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Academy, Gender, Law and Sexuality

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¿Who are we?

Red ALAS has been working since 2004 to articulate academic work on gender, sexuality and law in Latin American law schools.





Red ALAS was founded on August 20, 2004, by 18 law professors from six different Latin American countries: Peru, México, Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Guatemala. We are currently 76 members; from ten countries (we have included Brazil, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Ecuador). Our 76 members are law professors in about 20 different universities in the region; some of our founding members are currently Justices (Julieta Lemaitre), Commissioners at the ICHR (Julissa Mantilla), and occupy positions in philanthropic and advocacy organizations (Regina Tamés -Wellspring, Luisa Cabal -UN HIV initiative, and Macarena Sáez -HRW). Other founding members are teaching outside of Latin America (María Mercedes Gómez and Helena Alviar -SciencesPo Paris). Their expertise supports the network's growth, and their connections help the network gain visibility.

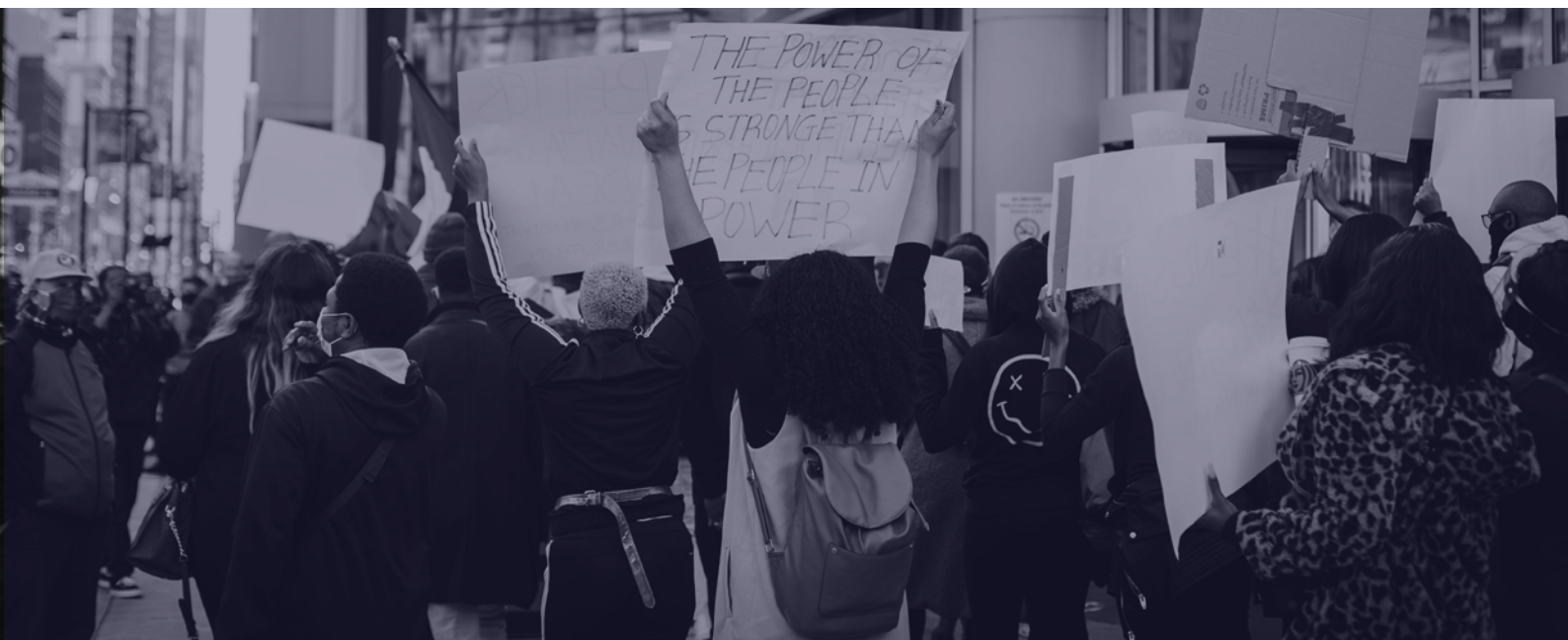
As a network, Red ALAS has published ten books: a casebook on gender, sexuality and the law, doctrinal books on criminal law and labor law, books on abortion and gender violence, and one book on sexual harassment in universities. Currently, there are other four books in the making: one on gender and constitutions, one on feminist criminal law, one on rights and public policies, and one on health and reproductive rights. We expect to produce other four books in the next two years: two on anti-rights mobilization, one on women in crises and one on women in legal academia in Latin America.

