

| RED | ALAS |

Academia, Gender, Law and Sexuality

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About Us

Red ALAS (ALAS Network) is a network of law academics and scholars that has been working since 2004 to articulate and promote academic work on gender and sexuality that is produced and consumed in law schools in Latin America.





The ALAS Network was founded on August 20, 2004 by 18 law professors from six Latin American countries: Peru, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Guatemala. We currently have 76 members from ten countries, and over the years members from Brazil, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Ecuador have been added to the original member list. Our 76 members are legal academics and scholars at nearly 20 universities across the region; some of our founding members are currently Judges (Julieta Lemaitre), Commissioners at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Julissa Mantilla), or hold positions in philanthropic and human rights organizations (Regina Tamés – Wellspring, Luisa Cabal – UN HIV Initiative, and Macarena Sáez – HRW).

Other founding members teach outside of Latin America (María Mercedes Gómez and Helena Alviar – Sciences Po, Paris). Their experience and expertise supports the Network’s growth, and their connections help it gain visibility.

The ALAS Network engages in and contributes to the creation of knowledge on gender, sexuality and law through case books, manuals, edited books and, most recently, our IGAL journal. Among the Network’s most important books are “La Mirada de los Jueces” (“A Judge’s Perspective”), “Más Allá del Derecho” (“Beyond the Law”), and “El aborto en América Latina” (“Abortion in Latin America”). To learn more about our collective research efforts and the call for papers to be published in our Journal, please visit our portal in the open knowledge section by [clicking here](#).

In terms of teaching and academia, the ALAS Network has focused on building strategies to increase awareness among key stakeholders about the gender perspective in teaching law. It also focuses on training professors in applying feminist approaches to the contents of university courses, and on developing strategic litigation skills among young activists.

In the context of raising awareness of the gender perspective, the Network has visited more than 15 law schools to conduct workshops on Gender Perspective in Legal Education. The Network has also taught, in conjunction with the NOVAK Project and GROW, the course “La Redacción” to more than 500 professors in Latin America. More information on the “La Redacción” course can be found [here](#).

To support the work of professors interested in gender mainstreaming, we have produced 76 videos on current issues seen through a feminist lens. These videos are available in the Network’s [repository](#).

The Network has also designed learning paths to be used by students who want to learn more. They are [available here](#).

The Network has made a commitment to training and educating beyond law schools. Between 2018 and 2021, the ALAS Network offered the course “The Legal Fabric of Abortion”. This course was offered every six months for three years and trained more than 300 activists from all over Latin America. Since 2022, the Network now offers advanced training courses for professors and doctoral students.

The first two courses taught have been devoted to exploring debates on visual culture, gender and violence, and new masculinities. For more information on the Teaching Alas project [click here](#).

The ALAS Network currently has two academic events: permanent seminars, for members only, and the ALAS Network Biennial Congresses. More information on these events can be found [here](#).



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

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Our Mission

Changing legal education to advocate justice for women and marginalized sexualities.





The ALAS Network seeks to change legal education by:

1

Producing legal knowledge about the ways in which the law creates disadvantages for women and LGBTQ+ people.

2

Shifting classroom dynamics to incentivize learning about women's and LGBTQ+ rights and changing attitudes toward gender.

3

Intervening in university responses to gender discrimination and gender violence.

4

Advocating for women in legal academia and in the legal field.

5

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

We are convinced that law schools play a critical role in the production and dissemination of legal meaning and, as such, are largely responsible for the law's failure to respond to discrimination against women and LGBTQ+ people. We believe that law schools shape legal meaning when they choose what to teach, how to teach, and who teaches. Thus, curricular, as well as institutional, decisions produce and shape the law that bureaucrats, judges, litigators, and other key social stakeholders deploy to discriminate against women.

Changing law schools, however, is no easy task. Despite existing mechanisms in place to ensure academic freedom and neutrality, law schools tend to be very conservative institutions that privilege the status quo.

At the ALAS Network, we are working together to challenge the isolation stemming from this environment and are learning from each other, and from our fellow activists, to bring about changes at the regional level.

Since the inception of the ALAS Network we have received funding for most of our existence. We believe that additional funding will broaden the reach of our impact because it will allow us to:

1. Increase the frequency and scale of what we do (research, teaching, and collaboration with activists).
2. Broaden and extend the scope of our work to areas that have received little attention in Latin America, i.e., women's leadership in law academia and the legal profession; the inclusion of African American, indigenous and transgender law professors; and research on the legal aspects of the gender income and wealth gap.
3. Render the work of women lawyers visible across academia and the legal profession, in addition to articulating this work throughout Latin America and other regions of the world.

