

Virtual Symposium
**Justice for All: Demanding Accessibility for Underrepresented
Communities in the Law**

Roger Williams University School of Law
Ten Metacom Avenue | Bristol, Rhode Island

Friday, November 4, 2022 (Zoom Webinar)

The phrase “Justice for All” dates to the founding of our country, but it has become increasingly clear that many groups of people are often left out of the “All” category. A person’s race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, citizenship, ability, age, and/or socioeconomic status are just a few of the factors that lock them out of receiving equal treatment in our justice system. People in these groups have limited access to lawyers, legal services, and legal education, which undermines the principle of justice that is the essence of the U.S. Constitution.

This symposium welcomes RWU Law Review’s newest journal, *Justice for All*, in its inaugural year by demanding the expansion of “All” in the phrase “Justice for All.” Led by a mix of professionals and students, the panel will discuss how different legal services and legal education programs can be made more accessible and inclusive to traditionally marginalized communities. By creating more accessible spaces, we can finally begin working towards achieving justice for everyone.

9:00AM-9:30AM

Welcome

Dean Gregory W. Bowman, Roger Williams University School of Law

Introduction to the Symposium

Professor of Law Debbie Gonzalez, Roger Williams University School of Law

9:30AM-10:15AM

Keynote Speaker

Professor Martha Minow, Harvard University

Professor Minow will be discussing her article, *Access to Justice*, which discusses the need for access to civil justice. Professor Minow will discuss the current situation of access to civil justice, arguments for reform, explanations of why reforms do not happen, and reasons to believe the situation can improve.

10:15AM-12:00PM

Accessibility in Legal Education Panel

Professor Monica Teixeira de Sousa, Roger Williams University School of Law

Professor Teixeira de Sousa will discuss a highly practical and low-cost intervention for law schools committed to amplifying the voices of their first-generation and low-income background students. The law school experience is a difficult one for most students, but it presents a particular challenge for those who are first-generation and low-income—for whom educational trajectories have placed great cultural, if not always geographic, distance between them and home communities. The therapist and law professor model intervention requires only a law professor and therapist/clinician to facilitate a regularly occurring support group in which students can relax, speak in their authentic voice, and build community. This model prioritizes the creation of a liberatory space in which first-generation students can share their experiences, receive, and provide support, and become agents of their law school trajectories.

Eden Yerby and Mikayla Thomas, Roger Williams University School of Law

Eden and Mikayla will be discussing barriers that transgender students face in applying to law school, while in law school, and applying for the bar exam. They will discuss the research they conduct over the summer, including their interviews with transgender folks in the legal community.

Yulyana Torres and Michael Donnelly-Boylan, Roger Williams University School of Law

Yulyana and Michael will be discussing barriers that minority students face during the application and admissions process to law school. Yulyana is going to share her experiences working in the RWU Law Admissions Department and what she thinks needs to be improved. Michael will be discussing the status of admissions reform across the country and what is currently being done to make the law school admissions process more accessible to minoritized groups and other underrepresented communities that are interested in applying to law school.

Heidi K. Brown, Brooklyn Law School

Professor Brown will be discussing her article, *Get with the Pronoun*, which focuses on the importance of using “they” in legal writing. Professor Brown will discuss the idea that good legal writers can enhance and foster clarity, accuracy, inclusion, and respect in pleadings, briefs, and judicial decisions through purposeful and intentional usage of the singular they (and other pronouns). Professor Brown will argue that legal writers cannot cling to outdated grammar rules and ignore societal shifts because we risk alienating clients, triers-of-fact, and decision makers.

12:00PM-1:00PM **Lunch Break**

1:00PM-2:45PM **Accessibility in the Courtroom Panel**

Tamera N. Rocha, Rhode Island Supreme Court

Tamera will discuss language barriers and access to language services in the courtroom. Tamera will discuss language access in general as it pertains to the United States courts. Tamera will then focus on Rhode Island’s demographics and need for language services in Rhode Island courts. Tamera will discuss credentialing, how to request language services for clients, and best practices for attorneys representing limited English proficient court users.

Katherine Alteneder, Self-Represented Litigation Network

Katherine will discuss the landscape of an accessible courtroom, and then the specifics needed for the self-represented litigant to succeed. Katherine will focus on the importance of educating self-represented litigants, and the importance of educating others about self-help in hopes that the more people that are educated on the needs of self-represented litigants, the more likely that self-represented litigants will succeed.

Nellie Large, Roger Williams University School of Law

Nellie will discuss her experience working at the eviction help desk in Rhode Island and discuss the issues she has seen pro se tenants face in landlord/tenant disputes. She will also discuss ways she thinks we can make landlord/tenant court more accessible.

2:45PM-4:00PM **Bridging the Accessibility Gap with Technology**

Zach Zarnow, National Center for State Courts; Danielle Hirsch, National Center for State Courts; and Lois Lupica, University of Denver

Between 2017-2020, there were 127,387 cases filed in Rhode Island courts that involved at least one self-represented party. According to a 2021 National Center for State Courts study, Rhode Island self-help information and forms can be hard to find and use. One recommendation of that report was to “greatly increase the number of self-help resources available by utilizing a multi-media approach.” This panel, which includes the authors of that report, as well as legal technologists, will discuss how other law schools, organizations, and jurisdictions have worked to create solutions to the access to justice technology gaps.

Meet the Moderators

- Nicole P. Dyszlewski, Roger Williams University School of Law, Director of Special Programs, Academic Affairs
- Suzanne Harrington-Steppen, Roger Williams University School of Law, Clinical Professor of Law and the Associate Director of Pro Bono Programs
- Eliza Vorenberg, Roger Williams University School of Law, Clinical Professor of Law and the Director of Pro Bono and Community Partnerships

This program has been approved for 6.5 Rhode Island CLE Credit Hours.



A ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
LAW REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

**DEMANDING
ACCESSIBILITY**
FOR UNDERREPRESENTED
COMMUNITIES IN THE LAW

JUSTICE
FOR ALL

Friday, November 4, 2022 • 9:00 AM EST
Virtual Program (Zoom) • Registration required.