

## RELIGION, THE LAW, AND THE CHALLENGE OF LGBTI RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA

A workshop organized by American University's Center for Latin American and Latino Studies (CLALS)  
and the Washington College of Law's Impact Litigation Project  
with generous support from the Henry Luce Foundation  
October 19, 2015

### WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

**Maurico Albarracín** has worked for several years with the group Colombia Diversa, an LGBT human rights organization in Colombia. He holds an LLM from American University's Washington College of Law and a Masters of Law from the Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia). His areas of interest include international human rights law, constitutional law, legal sociology and theory. Mr. Albarracín's research focuses on the relationship between the law and social movements. He reflects on these issues in his blog [www.malbarracin.com](http://www.malbarracin.com) and writes for the Colombian news website La Silla Vacía. He has also been a Consultant at Human Rights Watch in Colombia. Email: [malbarracin@gmail.com](mailto:malbarracin@gmail.com)

**Robert Albro** is Research Associate Professor at American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies. He received his PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of Chicago. His research and writing focus on popular and indigenous politics along Bolivia's urban periphery, including the role of gender in politics. He is the author of *Roosters at Midnight: Indigenous Signs and Stigma in Local Bolivian Politics* (SAR Press, 2010). Over the years his work has been supported by the National Science Foundation, Rockefeller and Mellon foundations, and the American Council for Learned Societies, among others. He has been a Fulbright scholar, and held fellowships at the Carnegie Council, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Kluge Center of the Library of Congress. Dr. Albro currently serves as Co-PI of the CLALS initiative on Religion and Democratic Contestation in Latin America. Email: [robert.d.albro@gmail.com](mailto:robert.d.albro@gmail.com)

**Hugo Córdova Quero** is Adjunct Faculty at Starr King School for the Ministry. He holds a PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion, Migration, and Ethnic Studies from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. His research interests include religious studies and queer theologies, ethnic and migration studies, critical theories (feminist, queer, and postcolonial), cultural studies, and geography of religion. Dr. Córdova Quero has published numerous articles on these topics and is co-editor of *Transnational Faiths: Latin American Immigrants and Their Religions in Japan* (Ashgate, 2014), which focuses on the role that faith and religious institutions play in the migrants' process of settlement and integration, and *Queering Migrations Towards, From, and Beyond Asia* (Palsgrave, 2014), which explores the intersection of migration, gender, religion, and queer theory among trans/pacific sojourners. Email: [hquero@sksm.edu](mailto:hquero@sksm.edu)

**Jordi Díez** is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Guelph in Ontario where he teaches Comparative Politics, Latin American Politics and Comparative Public Policy. He received his PhD from the University of Toronto and has been recipient of numerous research awards, including from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the International Development Research Council (IDRC). Professor Díez's research focuses on Latin American politics, processes of democratization, comparative public policy, citizenship studies, and the politics of sexual minority rights. He is the author of *The Politics of Gay Marriage in Latin America: Argentina, Chile and Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), and was the recipient of the 2014-15 Peggy Rockefeller Visiting Scholarship at Harvard University. Email: [jdiez@uoguelph.ca](mailto:jdiez@uoguelph.ca)

**Joseph Eldridge** is University Chaplain at American University and Senior Professional Lecturer in AU's School of International Service. He holds an MA in international relations from American University, an MDiv from the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, and a DMin from Wesley Theological Seminary.

Dr. Eldridge's research interests include U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America, U.S. human rights policy, the role of religion in international relations, and interfaith life and practice. He has spent more than twenty-five years working in the public policy arena as an advocate and analyst on international human rights and humanitarian issues. Dr. Eldridge established the Washington Office of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights in 1991, worked in Honduras as a consultant on human rights and development issues during the mid-1980s, and co-founded the Washington Office on Latin America and served as its first director in the early 1970s.

Email: [eldridg@american.edu](mailto:eldridg@american.edu)

**Eric Hershberg** is Director of the Center for Latin American & Latino Studies and Professor of Government at American University. He received his PhD in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Hershberg has taught at New York University, Southern Illinois University, Columbia, Princeton, and The New School. He also served for fifteen years as Program Director at the Social Science Research Council in New York City. His recent books include two co-edited volumes, entitled *Latin American Left Turns: Politics, Policies, and Trajectories of Change* (Lynne Rienner, 2010) and the second, *New Institutions for Participatory Democracy in Latin America: Voice and Consequence* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), with Max Cameron and Ken Sharpe respectively. Dr. Hershberg also serves as Co-PI of the CLALS initiative on Religion and Democratic Contestation in Latin America. Email: [hershber@american.edu](mailto:hershber@american.edu)

**Giovanny R. Infante** is a journalist, human rights activist and Executive Director of Movimiento Homosexual de Lima (MHOL), the oldest LGBTI organization in Peru, and dedicated to promoting a free, just and equitable society without any form of sexual orientation or gender identity discrimination. He studied journalism at the Universidad Jaime Bausate y Meza in Lima, Peru. Mr. Infante has coordinated programs to strengthen LGBTI networks and organizations around the country and human rights-based policies. He coauthored a Civil Union bill recently rejected by the Peruvian Congress, and a partially approved Hate Crimes bill. At present, he coordinates a program to bring together young activists from among diverse social movements, including feminists, LGBTI, indigenous, Afro-Latino, people with disabilities, students, artists, and others, and promotes a Citizen Truth Commission about LGBTI Rights. Email: [ginfante@mhool.org.pe](mailto:ginfante@mhool.org.pe)