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Our Theory

Law schools teach masculinist law as a neutral body, rendering feminist legal reform invisible and portraying women as non-ideal participants of legal debates.



Feminist jurists and scholars in Latin America, as elsewhere, have criticized the law for exclusively incorporating the point of view of men and, consequently, excluding and/or discriminating against women. We have argued that the laws are, in fact, part of the problem: through laws we have been barred from voting, paid less, precluded from accessing professions, forced to bear children, and so forth. This critique is very hard to sell and articulate in a context shaped by the belief that law is neutral and, therefore, does not in itself engender inequality, but rather remains a bystander to the acts of bad people, corrupt systems, and disempowered victims.

Law schools contribute to the creation of an environment of disbelief for feminist claims by emphasizing that the status quo is the result of technical and budgetary decisions, and not a reflection of the attitudes and beliefs of the individuals in charge, mostly men.

Hence, law schools not only defend what they teach and act neutrally—which only reflects the nature of the field—but actively render invisible hard-won feminist legal reforms in international and national forums.

As the work of Jaramillo and Alviar shows for the Colombian case, law professors in prestigious schools fail to know well the laws and precedents that protect sexual and reproductive rights, rationalizing their ignorance by claiming that they do not need to know or teach it because it is not at the core of their discipline.

Based on our experience, women find it difficult to engage in research and teaching, especially in connection with issues of gender and sexuality, for several reasons. First, most legal writing and teaching in Latin America is the work of adjunct professors who moonlight in law schools. Women cannot write and teach as a second job because they already have to devote a significant amount of their time to care work. Second, women's family ties and caregiving responsibilities make it very difficult for them to commute from their places of origin to take advantage of academic opportunities.

Third, women stumble upon the fact that their topics of interest and approaches are considered irrelevant: women's and LGBTQ+ rights are not considered at the core of any discipline,

research that questions the neutrality of law is marginalized, clinics advocating for women's rights are few and underfunded, traveling to women's and LGBTQ+ rights conferences is not considered crucial, and the recruitment of master's and doctoral students to research gender issues is secondary. These difficulties are greater still for Afro-descendant, indigenous and trans women.

Law schools have proven stubborn to change. Political and economic forces converge to justify their efforts. In Latin America, the rise of dictators to power profoundly impacted law schools in Brazil, Chile, and Argentina.

In countries such as Colombia and Mexico, with low-intensity democracies, the parties in power secured the alliance of law professors by offering them positions in government and completely excluding the enemies of traditional teaching.

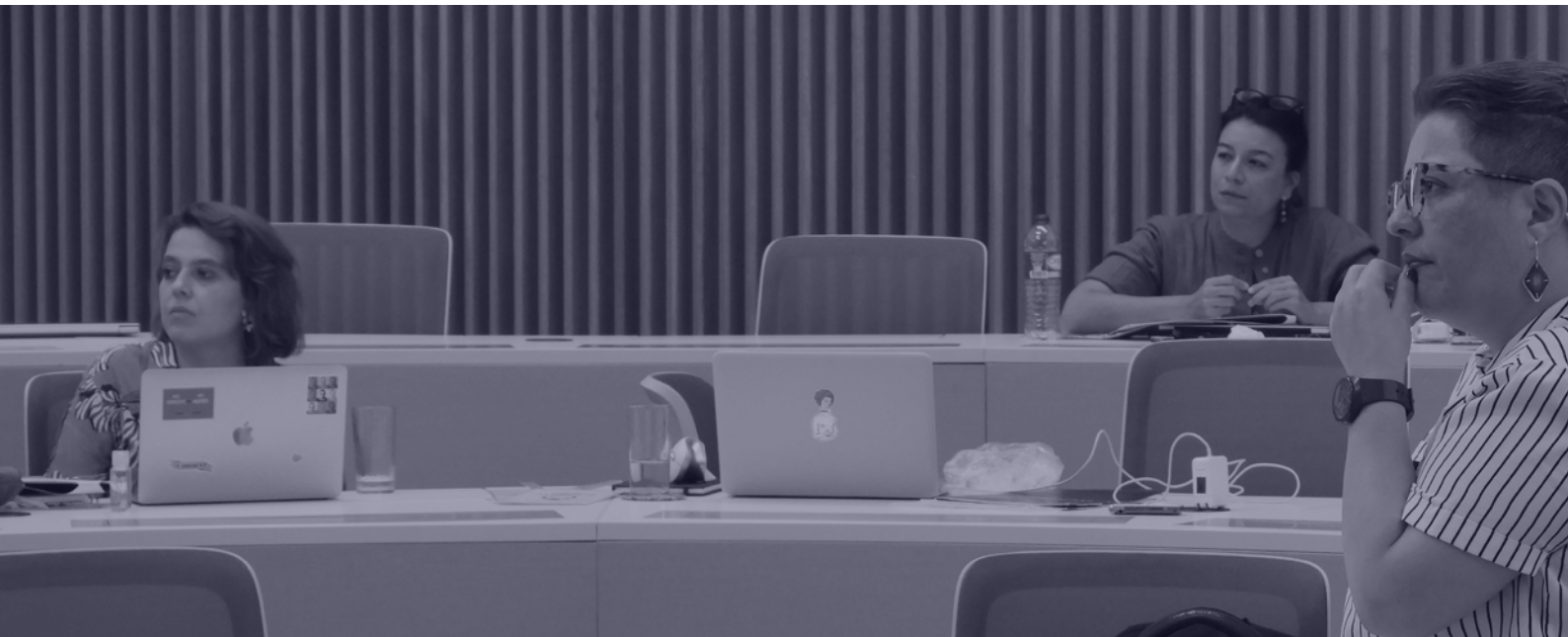
The neoliberal reforms that followed the transitions to democracy in the region allowed for the proliferation of private law schools, some of them for-profit. Although this increase in the number of seats and student capacity has allowed more women to enter law

