

AALS

New Law Professors Section

A Message from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

I still remember what it felt like to attend my first AALS Annual Meeting several years ago. I was new to our profession, and I didn't know many people. By chance, I happened to wander into a panel being hosted by the Section on New Law Professors. I recall the atmosphere vividly. The panel was called "Developing as a Legal Scholar: Thoughts for New Law Professors," and the room was jam-packed. Five distinguished academics were discussing how they developed into legal scholars. Their remarks were delivered with an eye toward aiding those of us new to the academy. They discussed how they managed to balance work and family commitments, how they evaluated scholarship within and outside their fields, and how they chose new scholarly projects to pursue. After the panel ended, most of the audience ran off to another panel, but I stuck around. Someone tapped me on the shoulder and told me that the business meeting for the Section on New Law Professors was about to begin. To my great surprise, I was invited to join the meeting.

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A Message from the Chair (continued)

That, in a nutshell, was my initiation into the Section on New Law Professors, the AALS Annual Meeting, and, in many ways, the legal academy. The goal of our Section has always been to welcome new members to our profession. We provide a support network and a community for new law professors, one where they can get tips on teaching, scholarship, and service, and where they can freely share their struggles, hopes, and dreams. We advance our goals in several ways, including through formal and informal networking and by putting on a panel at each year's Annual Meeting. We alternate, year to year, between panels on scholarship and teaching.

The title of our panel in 2018 will be “Enhancing Your Teaching Before, During, and After Class.” The panel will take place on Wednesday, January 3, 2018, from 3:30 to 5:15 pm. We all know that great teaching is about more than putting on a good show in class. What goes on before class matters just as much. Professors have to articulate their course objectives, make decisions about course coverage and sequencing, and determine when and how to assess their students. What goes on after class is equally important. Once the class ends, professors need to reflect on what worked in the course (and what did not), and to think ahead to how best to craft their final exam. Our Section's panel this year will address the big picture ideas that new law professors should have in mind when they prepare to teach a new course, as well as specific techniques for improving their teaching. There will be an opportunity for attendees to get advice about issues and decisions they will face as they plan their courses—and their careers.

Our panelists this year include Paula Franzese (Seton Hall), Darrell Jackson (Wyoming), Howard Katz (Cleveland-Marshall), and Kevin F. O'Neill (Cleveland-Marshall), all of whom are known within the legal academy for their distinguished teaching and for their scholarship on pedagogy.

Our annual Newsletter was put together this year by Mary Leto Pareja of the University of New Mexico School of Law. Professor Pareja has organized a colloquium on community engagement and social activism in legal academia, a topic of recurring interest to our readership. I would like to thank her for skillfully putting together this colloquium, as well as Professors Aliza Organick, Michael A. Olivas, and Marc-Tizoc González for kindly contributing written pieces to it.

My first few years as a law professor were shaped and inspired by my membership in this Section, and I will always be grateful for the opportunities this has given me. I leave things in the very capable hands of our incoming Chair, Dov Waisman of Southernwestern Law School. In turn, Mary Leto Pareja will be our Section's new Chair-Elect, and Maybell Romero of Northern Illinois University will be our new Secretary. We look forward to seeing you in San Diego!

Warmly,
Gene

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This edition of our annual newsletter focuses on community engagement and activism by law professors. Our contributors were asked to share their thoughts on what this looks like for law professors and how it can enrich and challenge teaching and scholarship. I wish to express deep appreciation to our contributors for providing their unique perspectives on these topics, and more importantly, for engaging in the work that they are doing. We are better for their efforts.

