

1-8-2014

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Boston College Law School

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Albert Leads AALS Symposium on Comparative Constitutional Change

2014 NEWS ARCHIVE

01/08/14

Newton, MA--Boston College Law School professor Richard Albert hosted the symposium "Comparative Constitutional Change: New Perspectives on Formal and Informal Amendment" at the recent Association of American Law Schools (AALS) annual meeting, held in New York January 2-5, 2014.

Albert's conference proposal was chosen as the inaugural Academic Symposium for AALS, a new stream of scholarly programing beginning this year. In a letter accepting Albert's submission last year, AALS Managing Director Jane La Barbera said the AALS Committee was "very impressed" with his proposal, and planned to post it on their website as a "model submission" and reference for those submitting proposals in the future. AALS plans to hold an academic symposium each year during their January meeting.

The full-day symposium brought experts on comparative constitutional change together from around the world. The event was divided into two main parts, "Unconventional Forms of Constitutional Change" and "The Challenge of the Formal Amendment." Albert made opening remarks and participated as a speaker in the panel discussions on *Structural Constitutional Change*, and *Difficulty and Rigidity in Constitutional Amendment*.

"The first-ever academic symposium at the AALS was rousing success," said Mark Tushnet, William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, who was a member of the panel on *The Forms and Limits of Unconstitutional Constitutional Amendments*. "Richard Albert managed to corral a large number of the most important figures in the field for a stimulating all-day discussion of constitutional amendments, which is an important topic at the cutting edge of the field of comparative constitutional law."

Rosalind Dixon, a Professor of Law at the University of New South Wales, who was on the same panel, called the symposium "terrific" and full of new and challenging ideas. "Whether it be from hearing ideas about an imagined ideal constitution (idealtopia), a new constitutional beginning for the us, or the power of "toilers with twitter" (or "peasants with pitchforks") you couldn't but walk away from this event stimulated and challenged to think anew about old questions and beliefs."

Ran Hirschl, Canada Research Chair and Professor of Political Science & Law at University of Toronto and speaker on the panel *Constitutional Interpretation as Constitutional Change*, said that the symposium "brought together some of the best minds in comparative constitutional law -- one of the hottest fields in contemporary legal inquiry -- to discuss various forms of constitutional transformation, what triggers it and how it is to be assessed from an empirical and from a normative standpoint."

Other participants included Carlos Bernal-Pulido (Macquarie University), Joel Colon-Rios (Victoria University of Wellington), James Fleming (Boston University), Stephen Gardbaum (UCLA), Tom Ginsburg (University of Chicago), Samuel Issacharoff (University of Toronto), Vicki Jackson (Harvard University), David Landau (Florida State University), David Law (Washington University), Sanford Levinson (University of Texas), Kim Lane Scheppele (Princeton University), and Ozan Varol (Lewis and Clark), who delivered the closing remarks.

Albert is a constitutional law professor at BC Law where he specializes in constitutional law and comparative constitutional law. His research focuses primarily on comparative constitutional change, including both formal and informal constitutional amendment. In 2010, he received the Hessel Yntema Prize, given annually to a scholar under the age of 40 to recognize “the most outstanding article” on comparative law. He has published peer-reviewed papers on comparative constitutional change in the *American Journal of Comparative Law*, the *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, the *McGill Law Journal* and the *Canadian Journal of Law & Jurisprudence*. Prior to joining BC Law in 2009, Albert was a law clerk to the Chief Justice of Canada, the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin.

AALS, a non-profit educational association representing over 10,000 law faculty in the United States, is dedicated to using legal education to improve the legal profession. It pursues that goal by offering professional development programs and holding its Annual Meeting, the world’s largest gathering of law faculty.