

CALL FOR PAPERS

Beyond Rights: Vulnerability and Justice

May 6th-7th, 2011

Smith College, Northampton, MA

This workshop explores the potential for envisioning justice through frameworks of vulnerability that extend beyond current approaches focused on rights and antidiscrimination. This Call for Papers builds upon feminist and transnational progressive critiques that have argued equal protections and human rights approaches fail to adequately address the changing nature of inequality within and across nation states. Remedies based on rights claims and protected legal status only for historically marginalized groups are an incomplete means of challenging both episodic (e.g. the result of recessions, war) and structural (e.g. arising from globalization, privatization) processes creating widespread injustice.

We want to explore the possibility of moving beyond a rights and equality framework to a justice paradigm grounded in vulnerability, which is understood as a universal and constant characteristic of the human condition. While vulnerability can never be eliminated, social institutions can respond to it by providing the resources (education, health, kinship, marketable skills, economic security, and community) that confer resilience. The precariousness of these institutions, as well as uneven access to the benefits they convey, result in systemic inequalities. While these inequalities may sometimes be recognized in antidiscrimination claims based on gender, race and nation, vulnerability analysis moves us beyond identity to consideration how state policy and practice should be grounded in an awareness of the interdependence between and among human beings and the institutions that support them. What are the political possibilities in advancing vulnerability as a substantive basis for justice beyond formal or procedural notions of rights?

Proposals from scholars of all disciplines interested in addressing vulnerability and resilience from either theoretical or specific perspectives are welcomed.

WORKSHOP CONTACTS:

Martha A. Fineman, Emory University School of Law, mfineman@law.emory.edu; Alice Hearst, Smith College, ahearst@smith.edu; Kristin Bumiller, Amherst College, kbumiller@amherst.edu; Katie Oliviero, Emory School of Law, koliviero@emory.edu.

SUBMISSIONS PROCEDURE:

Please email a paper proposal of 400-600 words by March 10th to: *Emily Hlavaty*, emily.hlavaty@emory.edu

Decisions will be made on or around March 18th and working paper drafts will be due April 18th so they may be duplicated and distributed prior to the Workshop.

Please explore the available resources on VHC at: <http://web.gs.emory.edu/vulnerability/resources/Publications.html>

WORKSHOP DETAILS:

The Workshop will begin Friday at 4PM in the Neilson Browsing Room of the William Allan Neilson Library at Smith College, followed by a dinner. The Library is located at 9 Elm Street, Northampton, MA 01063.

Presentations and panels continue on Saturday from 9:30 AM to approximately 5PM. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

POSSIBLE TOPICS AND QUESTIONS:

- **What would be the shape of a concept of global justice beyond current articulations of human rights?
- **What are the political, legal, and social implications of moving beyond the liberal designation of a rights holder to the concept of the vulnerable subject?
- **Should the idea of human vulnerability simply be meshed with existing human and equal rights frameworks? Can it be? And, if so, what would be the advantages and limitations of this strategy?
- **How might an approach based on vulnerabilities address the limitations of race and gender-based legal activism? Or might it merely perpetuate them in a different form?
- **How might a vulnerability approach focus us on a different set of grievances and remedies?
- **What are the implications of a vulnerability approach for feminist, anti-racist, immigrant, postcolonial, indigenous, & LGBT organizing?
- **Given its focus on institutional and structural relations, what is its potential for postcolonial analysis and critique?
- **How must legal, policy, institutional, and state structures change to address vulnerability and resilience?
- **Are some manifestations of human vulnerability desirable? If so, how can this understanding lead to rearticulating our conceptions of justice?