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Community Engagement and Social Activism in Legal Academia

Aliza Organick
Professor of Law; Associate Dean of Experiential Learning
University of New Mexico

Crossing the Doctrine-Skills Divide: The Value in Breaking Down Silos

There are times that being a law professor can be a bit disorienting. This is especially true early in your career as you find your footing in the classroom and in a new institution. Most new law professors find comradeship with other newly minted law professors and with their more experienced colleagues who teach in similar subject areas. As you begin to build on these new relationships I would encourage you also reach out to the clinicians on your faculty for both support and potential collaborative projects. As a new law professor, I found finding those common spaces for collaboration with my doctrinal colleagues invaluable early in my career. Students benefit from these collaborative endeavors in significant ways as well. It is important that our students observe the ways that lawyers work together as they respond to community need, conduct community outreach, wrestle with difficult legal issues, and engage in varied approaches to problem solving. Last, but surely not least, is that these collaborations can lay the foundation for deep and meaningful friendships that will sustain you over the years.

Unfortunately, there remain law schools where the divide between doctrinal and clinical programs is still deeply felt. Although with an increased focus on the value of various forms of experiential learning across the curriculum, I remain hopeful that this divide will continue to narrow. Regardless of where your particular institution positions itself, do not lose sight of the value of finding ways to bridge that divide. From a clinician's perspective, working with new doctrinal faculty can bring a freshness to existing clinical practices. Clinic students are very fond of learning about your practice experience, your skills developing policy, drafting legislation, or in direct client representation. If those experiences still resonate with you, you might consider how your experience can augment specific clinic classes. Most clinicians I have had the pleasure to work with over the years welcome that participation from kindred colleagues.

With so much community need, there is almost always the potential for rich collaboration when community organizations reach out to the law school for guidance on a pressing community issue, or when specific organizations seek out faculty expertise in a particular area of

law. These opportunities provide fertile ground for collaboration with clinical faculty. One recent project at the University of New Mexico involved the implementation of the Real ID Act in New Mexico. This collaboration involved our state district court, our state legal aid organization and their volunteer attorney program, four out of five of our clinical sections, and clinic and doctrinal faculty. In this instance, a district court judge reached out to a member of our faculty to determine whether the law school and our clinic program might assist potential clients file petitions for name changes. Professor George Bach, a “doctrinal” professor who also rotates into our clinic, was integral to the planning of the overall project and collaborated with the clinicians by supervising clinic students on the day.

Another recent project involved Professor Jenny Moore. Professor Moore teaches Human Rights, Immigration and International Law at the University of New Mexico School of Law. Recently, she worked as a consultant with a working group on our main campus in advance of the repeal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA). This working group requested very specific information on the impact of federal funding should UNM declare itself a sanctuary campus. Professor Moore reached out to our clinic program to find out ways the clinic could be involved in helping individual students with DACA matters as well as whether our clinic students could assist the working group with research on what if any impact becoming a sanctuary campus would have on the receipt of federal funding at the university.

Ultimately, Professor Moore collaborated with Professor Sarah Steadman and her clinic students on an important presentation to the working group. Professor Moore describes her experience working with Professor Steadman and the clinic students as a “wonderful opportunity to observe how clinicians work with the students to prepare.” She also appreciated observing how Professor Steadman “let the students do the work, field the questions, and use their knowledge and critical thinking skills” during the presentation to the working group. This prompted her to reflect on her own classroom teaching and, as a result, she gives her students more time in the classroom to work through difficult questions. She recognizes using some of the clinic methodology “fosters deeper learning and reflection when less controlled by the professor at the podium.”

These are just a couple of recent examples of doctrinal/clinic program collaboration at our institution. Over the years there have been many, many others. And I have no doubt they will continue to happen. These collaborations have clear benefits for both clinicians and doctrinal faculty. Working with your clinical program has the added benefit of helping you to understand how your clinical program fits with the overall mission of your institution. Equally as important is knowing that our students benefit in myriad ways as well. You might also consider how working in interdisciplinary spaces can inform your teaching and scholarship as you continue to grow as a law professor. Finally, even though it may take a while for you to feel grounded in your new role, I urge you to see yourself as an invaluable link in bringing together your law school communities.

Professor Organick, a citizen of the Diné Nation, born to the Tsenijikini Clan (Cliff Dweller Clan), is a Professor of Law at the University of New Mexico, where she also serves as the Associate Dean of Experiential Learning. She is a past Chair of the AALS section on Indian Nations and Indigenous Peoples. She can be reached at organick@law.unm.edu.

