

Promoting Human Rights Education in the Americas

by Natasha Concepcion*

As part of its mission to advance international human rights, the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Center) at the Washington College of Law (WCL) conducted a training seminar for human rights law professors from the Americas from May 26 to June 2, 1999. The focus of the seminar was on the importance of local and regional educators in disseminating human rights norms throughout civil society. The purpose of the seminar, which was entitled "Building Domestic Capacity in Academic Centers of the Americas," was to contribute to the dissemination of human rights standards by building on human rights education at law schools, and by teaching professors how to teach human rights and incorporate human rights education into the curriculum. Participants in the seminar included representatives from important Latin American human rights institutions such as the Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (IIDH) in Costa Rica and Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) in Argentina, as well as human rights law professors from several universities in the region, such as Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, in Mexico City, Universidad Nacional and Universidad de Los Andes in Colombia.

The Co-Directors of the Center's Inter-American Human Rights Digest Project, Claudia Martín and Diego Rodríguez-Pinzón, organized the seminar in cooperation with cooperating regional coordinators in Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina. The Center and the regional coordinators then recruited and selected 29 participants from approximately 80 applicants based on their activities and interest in the field of legal education in human rights. The Center designed a two-step program for the "institutionalization" of human rights education in Latin America. The seminar reflects step one, training legal educators. The second step involves a regional collaboration with these educators in the development of local diagnostic reports to assess the status of human rights and human rights education.

The main objectives of the seminar were to: (1) work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions in the Americas to foster an exchange of expertise, contacts, and resources to enhance local human rights training capacity; (2) implement a "train-the-trainers" program, enabling human rights law professors to take an active role in training those sectors of society that are failing to implement human rights norms; (3) implement a series of training seminars for legal practitioners, including NGO staff, members of the judiciary, and government officials; (4) foster the discussion of human rights in legal academic institutions in a neutral, nonpolitical forum; and (5) develop and reproduce a training manual and accompanying materials to be distributed to educators in Latin American universities.

The seminar focused on the organization of the Inter-American Human Rights system, the international human rights instruments that create obligations that bind states, and the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and Court. The participants examined comparative material from other relevant legal systems, including the United States and

Europe, and were given hypothetical problems taken from the Center's publication *La dimensión internacional de los derechos humanos: Guía para la aplicación de normas internacionales en el derecho interno*. The problems demonstrated the practical applicability of the participants training activities. Furthermore, the trainees interacted with members of international institutions working on issues relevant to their own work. For example, during a panel discussion at the Inter-American Development Bank on June 1, 1999, the participants talked with the members and staff of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). This event provided a forum for participants

to relate their own experiences and perspectives on human rights education, with the goal of aiding in the development of a more integrated regional system of human rights in Latin America.

The seminar also served as a forum for deliberation through panel discussions. Some of the panel topics were: "General Principles of International Rights Applicable to Human Rights," with speakers including IACHR Member and WCL Dean Claudio Grossman, and IACHR President and WCL Professor Robert Goldman; "Connection Between Domestic Rights and International Rights," with Dr. Carlos Ayala, former president of IACHR; "The Introduction of Human Rights to the Inter-American System: Judicial and Political Perspectives," with Professor Goldman, Dean Grossman, and Dr. Peter Quilter, Advisor to the Office of the Secretary General of the Organization of American States; and "Human Rights: A Latin American Perspective," with speakers including Dr. Clara Elena Reales, Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of the Andes, and Dr. Dina Rodríguez-Montero, Education Program Director of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights.

In conjunction with presenting the seminar, the Center also launched the Inter-American Human Rights Academic Network (Network) to encourage the integration of Human Rights education into legal curriculum. By partnering with several Latin American institutions, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and the Inter-American Institute on Human Rights, the Network aims to enhance the ability of several academic centers in



Professors and trainers in inaugural seminar for human rights professors, "Building Domestic Capacity in Academic Centers of the Americas," held in Washington, DC from May 26 to June 2, 1999.

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Daniel D. Bradlow, Professor of Law and Director of the Washington College of Law (WCL) International Legal Studies Program, participated in a panel discussion on "Race, Riots and Money: The Bretton Woods Institutions and Indonesia" at the annual American Society of International Law (ASIL) meeting in March 1999. In April 1999, Professor Bradlow organized a conference at WCL on "Human Rights and Development: Incorporating Human Rights Criteria into Infrastructure Projects." In June 1999, he presented a lecture entitled "Intertwined Issues and Global Governance: The Case of the IMF," during "International Forum: The Challenges of Globalization" organized by the Humanities and Social Sciences Federation of Canada and held in Sherbrooke, Quebec.