We have also dedicated a considerable amount of time to teach about how to mainstream gender in law schools. We taught forty courses on gender mainstreaming in law schools in ten different countries and universities for the first four years of existence. Later on, we created audiovisual materials to be used in classrooms. There are seventy-eight videos available to teach diverse topics such as strategic litigation, gender parity, egalitarian marriage, and secularism and gender. We are currently teaching a course on abortion, with a companion book, and a course on attitudinal transformations. We have collaborated with NOVAK and PENT-Flacso in these projects. We hope to keep teaching these courses, and to develop in the next two years our own curricula oriented to all levels of engagement with academic work: from doctoral students to street level bureaucrats. We will also start to produce podcasts to disseminate our work more extensively.



Las/os académicas/os de la Red forman parte de las facultades de derecho más importantes de la región.

We have a web page and some presence in social media (FB TW IN LI: @red-lasgenero). We have recently worked to make our image more attuned to our identity and we are developing a repository and educational portal to sustain our more ambitious strategies. The repository already includes more than four thousand entries, and the portal is advancing slowly but energetically.



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Our Mission

Change legal education to promote justice for women and marginalized sexualities.





Red ALAS seeks to change legal education by:

1

Producing legal knowledge about the ways in the law produces disadvantages for women and LGBTI individuals.

2

Changing classroom dynamics to incentivize learning about women's and LGBTI rights and change attitudes about gender.

3

Intervening university responses to gender discrimination and gender violence.

4

Promoting women within legal academia and in the profession.

5

Collaborating with activists working in the field of women's and LGBTI rights.



We are convinced that law schools play a key role in producing and disseminating legal meaning, and, as such, are largely responsible for law's unresponsiveness to women's and LGBTI discrimination. We believe that law schools shape legal meaning when they choose what to teach, how to teach and who teaches. Thus, curricular decisions, as well as institutional decisions, produce the law that bureaucrats, judges, litigators and other key social actors, deploy to produce women's discrimination. Changing law schools, however, is not an easy task. Despite the existing mechanisms to guarantee academic freedom and neutrality, law schools tend to be very conservative institutions and to privilege status quo. We work together to challenge the isolation produced by this environment and learn from each other, and our activist colleagues, to accumulate changes regionally.

We created Red ALAS on August 20, 2004 and we have received funding for most of these years. We believe that additional funding will enable us to increase our impact by:

1. Increasing the frequency and scale of what we have done (research, teaching, and collaboration with activists)
2. Extending the reach of our work to areas that have received little attention in Latin America: leadership in legal academia and the legal profession; inclusion of African American, indigenous and trans law professors; and research on the legal aspects of the gender income and wealth gap.
3. Visibilizing the work of women legal scholars in academic circles and the legal profession, as well as articulating this work across Latin America and other regions in the world.

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Our Theory

Law schools teach masculinist law as neutral, make feminist legal reform invisible, and show women as non-ideal participants of legal debates





Feminist legal scholars in Latin America, as elsewhere, have criticized law for incorporating the point of view of men and, consequently, excluding and/or discriminating women. We have argued that law is indeed part of the problem: through law we have been barred from voting, we have been raped by husbands and acquaintances, we have been paid less, we have been prevented from entering the professions, we have been forced to bare children. This critique is a very hard sell in a context shaped by the belief that law is neutral and, therefore, does not produce itself inequality but rather remains a bystander to the acts of bad people, corrupt systems, and disempowered victims. Law schools contribute to create an environment of disbelief for feminist claims by emphasizing that the status quo is a result of technical and budgetary driven decisions, and not a reflection of the attitudes and beliefs of the individuals in

charge, mostly men.

Law schools not only defend that they teach and act in a neutral manner that merely reflects the nature of the field, but also actively make invisible feminist legal reforms hard won in international and national forums. As the work of Jaramillo and Alviar shows for the Colombian case, law professors in prestigious schools do not know well legislation and precedent protecting sexual and reproductive rights, and rationalize their ignorance claiming that they need not know it or teach it because it is not the core of their discipline.

