

# PROLOGUE

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I am honored to write the prologue for this special issue of the *American University International Law Review*, which features the winning papers of the 2008 Human Rights Essay Award, and is sponsored by the Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law of Washington College of Law (WCL).

The Academy created the annual Human Rights Essay Award in 2003, in the spirit of encouraging and promoting scholarly work in international human rights law. This initiative has been met with enthusiastic response, as each year we receive insightful essays from lawyers around the world with extensive knowledge of and experience in international human rights law. Papers are solicited in English and Spanish, and awards are given to the best work in each language. Each award has its own Honor Jury, comprised of scholars with the highest credentials in international human rights law. The awardees receive a full scholarship to attend WCL's Academy, including tuition, travel and living expenses.

The theme for this year's Human Rights Essay Award was "International Human Rights Law and the Protection of the Environment." This timely topic elicited informative submissions from more than 180 individuals from 35 countries. Our institution values and commends the commitment and effort of each participant.

The winner of the 2008 Award in English is Carly Marcs of Australia for her article on *Spoiling Movi's River: Towards Recognition of Persecutory Environmental Harm Within the Meaning of the Refugee Convention*.<sup>1</sup> Ms. Marcs is currently a solicitor for the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative

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1. 24 AM. U. INT'L L. REV. 31 (2008).

Ltd., and is working towards her LL.M. degree at the University of Melbourne.

Honorable mention in the English category was awarded to Leonardo A. Crippa of Argentina, for his paper on *Cross-Cutting Issues in the Application of the Guatemalan "NEPA": Environmental Impact Assessment and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.<sup>2</sup>

The winner of the 2008 Award in Spanish is Rodrigo Durango-Cordero of Ecuador, for his article on *Los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas y la Protección al Medio Ambiente Dentro del Sistema Interamericano de Protección de los Derechos Humanos*.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Durango-Cordero is currently an attorney with the Ecuadorian Attorney General's Office, and obtained his LL.M. degree from WCL in 2007.

Honorable mentions in the Spanish category were awarded to Rodrigo Carlos Dellutri of Argentina, for his paper on *El Derecho Humano al Medio Ambiente: El Caso de los Pueblos Autóctonos*;<sup>4</sup> and to Edson Ferreira de Carvalho, of Brazil, for his article on *La Contribución del Derecho Humano Internacional a la Protección Ambiental: Integrar para Mejor Cuidar la Tierra y la Humanidad*.<sup>5</sup>

Our institution congratulates these individuals for their outstanding articles, and appreciates all of the contributions to the Academy's 2008 Human Rights Essay Award Competition. I especially would like to thank my fellow Honor Jury Members: Ellen Hey, David Hunter, Peter Lallas, Diego Rodríguez-Pinzón, and Patrick van Weerelt (for English submissions); and Adriana Fabra, Claudia Martin, Florentin Meléndez, and Romina Picolotti (for Spanish submissions).

The Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, which sponsors the Human Rights Essay Award, was created to help address the growing need for specialized legal training in international human rights law. The Academy was also a natural outgrowth of WCL's longstanding commitment and dedication to

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2. 24 AM. U. INT'L L. REV. 103 (2008).

3. 24 AM. U. INT'L L. REV. 7 (2008).

4. 24 AM. U. INT'L L. REV. 73 (2008).

5. 24 AM. U. INT'L L. REV. 141 (2008).

human rights and humanitarian law. By enabling participants to acquire specialized knowledge on vital issues and challenges confronting international law and shaping our world, the Academy contributes to the deeper understanding of the real world importance and impact of human rights rules and mechanisms. The promotion and advancement of human rights requires a professional community equipped with extensive knowledge and experience to address the pressing needs of people around the world.

The Academy's Specialized Human Rights Program takes place in Washington, D.C., each summer, and features an impressive group of distinguished scholars and practitioners as professors. Subject matters covered in the Academy's engaging array of courses include women and international human rights law; terrorism; litigation and activism; regional approaches to human rights law; international justice; the implementation of human rights in domestic law; and many more.

The Academy's Program offers additional activities including numerous panel discussions and debates. In 2008, panel topics included "The Procedures of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: a Debate on its Practices and Regulations" and "Challenges Remaining In The Final Years Of The Ad Hoc Tribunals For The Former Yugoslavia And Rwanda." The Academy also arranges visits to international institutions in Washington, D.C. such as The World Bank and the International Trade Center.

The Academy's steadfast commitment to strengthening human rights around the world is shared by numerous programs and initiatives of WCL. These include, for instance, our Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Clinical Program with nine in-house clinics, Impact Litigation Project, the annual trilingual Inter-American Human Rights Moot Court Competition, the Israeli Civil Rights Program, Office of Public Interest, United Nations Committee against Torture Project, and the War Crimes Research Office, as well as numerous student internships and externships year after year.

All of these efforts reflect our institutional commitment to the notion that law schools and lawyers play a significant role in promoting and strengthening the values of human dignity. WCL will continue to fulfill this commitment through ingenuity, persistence,

creativity and collaboration with the world community. The *American University International Law Review*, by consistently providing meaningful contributions to international human rights law scholarship in both English and Spanish, makes lasting contributions to this vital mission.