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Michael A. Olivas

William B. Bates Distinguished Chair of Law
University of Houston Law Center

Being in the Right Place at the Right Time and with the Right People

It is funny, in the sense of odd/funny, but I do not really see myself as setting out to do justice, any more than actors set out to make a bad movie or singers a bad album. Most good scholars live in our heads—I more than most—and as much as I love teaching, I teach to have an occupational platform for doing my research. I am aware that I have come to be known for what is often called “advocacy research” or “special pleading” scholarship, as my work often tends to be about the downtrodden and the helpless, especially the undocumented and underrepresented, but it is the opposite from what most people think: I do this not because I want to advocate, but because after very careful thought and reflection, I gravitate towards this type of scholarly work. That is, I do not choose this kind of work, but in a very real sense, it chooses me. I never know when my writing will be helpful to someone or become useful to a legislator or policy wonk or advocate or lawyer. Of course, I hope it is helpful or persuasive or provocative, but in a very real sense, I do not care if it is so.

But I am being completely honest and embarrassed when I find it surprising that I am regarded as doing social justice. Don’t get me wrong, it surely is better than being thought of as not doing justice. It is just that it is not this impulse that accounts for my topics or my takes on various issues. Who would think so when they see the range of interests I have, from prepaid and Sec. 529 plans to deferred action and prosecutorial discretion to residency requirements to academic freedom? (And don’t forget my universally-admired and identified-with work on John Updike, Padre Martinez, and the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act, my first law review article.) With 15 books and counting, and over 145 articles and chapters, I have never lacked for topics, only the time to take them all where they would lead me, the way that I am told novelists are often surprised by their characters, who take twists and turns that magically flow without thinking in the careful plots, or the astounding ways that kids around us turn out so differently than you think they will (or should).

However, all of this is just prelude, and protesting, probably too much—that exquisite Shakespearean turn of phrase about suspect motives and false humility. The truth is, I concede I am drawn this way due to the congeries of personal attributes, and the unlimited institutional latitude I have in my pursuit of suitable topics. Of all the dimensions of a full life as a professor—the opportunities and rewards of teaching, mentoring, scholarship, consulting, professional service, advising—I will say that one small piece of my life has been more deliberate and purposeful, and I rarely see this side of service and social justice acknowledged, so I write with the tongue-in-cheek title, “Being in the Right Place at the Right Time with the Right People,” a truism that likely accounts for my own involvement and satisfaction with this piece of my work, statutory drafting and legislative reform, including its kissing cousin, regulatory reform and administrative law. If there is an advocacy-gene in me, it is likely one nurtured by experience and my training, especially my legal training. In the interest of time, I will only give brief examples.

My first law review articles grew out of Georgetown Law class papers I wrote, one a critical analysis of educational vouchers and one on the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act, and then I started following the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court case that happened partly in Houston and was announced the year I got to Houston. (Indeed, I attended its oral SCOTUS arguments, and have tried in my own way to honor the MALDEF attorney Peter Roos as a result.) I immediately saw the postsecondary implications of allowing these students to stay in K-12 classes, and was determined to extend *Plyler*'s reach to colleges. This would require statutory analysis and legislative drafting.

At Ohio State University, where I did my doctoral work, I had successfully drafted a provision to allow citizen agricultural migrant workers to count three consecutive years towards the twelve-month durational requirement for in-state, resident tuition. In Texas, armed with this precedent, I began to lobby locally and in Austin for a similar provision for the undocumented, a state DREAM Act. This was a long and slow slog, one that even a number of Chicano and Chicana legislators resisted, as they felt that any displacement would likely occur against their own voting Chicano constituents. However, in 2001, I convinced a Houston state legislator to champion the cause, leading to the first such provision, in accordance with the 1996 federal law that requires states to enact "state law" to allow the undocumented to gain resident tuition.