Women find it hard to dedicate themselves to research and teaching, particularly on issues of gender and sexuality, for several reasons, according to our experience. First, most legal writing and teaching in Latin America is the work of adjuncts who moonlight in law schools. Women cannot write and teach as a second job because they already have to dedicate a significant amount of hours to care work. Second, women's family attachments and care responsibilities make it very hard for them to move from their places of origin to benefit from academic opportunities. Third, women find that their topics of interest and approaches are not regarded as relevant: women and LGBT rights are not considered at the core of any discipline, research that questions the neutrality of law is marginalized, clinics to defend women's rights are scarce and underfunded, travelling to conferences on women's and LGBT rights is not considered crucial, recruiting master's and doctoral students to do research on gender issues is secondary. These difficulties are even greater for afro descendants, indigenous and trans women.

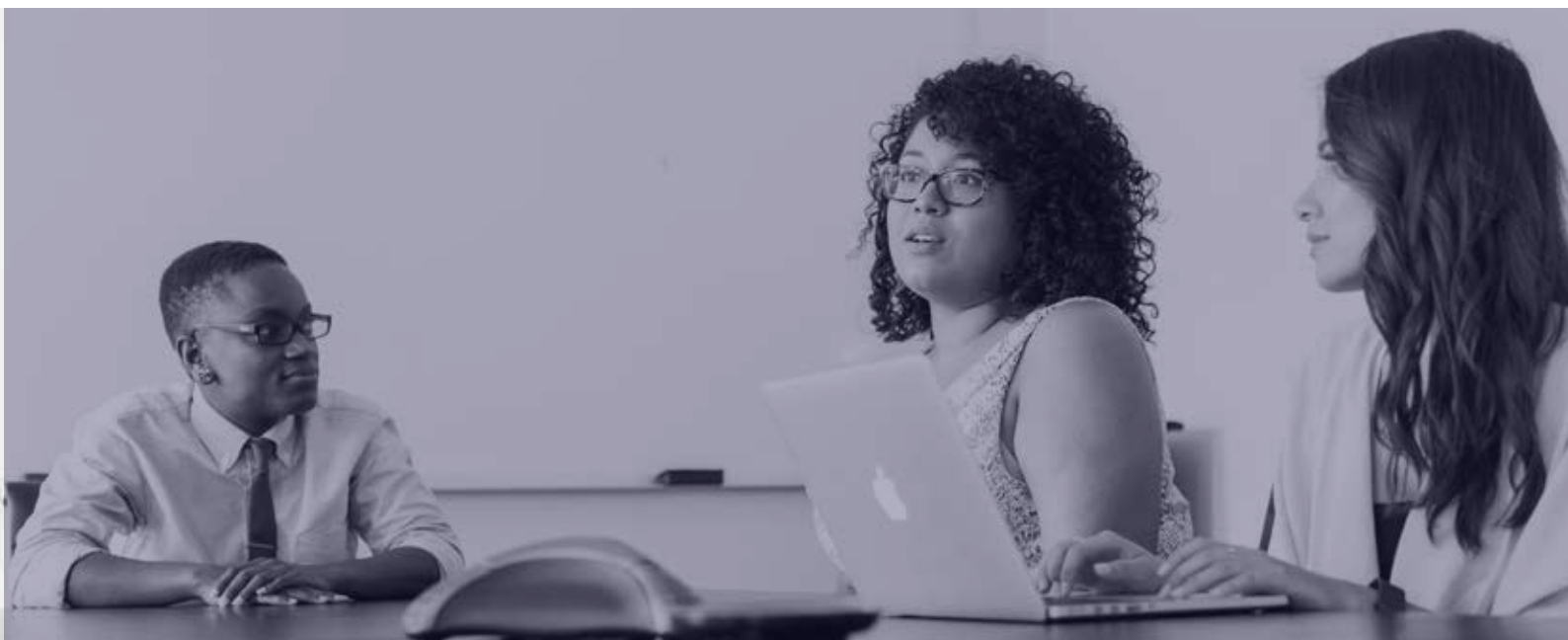
Law schools have proven to be hard to change. Political and economic forces converge to justify their endeavors. In Latin America, the rise of dictators to power deeply affected law schools in

Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. In countries such as Colombia and Mexico, with low intensity democracies, parties in power secured the alliance of law professors by offering positions in government and excluding enemies from teaching altogether. Neoliberal reforms that followed transitions to democracy in the region allowed the proliferation of private law schools, some of them for profit. While this increase in the number of positions and student capacity has allowed more women to enter legal academia, private law schools operate under enormous budgetary restrictions and mostly feed the lower echelons of the bureaucracy and the judiciary. Adjunct teaching and part-time studies are the norm, as opposed to the prestige monopolized by public universities.

Alongside political forces, the market for legal services demands from law schools opportunities to recruit clients and workers among the ranks of students. Thus, practitioners push to keep adjunct positions open as they allow them to maintain a grasp of the prestige controlled by legal academia and to train students as future assistants.

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Our coordination team



Isabel C. Jaramillo Sierra

General Coordinator

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LLB (with Honors) Universidad de los Andes, Bogota (1997) and SJD Harvard Law School (2007). Full Professor of Law and Director of the Jurisprudence Department at Universidad de los Andes.

Her scholarship has focused on the question of feminist legal reform and feminist governance. She has published extensively on abortion reform, quota laws, and gender violence reform in Latin America. Her most recent book, coedited with Laura Carlson from Stockholm University, is a comparative study of the rights of trans persons in twenty six different

countries (“Trans rights and wrongs: A Comparative Study on the rights of trans persons”, Springer, 2021)

Professor Jaramillo has worked as consultant for the Colombian Government on issues of Access to justice and Sexual and Reproductive Rights; as expert on gender mainstreaming for the Colombian, Mexican and Argentinean Judiciary; and as Ad Hoc Justice in the State Council and Constitutional Court. In 2017, Professor Jaramillo was nominated (but not elected) to the Colombian Constitutional Court by President Juan Manuel Santos.

María victoria Castro

Project Manager

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Maria Victoria is a seasonal Professor of the Law School at Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia). She is lawyer and PhD in Law and has more than 15 years of professional experience; as a public official in the judicial branch (in the Constitutional Court) and in academia (as a researcher and professor in different universities and programs).

She is an expert in legal feminism and legal geography, constitutional law, labor law, human rights, and international human rights law with a gender approach, as well as differential analysis of norms and public policies. Her main experience

and interests are in research and interdisciplinary relations, specially related to gender studies, legal theory and the relationship between law, geography, and power, when facing the question about the way in which law distributes resources, produces identities, and power, which with conflicts are negotiated.

Ivy María Bonilla

Research and process
assistant

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Lawyer from Universidad del Norte graduated with a distinguished GPA.

Ivy was a legal intern at the the Constitutional Court of Colombia and a volunteer in the legal area of La Mesa Por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres. She also worked as an advisor on gender and sexual diversity issues in the Legislative Work Unit of Senator Angélica Lozano.

She has experience in research, strategic litigation, legislative monitoring, drafting legal documents such as law projects, depositions, and concepts. She is passionate about gender, race, human rights, and cultural

studies. She is familiar with Colombia's current constitutional situation and the legal instruments designed to protect subjects of special constitutional protection. Trained in techniques such as economic analysis of law and critical analysis with a gender approach.

Her professional perspective is distinguished by an interdisciplinary approach to law and her knowledge of legal strategies for the defense of the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ community.

Fabian Cardenas Perez

Communications
Specialist

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Industrial designer from Universidad del Norte (2015) specialized in providing solutions such as the formulation of strategies to boost brand image, the design of communications pieces, and the creation of web pages from the user experience. Competent in the development of marketing campaigns and management of social networks. Founder of CARPER Design Studio which offers integrated design services.

Fabian knows how to design communication strategies and grow communities for specialized sectors. He has worked as Community Manager for im-

portant brands in the pharmaceutical chemical sector: Colombian Association of Cosmetic Science and Technology- AC-CYTEC, Bioexcel Colombia, and Nanovec Colombia.

His work experience has trained him to develop his imagination power and creativity. He can create any kind of unique, simple and eye-soothing design. That's why consumers also understand the concept of his design and can connect with the brand's image.



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