academia, private law schools operate under enormous budgetary constraints and feed mostly into the lower echelons of bureaucracy and the judiciary. Adjunct teaching and part-time studies are the norm, as opposed to the prestige monopolized by public universities.

Along with political forces, the market for legal services demands law schools to open up opportunities to recruit clients and workers from among the student ranks. Thus, professionals lobby to keep adjunct faculty positions open, as this allows them to hold onto the prestige controlled by legal academia and to train students as future clerks.

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Our coordination team



Isabel C. Jaramillo Sierra

General Coordinator

ijaramil@uniandes.edu.co



LLB (with Honors) from Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia. S.J.D. from Harvard Law School.

Professor Jaramillo's work in academia has focused on the question of feminist legal reform and what this has meant for women, placing particular focus on reforms involving quotas, abortion and violence. Her books on feminism, distributive analysis and legal reform of abortion have been compulsory references for several generations of lawyers. She has been a visiting lecturer at Sciences Po, Paris; the Free University of Berlin; University of Turin; and the University of Miami, among other academic institutions.

Professor Jaramillo has held multiple positions within the university administration (Director of Research, Director of the Doctorate and Master's Degree in Law, and she is currently the head of the Legal Theory Department). She has also worked as a consultant for the Colombian Government and the Judiciary on gender and human rights issues; as an expert before the Colombian Congress of the Republic on issues of sexual and reproductive rights; and was an Ad Hoc Justice of the Constitutional Court and of the State Council.

María victoria Castro

Projects Director

redalas@utdt.edu



María Victoria Castro is an attorney and holds an S.J.D. from the School of Law at Universidad de los Andes (Bogota, Colombia). Ms. Castro is a seasonal Professor of the School of Law at Universidad de los Andes and has more than 15 years of professional experience as a public official in the Colombian Judiciary (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 in the differential analysis of norms and public policies. Ms. Castro's work has always been based on interdisciplinary approaches, and she has broadly covered constitutional law and human rights with a special emphasis on gender and legal geography. Methodologically, she is interested in ethnographic research, as well as socio-legal research and analysis, legal feminism, legal education, sociology and the anthropology of the state.

Ivy María Bonilla

Research and process
Assistant

redalas-asistente@utdt.edu



Ivy María Bonilla is an attorney. She obtained her LLB from Universidad del Norte, graduating cum laude.

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

She has experience in research, strategic litigation, legislative monitoring, drafting legal documents such as bills and draft laws, and advocacy. Ivy is passionate about gender and race

issues, 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. Ivy has been trained in techniques such as the economic analysis of the law and critical analysis with a gender-centric approach.

Her professional perspective is marked 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

comunicaciones-redalas@utdt.edu



Fabián Cárdenas is an industrial designer who obtained his degree from Universidad del Norte (2015). His area of expertise is providing marketing and design solutions, including creating strategies to boost brand image, designing communications pieces, and creating websites based on user experience. Fabián is skilled in developing marketing campaigns and managing social networks. He is the 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 important brands in the pharmaceutical-chemical sector, such as the Colombian Association of Cosmetic Science and Technology – ACCYTEC; Bioexcel Colombia; and Nanovec Colombia.

Fabián's work experience has allowed him to hone his imagination skills and creativity. He can create any kind of unique, simple and appealing design. Thanks to this, consumers also understand the concept of his designs and can connect to a brand's image.



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