This drafting experience and the ramp-up of the other states following the Texas lead have been among the most satisfying professional service projects I have undertaken in my life. (Others have included work on Sec. 529 Plans for college prepaid and savings plans; the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan which was enacted to open up the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University to more high schools than the small number of feeder schools sending their graduates to those colleges and as a counter to the effects of *Hopwood*; and graduate student legislation that precluded public post-baccalaureate programs in Texas from relying upon a single measure for admissions, such as a GRE score.)

There have been other such legislative drafting accomplishments, but none so satisfying as these, especially the undocumented college tuition plans, which have now increased to more than two dozen, and which allowed me to consult, draft, advise, litigate, serve as an expert witness, and write about these issues, including a book project and about a dozen law review and refereed journal articles. Of course, a number of faculty members know that the percentage plan statute figured in the *Fisher* case, although it has been wrongly portrayed as a minority remedy, when over half of its participants have been Anglo students, in a state where less than a third of all K-12 students are white. As you start doing the autopsy of my career, you can see the various pieces, the spores and the connections, with advocacy interacting with legal work, leading to scholarship and an opportunity to blend my two teaching fields, Higher Education Law and Immigration Law and Policy. My weekly NPR radio show, "The Law of Rock and Roll," and my teaching Entertainment Law came late in life.

When President Obama announced in June 2012 that he would undertake a version of Deferred Action to cancel the removal and deportation of young DREAMers, I had just the month before finished a long article on the history and value of these Deferred Action policies. That day, I retrieved the article I had already submitted, got an extension, and wrote a 35-page postscript to frame the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), rushing (if that is the right word) into print as the first scholar to publish on the subject. Five years after the DACA program began, well over three-quarters of a million undocumented DREAMers have received

permission to remain in the United States, be issued Social Security Numbers, acquire “lawful presence,” and hold work authorization. Luck counts, I have found, but you can improve your own luck by seeing the possibilities and by having insider knowledge of complex transactions. I also worked with a friend at UCLA’s Law School to organize law professors to write the Obama Administration and urge it to adapt Deferred Action, then lying fallow in a disappointing fashion, towards the immigration status of DREAMers. As a parenthetical, no week goes by where I am not contacted in one way or another by at least two or three DREAMers, and now by DACA-recipients. I am also known as their scold, to my own mixed feelings. And I await their full entry into our community, after comprehensive immigration reform. As the Trump Administration has entered the fray, I also helped organize a group of immigration scholars to keep DACA, and not to end it, the way they have tried to repeal, if not replace, President Obama’s Affordable Care Act. I failed to persuade, but continue to believe I am on the side of the angels. This motivation, as well as my mortification over recent political events, continues to engage me. And, after eight years of studying for the priesthood, I believe anyone can be saved.

One last thought: you can only look at the world as I do and live accordingly if advocacy and service are on top of all the other marks you must hit. Keep your regular scholarly focus and there will be time and many opportunities will present themselves—more than enough for a full career. And participation in AALS is one way to find this focus and to assure a satisfying approach to the arc of your professorial career.

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Marc-Tizoc González
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**Socially Active Law Teaching:
Lessons Learned**

While I don’t consider myself to be a thought leader on homelessness, I suspect that I am one of relatively few law professors in the United States today whose prior work as a lawyer involved full-time representation of people who are homeless, and I wonder whether homelessness was once of greater interest to a larger proportion of U.S. law professors, particularly those who entered the legal academy after being employed by programs funded by the Office on Economic Opportunity or the early Legal Services Corporation. I have yet to survey these questions, but I think they could generate interesting, perhaps provocative, findings about the class backgrounds and professional experiences of the U.S. law professoriate over the past fifty or so years.

In any event, when I joined the St. Thomas Law faculty in 2011, I was careful not to plunge into community activism: prior to joining the professoriate, I had been working for several years as a staff attorney for the Oakland, California office of the Alameda County

Homeless Action Center and part-time lecturer for the University of California, Berkeley Department of Ethnic Studies. Because I knew what it meant to be socially active, I had considered carefully the likely impact of moving across the country for the opportunity to teach law full-time. I knew that I would leave behind a rich network of social relations that I had cultivated for over a decade in the San Francisco Bay Area, and that the geographical and political change would likely help me to resist the gravitational pull of community activism because I knew relatively few people or organizations in my new locale. Thus, I would be able to focus on scholarship, teaching, institutional service, and collegiality.

