. Constitutional Law and International Law. He has published widely in the fields of constitutional law, international law, human rights, international indigenous law, the law of armed conflict, arbitration, space law and refugee law. His articles include Rights and Status of Indigenous Peoples: A Global Comparative and International Legal Analysis, 12 HARV. HUM. RTS. J. 57 (1999); Indigenous Sovereignty: A Reassessment in Light of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 41 VANDERBILT J. TRANSNAT'L L. 1141 (2008); Re-Enchanting the World: Indigenous Peoples' Rights as Essential Parts of a Holistic Human Rights Regime, UCLA J. INT'L L. & FOREIGN AFF. (forthcoming, 2011); and The Cultural Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Achievements and Continuing Challenges, EUR. J. INT'L L. (forthcoming, 2011). In 1989, he published a book on the function of nationality (DIE FUNKTION DER STAATSANGEHÖRIGKEIT, Tübingen University Press), and he is the co-author, with Michael Reisman, Mahnoush Arsanjani and Gayl Westerman, of INTERNATIONAL LAW IN CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE (Foundation Press, 2004).

### **Armstrong Wiggins:**

Armstrong A. Wiggins is the Director of the Indian Law Resource Center, Washington D.C. Office. Mr. Wiggins was born in Nicaragua in 1948 and is a Miskito Indian from the village of Karata, Nicaragua. Mr. Wiggins was the Founder of the Indian Organization called ALPROMISU and was the Coordinator of Municipal Affairs of the East Coast for the government of Nicaragua. He was also the national representative of the regional Indian organization MISURASATA. Mr. Wiggins was arrested twice during both the Somoza and Sandinista regimes and became a political prisoner because of his work to