CONFERENCE EXPLORED
POVERTY, WEALTH, AND
THE WORKING POOR

by Janet Edwards

More than 200 lawyers, social workers, community leaders, government officials, and judges, as well as law and social work faculty and students, attended the conference on Poverty, Wealth, and the Working Poor: Clinical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives.

Sponsored by the School of Law’s Clinical Education Program, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, and Washington University Journal of Law & Policy, and by the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, the conference explored barriers to economic prosperity for America’s working poor, as well as interdisciplinary and clinical strategies for change. The April 1 conference coincided with the School of Law’s fifth annual Access to Equal Justice conference.

“The George Warren Brown School of Social Work, one of the top social work schools in the country, is an enormous resource for us here at the School of Law. We have learned through our work with their faculty and students that interdisciplinary practice respects the complexities of clients and their problems and strengthens how we understand and practice law,” says Karen Tokarz, director of the School of Law’s Clinical Education and Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs and member of the conference’s planning committee. Also serving on the planning committee were Steven Gunn, Peter Joy, and Maxine Lipeles from the law school and Mark Rank from the social work school.

Keynote speaker William P. Quigley addressed “Ending Poverty as We Know It: Guaranteeing a Right to a Job at a Living Wage.” Author of a book by the same title, Quigley is the Janet Riley Distinguished Professor of Law at More than 200 lawyers, social workers, community leaders, government officials, and judges, as well as law and social work faculty and students, attended the conference on Poverty, Wealth, and the Working Poor: Clinical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives.

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Upcoming Conferences
by Ann Nicholson

This fall the School of Law will be hosting four major conferences focusing on corporate governance, intellectual property scholarship, commercialization of innovation, and the First Amendment.

On September 29-October 1, corporate and securities law professors and practitioners, judges, journalists, chief executive officers, and other business leaders will convene for The New Corporate Governance conference.

“Panels and a roundtable will examine the varying power and influence of CEOs, fiduciary duties of directors, factors affecting executive compensation, the expanding role of institutional investors, the influence of the media on corporate conduct, and international models of corporate governance,” says Professor Troy Paredes, who is organizing the conference for the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies.

Invited presenters include Stephen Bainbridge and Lynn Stout, University of California at Los Angeles; Alan Beller, Securities & Exchange Commission; Bill Bratton, Georgetown University; Charles Burson, Monsanto; William H.T. Bush, Bush O’Donnell Investment Advisors, Inc.; John Coffee and Harvey Goldschmid, Columbia University; Jim Cox, Duke University; Jesse Fried, University of California at Berkeley; Ronald Gilson, Columbia and Stanford Universities; Stuart Greenbaum, John Haley, Troy Paredes, and Murray Weidenbaum, Washington University; Bob Hamilton, University of Texas; Jack Jacobs, Supreme Court of Delaware; Michael Jensen, Harvard University; Hideki Kanda, University of Tokyo; Kon Sik Kim, Seoul National University; Rainer Kulms, Max Planck Institute; Joseph Lehrer, Greensfelder Hemker & Gale PC; Lawrence Mitchell, George Washington University; David Nicklaus, St. Louis Post-Dispatch; Floyd Norris, New York Times;
Loyola University in New Orleans and director of that university’s Law Clinic and Gillis Long Poverty Law Center.

A nationally recognized social justice advocate and commentator, Quigley spoke about his goal to eradicate poverty and his proposal for a constitutional right to a job at an “earn-a-living” wage: “We have the promise of freedom of religion and freedom of speech; we have promises of these political rights. It’s time that we talk about social and economic rights as well.”

Among the statistics in his social justice quiz designed to debunk myths about poverty and wealth, Quigley shared the following:

- In only four out of more than 3,000 counties in the United States are people able to work full time at minimum wage and still afford to pay the average rent.
- More than 30 million workers in this country earn less than poverty-level wages.
- Among the world’s population, 1.2 billion people live on less than $1 a day and 2.8 billion live on less than $2 per day.

He also pointed to growing gaps in wealth among workers and corporate executives, within racial groups, and across countries. He challenged the allocation of resources in the United States—from the military, which by some estimates spends $12,000 per second, to individual Americans, who spend 60 cents per person per day on soft drinks, but only 15 cents per person per day on governmental assistance to poor people worldwide.

Anyone who wants to be employed should have a job, Quigley advocates. “If the private market can’t
create the job, then that’s the job of our government, our common good, our society, to do that.”

Providing additional perspectives on poverty, wealth, and the working poor were Rank, the Herbert S. Hadley Professor of Social Welfare in Washington University’s social work school and author of One Nation Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All, and Laura Lein, professor of social work and anthropology, University of Texas, and co-author of Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low Wage Work.

The plenary session, “Collateral Consequences of Criminal Convictions on Welfare, Work, and Economic Well-Being,” featured four experts: Patricia Allard, associate counsel of criminal justice, Brennan Center for Justice, New York University; Debbie Mukamel, director, Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, and author of After Prison: Roadblocks to Reentry; Michael Pinard, assistant professor of law, University of Maryland; and moderator Margo Schlanger, professor of law, Washington University.

Thomas M. Shapiro, the Pokross Professor of Law and Social Policy, Brandeis University Heller School for Social Policy and Management, and author of The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality, spoke on “Race, Homeownership, and Asset Accumulation.” Responders in this plenary session included Rajesh Nayak, Equal Justice fellow and staff attorney, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; Diane Thompson, staff attorney, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation; and Christopher M. Bracey, associate professor of law, Washington University, as moderator.

The third plenary session on “Race, Poverty, and Environmental Justice” featured Sheila R. Foster, professor of law and co-director, Stein Center, Fordham University, and Luke W. Cole, director, Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment, who are co-authors of From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement; Michael Homes, manager, William H. Harrison Northside Education Center, St. Louis Community College; and Sandra Moore, JD ’79, president, Urban Strategies, as moderator.

Facilitators for the conference working groups included John J. Ammann, associate clinical professor of law and director, Legal Clinic, Saint Louis University; Stephanie C. Brodie, assistant professor of social work, Washington University, and co-author of The Invisible Caring Hand: American Congregations and the Provision of Welfare; Juliet M. Brodie, clinical assistant professor of law, University of Wisconsin, and co-author of Poverty Law: Cases & Materials; Susan L. Brooks, clinical professor of law, Vanderbilt University, and co-author of Creative Child Advocacy: Global Perspectives; Nancy L. Cook, associate professor of law and director, Community Justice and Legal Assistance Clinic, Roger Williams University; and Jim Gannaway, division director, Casey Family Services, Providence, Rhode Island.

The Washington University Journal of Law & Policy will publish an interdisciplinary volume from the conference that will include articles by Brodie, Brooks, Brodie, Cole, Cook, Lein, Quigley, Rank, and Shapiro, with an introduction by Tokarz.

To watch the conference on streaming video, visit law.wustl.edu/Clinics/Conferences/InterdisciplinaryConf/2005/povertyvideos.html.

The 2006 Access to Equal Justice conference will be held March 30–31.