Still, the one or two friends that I had in South Florida almost immediately introduced my partner (wife) and me to the nascent South Florida National Lawyers Guild chapter and to established social justice organizations like the Miami Workers Center, Florida Immigrant Coalition, and Community Justice Project, so I had opportunities to consider carefully—and to say no—when invited to join boards of directors, coordinating committees, etc. Thankfully, my partner was, and is, very supportive in these areas. She reminded me that the whole point of moving our family across the country was for me to pursue my dream of teaching full-time, accessing institutional resources to advance my scholarship, etc. Also, in preparing for and undergoing the AALS “meat market” hiring process, I had resigned from several boards of directors, so I had recently practiced how to focus my time and energy in this manner, which I justified under the notion that I aspired to “play my position”: I hoped to become a socially-engaged law professor who would have the time to consider deeply and the vantage to consider broadly the sociolegal problems that I had encountered as a lawyer. As a person who identified as Chicana/o (a politically conscious and spiritually aware Mexican American), I had done my best to represent not only my individual clients but also the interests of the impoverished and marginalized working classes in Oakland. During those years, I lived about a mile away from where I worked, and I identified strongly with the multi-racial peoples of the ‘Town.

Flash forward from July 2011, when I moved to South Florida, to September 2014, by which time I had been promoted early from Assistant to Associate Professor of Law and had just filed for retention: after three-plus years of teaching, researching, and publishing at St. Thomas Law, I felt ready and able to outreach to local community activists when a nearby city, Fort Lauderdale, was set to promulgate new anti-food-sharing laws, a phenomenon that I had begun to study. Anti-food-sharing laws are municipal efforts to deter people from charitably sharing food in public. Under threat of misdemeanor punishment, anti-food-sharing laws require religious or political (in the social, not electoral, sense) activists to obtain a permit, typically with burdensome administrative requirements, prior to being authorized to share food in city parks or on city sidewalks. If the activists attempt the activity without the proper permit, they are subject to arrest and prosecution for a misdemeanor crime.

I had first noticed the phenomenon shortly after I moved to South Florida, when someone posted to the South Florida National Lawyers Guild listserv about a then-recent Eleventh Circuit opinion, *First Vagabonds Church of God v. City of Orlando, Florida*. After reading the opinion, I quickly read the Supreme Court opinions upon which it relied, and a Comment on the case, but then I filed them away because they were not pertinent to my then-current research project. Two years later, however, I returned to that folder when I realized that the phenomenon of criminalizing the public sharing of food with those who hunger represented a terrible development in the criminalization of people who are visibly poor: not only were U.S. cities criminalizing the activities necessary to sustain the lives of people who are homeless, now cities

were seeking to deter people, of ostensibly non-poor “middle” classes whose religious beliefs or political convictions compelled them publicly to share meals in city parks, plazas, sidewalks, streets, etc. So when the City of Fort Lauderdale, which is located one county north of my home in Miami-Dade County, notified the public that it planned to promulgate such a law, I decided that I could no longer only study the food-sharing cases textually: my ethics called me to engage in action research: hence I attended a community forum, inviting a research assistant too, introduced us, and offered my aid as a pro bono publico consultant—not to represent the activists but to share my knowledge about how courts across the country had adjudicated other food-sharing cases.

