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Fall 2023

## Introduction for Roger Williams University Law Review, Symposium Issue, 2023-24

Gregory W. Bowman

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## Introduction for Roger Williams University Law Review, Symposium Issue, 2023-24

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*Dean and Professor of Law, Roger Williams University School of Law*

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# Introduction for Roger Williams University Law Review

## Symposium Issue, 2023-24

Dean Gregory W. Bowman\*

Roger Williams University School of Law is proud to present this issue of the *Roger Williams University Law Review*. While all issues of our law review are important, this one commemorates the symposium our law school created and led at the Association of American Law Schools Annual Meeting in January 2023. For a number of reasons, I believe this issue exemplifies the very best of legal education today.

First, this issue includes scholarship and remark transcripts from some of our country's leading legal scholars and commentators on race and the law. These leaders address the ways legal educators and jurists can incorporate matters of doctrine and diversity into the law school curriculum, the classroom, and the courtroom. For far too long, many have portrayed the law as race neutral. It is not. The law is infused with and informed by dimensions of race and racism, gender, and class. The law does not exist in a vacuum; instead, it lives in a complex web of sociocultural norms and individual and corporate interests. The law is crafted and applied by people to other people, and institutional and structural problems

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\* Dean and Professor of Law, Roger Williams University School of Law. I wish to thank all of my faculty and staff colleagues at Roger Williams University School of Law for their support since I joined the Roger Williams University School of Law faculty in 2020, as well as for their dedication to improving legal education and advocating for justice for all.

abound. Matters of race are inevitably part of the law, and it is our duty as lawyers to understand this.

Second, it is our responsibility as legal educators to train the next generation of lawyers and leaders to better understand—and challenge—these dimensions of the law. We must train our students to be effective and informed advocates. If we do not teach our law students how to identify and address matters of race and injustice, we are doing these future lawyers and their clients a grave disservice. We are harming society for generations to come. We are not working to form a more perfect union.

Third, this issue is a proud embodiment of Roger Williams University’s diversity and inclusion goals and work. This issue amplifies our law school’s Strategic Plan for Diversity & Inclusion;<sup>1</sup> our university’s Equity Imperative;<sup>2</sup> the work of our law school’s new Institute for Race and the Law;<sup>3</sup> and the social justice work of our law school’s legal clinics, externship programs, and pro bono programs.<sup>4</sup> American law schools are at their best when they—like our law school—strive to be agents of social change. This law review issue supports that work.

Fourth, this issue is a testament to the vision and dedication of current and former students at Roger Williams University School of Law. A law school only reaches its full potential when faculty and staff work collaboratively with students. Treating our students like the future colleagues they are leads to meaningful collaboration, which—in turn—allows us to achieve a new vision together of

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1. See *Strategic Planning for Diversity & Inclusion*, ROGER WILLIAMS U. SCH. L., <https://law.rwu.edu/student-experience/diversity-and-outreach/strategic-planning-diversity-inclusion> [<https://perma.cc/2EPQ-XFK6>] (last visited Oct. 10, 2023).

2. See *Strategic Action Plan*, ROGER WILLIAMS U., <https://www.rwu.edu/who-we-are/strategic-action-plan> [<https://perma.cc/ECK8-MTL7>] (last visited Oct. 10, 2023).

3. See *Mission and History: 2020 - Present*, ROGER WILLIAMS U. SCH. L., <https://law.rwu.edu/why-rwu-law/mission-and-history/2020> [<https://perma.cc/QK82-VBH4>] (last visited Oct. 22, 2023).

4. See *Feinstein Center for Pro Bono & Experiential Education*, ROGER WILLIAMS U. SCH. L., <https://law.rwu.edu/academics/feinstein-center-pro-bono-experiential-education> [<https://perma.cc/U9GZ-DS4S>] (last visited Oct. 22, 2023).

what our law school can be. With our students' guidance, we can face shortcomings in legal education with candor and courage, and we can work together to create a better present and a better future for legal education.

I therefore dedicate this brief introduction to all of the current and former law students who have worked to make Roger Williams University School of Law a better law school. To the members of our law school's Black Law Student Association who demanded change in 2020<sup>5</sup>: thank you. Because of their efforts, our law school created a new required course, *Race and the Foundations of American Law*,<sup>6</sup> that has become a model for required courses at other law schools. To the students on previous *Roger Williams University Law Review* editorial boards who launched the first "Justice for All" issue<sup>7</sup> and revised the law review's bylaws to make membership more diverse and inclusive: thank you. Their work greatly enhanced the impact of our law review. And to this year's members of the law review who undertook the hard work to edit and publish the articles and remarks in this issue: thank you. Collectively, these students and alumni have improved our law school and advanced the cause of justice, equity, and inclusion. I am proud to count them as colleagues in the legal profession.

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5. Michael M. Bowden, *RWU Law Introduces Required Course on Race and the Law*, ROGER WILLIAMS U. SCH. L. (June 28, 2021), <https://law.rwu.edu/news/news-archive/rwu-law-introduces-required-course-race-and-law> [<https://perma.cc/3LJR-6XCL>].

6. *Id.*

7. See generally Rachel Dunham & Sophia Weaver, *Introduction: The Founding of the Justice for All Edition*, 28 ROGER WILLIAMS U. L. REV. 101 (2023).