**Luis Larraín** is Chief Executive and Co-Founder of Fundación Iguales in Chile. He is an Industrial Civil Engineer from the Pontificia Universidad Católica in Chile and holds a Masters in International Public Management from Sciences Po in Paris, France. Fundación Iguales is an organization that advocates for research, diffusion, education and development of public policy and legislative action to ensure full inclusion of sexual diversity in Chilean society. Mr. Larraín is also the founder of JovenConfundido.com, a website that provides information to young people in the Latin American LGBT community, their families and friends, by sharing testimonials and answering questions about sexual orientation and gender identity. Email: [llarrain@iguales.cl](mailto:llarrain@iguales.cl)

**Lisbeth Melendez Rivera** is Religion and Faith Program's Director of Latino and Catholic Initiatives at the Human Rights Campaign, where she works with Latino communities and helps to develop and implement engagement with the Catholic Church across the organization. She was previously the National Coordinator for the A la Familia project for the same organization, where she trained and empowered Latinos throughout the country to advocate for LGBT issues. She also envisioned and produced the short documentary *Before God: We Are All Family* for the same organization. Email: [lisbeth.mr@hrc.org](mailto:lisbeth.mr@hrc.org)

**María Mercedes Gómez** is Regional Program Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean at Outright Action International. She holds a PhD in Political Science and a M.A. in Gender Studies and Feminist Theory from the New School for Social Research in New York. Dr. Gómez's work focuses on exploring the challenges of understanding, preventing, and reducing violence based on sexual prejudices and gender identities and expressions in Latin America. She has taught at Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, and at Dalhousie and Saint Mary's University in Canada. She is a founder member and was the general coordinator for Red ALAS – Red Latinoamericana de académico/as del Derecho – ([redalas.net](http://redalas.net)) and served on the legal team and the Board of Directors of Proyecto Colombia Diversa. Email: [mgomez@outrightinternational.org](mailto:mgomez@outrightinternational.org)

**Mirta Moragas** is a legal advocate and Paraguayan LGBTI activist with the organization AIREANA. Over the years, she has served as the regional coordinator for the Campaign for an Inter-American Convention on Sexual and Reproductive Rights, been a member of the feminist group Las Ramonas, and of the Red Contra Toda Forma de Discriminación, has collaborated with the Centro de Documentación y Estudios (CDE), and also has many years of experience working with the Organization of American States. Email: [mirtamoragas@gmail.com](mailto:mirtamoragas@gmail.com)

**Macarena Sáez** is a Fellow in the International Legal Studies Program at American University's Washington College of Law, and Director of WCL's Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and its Impact Litigation Project. She earned her JD from the University of Chile's School of Law. Her main areas of research are gender discrimination in Latin America and comparative family law, with a recent focus on the impact of the same-sex marriage debate in family formation around the world. Professor Sáez is a member of the Executive Committee of the Ford Foundation-funded Network of Latin American Scholars on Gender, Sexuality, and Legal Education (Red ALAS), an organization that provides training to law professors in Latin America on how to mainstream gender and sexuality perspectives in legal education. She is also a member of Libertades Públicas, an organization with which she successfully litigated the first case on sexual orientation before the Inter-American System of Human Rights. Professor Sáez currently serves as Co-PI of the CLALS initiative on Religion and Democratic Contestation in Latin America. Email: [msaez@wcl.american.edu](mailto:msaez@wcl.american.edu)

**Juan Marco Vaggione** is Professor of Sociology at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba and Researcher at the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas in Argentina. He holds a PhD in Sociology from the New School for Social Research in New York and PhD in Law from the National University of Cordoba, Argentina. Mr. Vaggione is also part of Catholics for Free Choice and is currently directing the Program on Sexual and Reproductive Rights at the School of Law (National University of Cordoba). His is the author of "Families Beyond Heteronormativity," a book chapter in *Ius Gentium: Comparative Perspectives on Law and Justice* (Springer, 2013) and co-author of *Conservadurismos, religión y política: perspectivas de investigación en América Latina* (Ferreya Editor, 2013). Email: [juanvaggione@yahoo.com](mailto:juanvaggione@yahoo.com)

**Estefania Vela** obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Law from the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México and a Master's Degree in Law (LL.M.) from Yale University. She is currently an Assistant Professor and Head of the Sexual and Reproductive Rights Area of the Legal Studies Division at the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE). She teaches and coordinates a program on gender, sexuality, and the law. Her research has focused on the transformation of family law in Mexico as a result of the influence of human rights (particularly for the case of same-sex marriage), the development of sexual and reproductive rights in the Mexican Supreme Court's case-law, and on the rights of LGBT persons in Mexican law. She also collaborated with the Supreme Court in the creation of the current protocol for judges in cases involving sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Alexander Wilde** is Senior Research Fellow at American University's Center for Latin American and Latino Studies. He received his PhD in political science from Columbia University. He is co-editor of *The Progressive Church in Latin America* (with Scott Mainwaring, Notre Dame University Press, 1989) and author of *Conversaciones de caballeros* (Tercer Mundo, 1982), on the breakdown of Colombian democracy in the 1940s. Dr. Wilde has served as Vice President for Communications at the Ford Foundation and headed Ford's regional office for the Andes and Southern Cone. He has also served as Senior Fellow at the Helen Kellogg Institute and the Woodrow Wilson Center's Latin America Program, and formerly directed the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). Most recently, Dr. Wilde directed the CLALS project on religious responses to violence in Latin America, a two-year initiative funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. He is the editor of the project's forthcoming scholarly volume. Email: [wilde@american.edu](mailto:wilde@american.edu)