

Introducing: “Critical Race Theory and the Struggle for Equality: Brazil, India and the United States”

The Global Affirmative Action Praxis Project Transnational Seminar (GAAPP) --“Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Struggle for Equality: Brazil, India and the United States”-- is an intensive 10-day summer program offered by the African American Policy Forum (“AAPF”) in partnership with the Critical Race Studies Program at the UCLA School of Law (CRS) and the Navsarjan Trust (India).

Between June 7-16th, 2009, the GAAPP Transnational Seminar will bring a select group of professors, students, and senior activists to the U.S. to work with GAAPP alums, American law school professors, and social justice advocates. Together the group will explore remedies designed to address societal stratification and will consider ways to globalize the imperative of social justice. One of the highlights of the GAAPP transnational seminar will be its attention to Critical Race Theory and discussions of how it might be adapted in various societal contexts to leverage support for anti-discrimination remedies around the world.

One of the central goals of the seminar is to facilitate the growth of a transnational network of students, researchers and advocates who are committed to pursuing greater levels of social equity and societal participation for traditionally marginalized populations. The seminar builds on the recommendations of an international network of scholars who gathered in Bellagio, Italy in 2007 to advance greater cooperation in efforts to understand and diminish race and caste stratification around the world. This networking process, initially facilitated by the Rockefeller Foundation, now draws the support of several Brazilian organizations, the Navsarjan Trust in India, and the Cordaid Group, in the Netherlands. This year, to advance the networking and global literacy objectives of GAAPP, AAPF will make a limited number of slots available to American participants who wish to enroll.

Background and Program Overview

Targeted social inclusion policies, variously called "positive action," "affirmative action" or "special measures" have been debated and variously pursued around the globe, yet these policies are now at a crossroads. As positive steps toward social integration are being undertaken in contexts

where the very possibility of such targeted intervention was barely fathomable a few short years ago, elsewhere longstanding policies that have integrated scores of traditionally underrepresented groups into various societal institutions are being drastically cut back or altogether eliminated. Given the importance of both these developments, there is a surprising absence of information and dialogue among the broad community of academics, students, advocates and other actors who work on questions that relate to the advancement of social inclusion policies.

The GAAPP summer seminar was developed to fill this critical discursive need. It is designed to reach out to students and others eager to learn how Critical Race Theory might support efforts to defend social inclusion policies in the US, Brazil and India. GAAPP is also designed to serve as a venue for students who want to create a platform to systematize student-based reporting concerning the state of equality in higher education, and other spheres of life in different societal contexts.

GAAPP grew out of the “Global Race Conscious Remedies” seminar developed by UCLA/Columbia Law School Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. GAAPP students from the U.S. have traveled to Brazil and India to study the perspectives of both academics and activists with regard to how different nations promote a more robust anti-discrimination framework.

To date, GAAPP excursions have taken American students to Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo in Brazil, and to New Delhi, Mumbai, and to the state of Gujarat in India. Now, GAAPP is pleased to be able to welcome students and advocates from Brazil and India to an extensive international seminar at UCLA Law School to explore the common social justice themes that cross national borders. This intensive seminar is made up of two modules. GAAPP Module I will take place at the UCLA law School and will mainly address the origins and key insights of Critical Race Theory, the comparative patterns of stratification in the US, Brazil and India, and the differences and similarities of anti-discrimination strategies in those countries.

GAAPP Module II will further explore interdisciplinary research projects at the university level and study the on-the-ground practices of key social justice organizations. The discussion will focus on current challenges in these areas and on the potential of human rights discourses to frame and advance racial justice advocacy around the world. GAAPP will conclude

with presentations that propose research and advocacy strategies designed to strengthen social inclusion discourses in both the national and international arenas.

Delegations of 8 Afro-Brazilians and 7 Dalit participants are confirmed. The teaching faculty will consist of leading critical race theorists including Cheryl Harris, Devon Carbado, George Lipsitz, Jerry Kang, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Luke Harris, Russell Robinson, and Saul Sarabia, Dalit senior activists, including Martin Macwan, the recipient of the Robert F. Kennedy award for his groundbreaking work organizing Dalits in rural India, and Flávia Piovesan, a professor at PUC-São Paulo whose transnational work includes her recent report tracing the wide influence of the World Conference on Racism.

Participants:

While we do plan to have a limited number of translators available to assist us in the administration of the seminar, to gain entry to the Praxis Project the ability to speak English is preferable. Nonetheless, interested students will not be excluded solely based on their limited language skills.

Goals: The Praxis Project and the Global Racial Justice Leadership Seminar place students in a unique position to begin mutual mentoring and supportive transnational relationships. We hope these participants can garner the training and resources necessary to engage serious questions of racial injustice. We anticipate that long-term relationships will develop between the students, and that the dialogue between students in Brazil, India and the US will produce fruitful learning experiences for all concerned. Moreover, we believe that we are training future scholars, attorneys, and community leaders in their respective countries, and that there will be long term benefits from their participation in this process. To aid in the development of collegial relationships and to reduce any difficulties posed by the English language, the students from Brazil and India will be partnered with a U.S. counterpart who has similar research interests. Furthermore, the AAPF will actively seek bi-lingual student-partners and/or volunteers.

Lastly, the seminar will serve as a pilot course for launching a transnational Critical Race Theory curriculum – one which will draw

upon the contributions and experiences of both our partners as well as the students in the program, and one that will be circulated in the U.S. and abroad in both Portuguese and English.

Evaluation Plan:

The Policy Forum understands that rigorous evaluation is necessary for project and organizational improvement. We are constantly creating internal mechanisms to make such assessments. For the training component of the project, AAPF generally uses three mechanisms: 1) one-on-one exit interviews; 2) evaluation sheets; and 3) follow-up emails to investigate the impact of the training on the attendees' day-to-day work. For our interactive on-line tools, AAPF has created a feedback and registration form and commentary windows. Within our post-event plans, we will also pursue strategies to collect and synthesize the rich materials and products that have been derived from the three years of GAAPP to demonstrate what they suggest about the significance of our project.

About the African American Policy Forum:

The African American Policy Forum has been working since 1996 to bridge the gap between scholarly research and public discourse on questions of inequality, discrimination and injustice. AAPF-sponsored programs work to advance a more inclusive and robust public discourse by building bridges between the academic, activist, and policy-making sectors. The AAPF approach brings diverse actors from various social justice fields to the table in order to stimulate discussion and develop concrete strategies for addressing key issues of social injustice in American society and elsewhere.

Developed as part of an ongoing effort to promote women's rights and gender rights in the context of struggles for social justice, the Policy Forum strives both to promote the interests of all communities that suffer from intersecting forms of discrimination (e.g., class-based, race-based, caste-based and gender-based), and to highlight unrecognized patterns of institutional discrimination.

We are dedicated to advancing and expanding racial justice, gender equality, and the indivisibility of all human rights, both in the U.S. and internationally.