Subsequently, I began to collaborate with some of the local activists, which eventually led them to invite my help in organizing the Florida Homelessness Action Coalition (FLHAC), and to support its efforts by researching relevant sociolegal issues. For example, when considering Florida’s need for a Homeless Bill of Rights, I noticed that Florida’s existing hate crimes law created a sentencing enhancement for crimes committed against people targeted on the basis of their housing status but that the complementary hate crimes reporting law did not mandate the Florida Attorney General to report hate crimes committed against homeless people, and I called to FLHAC’s attention that the Florida A.G. publicly refused to report on such crimes, in her annual hate crimes report, because she was not required to do so by the reporting statute. Similarly, my lead research assistant and I collaborated with FLHAC activists to extend the research of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, which had surveyed the municipal codes of one-hundred and eighty-seven U.S. cities, including seventeen in Florida, to analyze laws that criminalize conduct that is highly correlated with being homeless. Although we have yet to publish this report, it and similar efforts represent my “community work” as a St. Thomas Law professor.

(Editor’s note: The remainder of this article is a response by Professor González to questions posed to him by the editor.)

(1) How does this work inform your teaching or scholarship, if it does? Does your institution value your work as part of your service (or teaching or scholarship) obligation, or is this something you do completely on your own time?

As to the first question, I generally regard work as a lawyer or activism in the community as analogous to inductive reasoning: learning facts on the ground by attending to sociolegal controversies in my locality can profoundly shape the premises that I employ and evaluate in my research and argumentation. Similarly, I refer to concrete sociolegal conditions in order to help my students relate to archaic or arcane doctrines in Property and Wills and Trusts. For example, when I ask my students to discuss Locke’s labor theory of property, if none of them critiques it for expressly excluding women, then I raise it, along with the related critique regarding people of African descent who were bound in chattel slavery prior to the enforcement of the Thirteenth Amendment. Similarly, the Florida constitution expressly provides that the legislature may prohibit, or otherwise regulate, the rights to real property of “aliens ineligible for citizenship.” Also, when discussing Sections 1981 and 1982 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, as amended, I underscore that if a person cannot contract or own property, it suggests that the law regards such a person as the object of property.

As to the second question, I was fortunate to join a faculty that values my community engagement as part of my service, relevant to my teaching, and a positive contribution to my scholarship. Though I call it fortune, however, this was part of the resonance between St. Thomas Law and my candidacy: I was a Chicana/o community lawyer from Oakland who proffered my authentic research agenda. Happily, the St. Thomas Law faculty were receptive to my commitments, which resonate strongly with Catholic social thought (and practice). Moreover, as I noted above, I was careful in my early years, and remain so now, not to overcommit to community activism but instead to focus on improving my scholarship and teaching. By the time that I began to engage actively in FLHAC, I had built my capacity so that it did not detract from my scholarship and teaching but instead created opportunities to deepen both, help me train my research assistants, etc.

(2) What challenges have you faced because you engage in this work, in your personal life, at your law school or university, or in your community? How have you addressed those challenges?

In retrospect, the main challenge that I faced on my tenure track was workaholicism: while all academics may be subject to it, perhaps especially law professors, I only lately realized that I had subordinated too many aspects of life to work: without enough vitality in other domains of living, I became increasingly distressed and irritable and decreasingly insightful and compassionate. Learning how to teach and research effectively takes a great deal of time, and I responded to the stressors of tenure track scrutiny by pouring countless hours into my work. Having finally obtained tenure, and promotion to full professor, I have released the throttle, a bit, and am now focused on rehabilitating my heart and soul, but a friend's recent offhand comment emblemizes the situation, "Wow, you're joining us for brunch? We haven't seen you for a long time!"

There are other challenges, but I think it's critical to highlight this one because it's endemic to our profession and likely to the "Type A" personality style that motivated and enabled many (most?) of us to become lawyers. If the tenure track can be likened to a marathon, then our entire career as law professors is like an ultra-marathon, or perhaps a sojourn across the tundra . . .

I understand my work as a law professor as part of a vocation to help my students educate themselves and to illuminate and critique the jurisprudence under study in order to preserve the rule of law over authority (*i.e.*, the constitutional framework of republican democracy in the United States). I'm in this profession for the long haul. My tenure track was six years. Hopefully I will be able to continue this work for at least twenty-five more years, and at that moment, hopefully I will have the privilege to choose whether to continue working full-time, to teach part-time, etc. By then it will be 2042. I will have experienced the first half of the twenty-first century, along with the last quarter of the twentieth-century. I have long believed that my role in society, in part, is to help people born in the twenty-first century to understand the horrors that society birthed in the twentieth (*e.g.*, fascism, nuclear annihilation, climate change), in order not to repeat them.