Robert K. Goldman, Professor of Law and Co-Director of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Center), is on sabbatical for the 1999-2000 academic year. He is currently serving as the president of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

Claudio Grossman, Dean, Co-Director of the Center, and member of IACHR, spoke on August 12, 1999, at a seminar on "Counter Terrorism Strategies for the 21st Century," sponsored by the Inter-University Center for Legal Studies at the International Law Institute in Washington, D.C. On September 9, 1999, Dean Grossman presented a lecture on "The Influence of Human Rights on International Relations" at the Inter-American Defense College at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C. He participated in a panel discussion on "The Role of the University in the Human Rights Movement: Scholars and Activities," which was part of the fifteenth

annual celebration of Harvard Law School's Human Rights Program on September 17 to 19, 1999. Dean Grossman wrote an article entitled "The Inter-American System of Human Rights and the New Hemispheric Reality," which appeared in the journal *Innovation and Inspiration: Fifty Years of the Universal Declaration of Human* in September 1999.

Diane F. Orentlicher, Professor of Law and Co-Director of the Center, served as Special Advisor to the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in The Hague, Netherlands, while on sabbatical leave from January through July 1999. Her work with the High Commissioner, Max van der Stoep, focused on issues relating to Roma in Europe. In early September 1999, the Foundation Press published a casebook entitled *Human Rights*, which Professor Orentlicher co-edited with Columbia Law School faculty members Louis Henkin, Gerald L. Neuman, and David W. Leebron.

Herman Schwartz, Professor of Law and Co-Director of the Center, organized and conducted an American Bar Association-Central and Eastern European Law Initiative seminar for East European judges, which was held on May 1, 1999, in Washington, D.C. The seminar focused on the role of the press in assisting the judiciary to promote the rule of law. On October 12 to 13, 1999, Professor Schwartz organized and conducted a United States Agency for International Development seminar in Warsaw, Poland, for judges from the Republic of Georgia. This seminar focused on the role of the judiciary in assisting and protecting the press, as well as the role of the press in assisting the judiciary to promote the rule of law.

Richard J. Wilson, Professor of Law, Co-Director of the Center, Director of WCL's International Human Rights Law Clinic, and Acting Director of the WCL Clinical Program, participated in "Law School Human Rights Programs and Advocacy Work," as part of the "Symposium on Law School Human Rights Programs: Sharing Our History, Planning Our Future," held at the Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School in April 1999. In May 1999, he co-presented with George Washington Law School Professor Jenny Lyman the lecture "Interpretation: Clinical Teaching in Different Voices to Other Legal Cultures," which was part of the Association of American Law Schools Workshop on Clinical Legal Education in Lake Tahoe, California. In June 1999, Professor Wilson presented "Clinical Legal Education and Legal Aid," at the Legal Aid Practitioners' Forum, hosted by the International Human Rights Law Group and the Asian Human Rights Commission in Bangkok, Thailand. He also organized a conference on "Consular Assistance and the Death Penalty under the Vienna Convention: Recent Developments and Strategic Issues," which WCL's International Human Rights Law Clinic and Amnesty International co-sponsored in Washington, D.C. in June 1999. In November 1999, Professor Wilson's article entitled, "Prosecuting Pinochet: International Crimes in Spanish Domestic Law" will be published in Volume 21 of the *Human Rights Quarterly*. Professor Wilson also wrote a chapter entitled "The Spanish Proceedings" for the book, *The Pinochet Papers*, edited by Reed Brody of Human Rights Watch and Michael Ratner of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which Kluwer Academic Publishers is scheduled to release in December 1999. ☉

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Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico to provide local legal training to educators. Those educators will eventually be responsible for training their students (and future lawyers), the police, the judiciary, and others.

According to one of the participants, Lorena González of the Inter-American Institute on Human Rights and Coordinator of the Central American Network, a branch of the Network, the seminar succeeded in meeting its objectives. She commented that "the use of interactive methodologies [such as the use of hypothetical problems to practical legal applications of the law] allowed the participants to play an active role during the seminar and also permitted them to contribute from their own

experiences. Thus, the participants learned about the different realities in the sub-region." González lauded the Center for creating the Network and for laying the ground work for another meeting, which the Mexico branch of the Network organized and held from October 4 to 6, 1999, in Mexico City. Participants at this follow-up meeting included lawyers, political scientists, journalists, sociologists, international relations specialists, and law professors from throughout Latin America. The Center's own Claudia Martin and Diego Rodríguez-Pinzón, along with WCL Professor Richard Wilson, also conducted workshops and administered hypothetical problems to the participants.

In recognition of its important work on human rights education, the Center recently

received a two-year grant from the Associate Liaison Office for University Cooperation of the U.S. Agency for International Development to continue its work with the Colombian Human Rights Academic Network. The Center will work with the Universidad Nacional and the Universidad de Los Andes, which are the regional coordinators for Colombia, to prepare a diagnostic report on the current situation of human rights education in Colombia. ☉

**Natalia Parassram Concepcion is a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law and a staff writer for the Human Rights Brief.*