To engage in that task, I, and all new(er) law professors, need to prioritize our health in body, mind, and spirit. We are not automatons. Teaching, scholarship, and institutional service

will always demand more, but in order to work effectively, we need to act daily to promote our personal health as well as the wellbeing of our families.

(3) What are the risks and rewards of engaging in activism, and what are your tips for a new(er) law professor who is considering whether or not to get involved in this way, or for a new(er) law professor who is already involved?

One risk of engaging in activism is to go overboard—effectively jumping ship from the tenure track (to mix metaphors). Especially at the start, I think this is a big risk for those of us who came to the law professoriate with a background in community-based sociolegal activism: if we focus overmuch on such work, we risk having our scholarship, teaching, and institutional service suffer, or of being perceived by our tenured faculty as insufficiently focused on “acting like a law professor.” Also, this phenomenon—of misperceiving a socially active professor as not acting like a proper faculty—likely has disparate impacts depending on socially salient dimensions of power and identity (*e.g.*, race and color; sex, gender, and sexual identity / expression; dis/ability; age; etc.). At the same time, the rewards of engaging in activism are great. Derrick Bell discussed them as the fruits of “ethical ambition,” and working with others to address concrete problems usually feels enlivening and may contrast starkly with the isolating or alienating conditions that we sometimes perceive regarding acting like a proper law professor.

For the lawyer who was socially active before becoming a law professor, the best practices would probably include engaging activism with the right mix of rhythm and balance to enable one to obtain the benefits while minimizing the risks. I wasn’t able to realize that mix during my tenure track process, but I feel hopeful as I reintegrate myself in a post-tenured status.

For the law professor who has not previously engaged in activism, I first question who that could be and advise such a person to reflect deeply across their life to discern whether they have in fact engaged in some form of activism. Then I would recommend starting slowly and in consultation with activists and professors who are experienced in the field and locality. The literature on poverty lawyers and community lawyering is replete with critiques of lawyers acting like experts in domains outside of our profession. An article by Bill Quigley comes to mind, as does Gerald López’s famous book, *Rebellious Lawyering*.

Like all meaningful work, it takes time to engage in social activism, and its rewards will likely feel unfamiliar to a professor who has not previously, or recently, engaged with others in these ways. A long community meeting can feel like a waste of one’s time, and it can feel odd not to be deemed the authoritative voice at the head of the room, but impoverished, precarious, and otherwise marginalized communities can benefit profoundly from compassionate and ethical law professors who commit themselves and the resources that they can access to the cause. If one treats engaging in social activism like learning a new field of law (for teaching, scholarship, or practice), the investment of time and effort might be easier to comprehend: without the investment, one likely cannot do the new work well, and even with the investment, one’s initial and early efforts will necessarily be imperfect.

I’ll end by mentioning that organizations of law professors like LatCrit (Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory), ClassCrits (A Network for Critical Analysis of Law and Economic Inequality), or SALT (Society of American Law Teachers) regularly conference in the United States, and they provide vital venues for law professors who engage socially or seek to do

so. Similarly, myriad AALS sections, including the Section on Poverty Law, provide significant resources for professors who are new(er) to social activism.

Marc-Tizoc González is Professor of Law at the St. Thomas University School of Law in Miami Gardens, Florida; chair of the AALS Section on Poverty Law; secretary of LatCrit, Inc.; and a member of the Association for Law, Property, and Society, ClassCrits, the Law and Society Association, and SALT. He can be contacted online at mtgonzalez@stu.edu or @marctizoc.

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Again, thank you to all of our contributors. If you have suggestions or ideas for future newsletters, please feel free to e-mail our incoming secretary, Maybell Romero, at mromero@niu.edu.