

5-1-2022

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Recommended Citation

Clark, Dean Annette (2022) "Introduction: Seattle Journal for Social Justice 2022 Annual Banquet: Keynote Remarks," *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*: Vol. 20: Iss. 3, Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sjsj/vol20/iss3/8>

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Introduction: Seattle Journal for Social Justice Annual Banquet

Keynote Remarks, April 9, 2022

Dean Annette E. Clark

We are gathered this evening to celebrate another successful year in the history of the Seattle Journal for Social Justice, and what a pleasure it is to be able to do so in person now that the COVID-19 pandemic has abated. Congratulations to the outgoing editorial board for persisting during an unusually challenging year, and congratulations to the new leadership, who will carry SJSJ forward into the next academic year.

Given my long history with the Law School and the fact that I was here at SJSJ's inception, I have been asked to speak to the journal's growth and development over the years and to give any last thoughts and words of wisdom as I approach the conclusion of my deanship. I very much appreciate the invitation to give remarks centered on the history of SJSJ because I believe that we can best evaluate our successes in light of where we began.

SJSJ was conceived in the 2000–2001 academic year, and I was there at the beginning, but that was a long time ago. To refresh my memory, I reached out to Kelly Kunsch, Librarian Emeritus, who was also in the room and did much of the initial research as we laid the foundation for what was to become SJSJ. I appreciate his recollections, which are incorporated into my remarks this evening. To further supplement Kelly's and my collective memories, I also reached out to our Law Library archivist, Jane Connelly, who provided me with several folders of original materials reflecting the committee process that resulted in the journal's creation.

The initial work that led to the founding of the Seattle Journal for Social Justice occurred in the 2000–2001 academic year as a project of the newly created Access to Justice Institute (ATJI). The moving force behind the journal’s beginnings was Professor Kellye Testy, who was then a member of the tenure-track faculty and who eventually went on to serve as our dean from 2005–2009. In addition to Professor Testy, the Steering Committee consisted of Professor Ron Slye, Professor Lisa Brodoff, Librarian Kelly Kunsch, Heidi Borson (the first staff director of ATJI), student L’Nayim Shuman-Austin, and me (in my role as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs).

The archival materials reveal multiple drafts of the proposal to launch SJSJ, as well as numerous drafts of the by-laws that were created to provide operating principles for the journal’s editorial staff. At that time in the Law School’s history, we had only one student journal: the Seattle University Law Review. In explaining why SJSJ was being proposed as a new journal, the Steering Committee noted that most law schools have a general student-edited journal but also one or more journals devoted to a specialized topic. Adding another journal would have the benefit of expanding the number of students who were able to obtain journal experience during law school (we were rapidly growing in student body size with the move from Tacoma to Seattle), enable Seattle U Law to specialize in a topical area of interest to faculty and students, and help advance knowledge about the particular area covered.

The choice of a journal devoted to social justice seemed particularly appropriate given the Law School’s recent acquisition by Seattle University, with its attendant Jesuit ethos and values. As conceived, the journal’s mission was “to promote critical interdisciplinary discussions of urgent problems of social justice, including exploring the often-conflicting meanings of justice that arise in a diverse society.” Those words should sound familiar because that original mission statement has carried forward to this day and continues to guide SJSJ’s work.

While there was some initial discussion about having SJSJ be a peer-reviewed journal, what ultimately emerged was a student-edited, interdisciplinary journal, first published in 2002 (which means that tonight we are actually celebrating the 20th anniversary of SJSJ). The intention from the very beginning was for the journal to be unique, unlike a standard law review. The original concept was for more of a magazine, with a multidisciplinary focus and briefer, less heavily footnoted essays and articles by well-known scholars and public intellectuals. SJSJ would include response pieces, poetry, and, most notably, artwork gracing the cover. The very first cover of the journal was a reprint of Jacob Lawrence's famous painting "Lawyers and Clients," a print of which hangs on the walls of Sullivan Hall. Subsequent journal covers have featured oftentimes fledgling artists and original artwork that relates and responds to the social justice commentary contained within the journal's pages in really interesting and instructive ways.

One of the most significant changes in the journal occurred before its initial publication. As articulated in the original proposal, the journal's name was Seattle Journal *of* Social Justice. By the time the first issue rolled off the presses in 2002, the journal's name had evolved into Seattle Journal *for* Social Justice. While the process of how the change in title occurred has been lost in the mists of time, the significance of the change is clear. With a single word substitution, the journal had gone from writing about social justice to being an active instrument of social justice.

A review of the first several issues of SJSJ reveals that the journal was, in actuality, quite different from the usual law review. The early pieces have citation endnotes rather than text-heavy footnotes, and fewer of them. There were no student-authored articles in the beginning, and many of the early authors—Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mari Matsuda, Noam Chomsky, Ruthann Robson, Eric Yamamoto, Adrienne Rich—were well-known academics, poets, and humanitarians. The combination of interdisciplinarity

and creativity was refreshingly and intentionally designed to reach a broader audience, including non-academics and non-lawyers.

The first published issue of SJSJ, Volume 1: Issue 1, surprisingly has no introduction to the journal, or to its mission or focus. It begins with a reprint of an incisive essay by Alice Walker that is perhaps even more timely today (“The Right to Life: What Can the White Man Say to the Black Woman?”). That piece is followed by an article by our very own Professor Maggie Chon—“Transforming Talks: Public Dialogue about Social Justice in a Post-911 Age”—which served as an introduction to the other articles in the issue and perfectly embodies the journal’s mission of promoting “critical interdisciplinary discussions of urgent problems of social justice.” Professor Chon was the first of many of our Seattle U Law faculty who have published with SJSJ, including Professors Lori Bannai, John Mitchell, Ron Slye, Christian Halliburton, and yours truly.

Perhaps not surprisingly, SJSJ began over time to publish an increasing number of articles authored by law academics, and that change in content and authorship created a rather striking change in the journal’s format as it came to resemble more traditional law reviews. To wit, the articles are longer, citation endnotes have been supplanted by footnotes with embedded text, there are student-authored pieces, and the reprints of poetry and literature excerpts have all but disappeared.

What can explain this loss of originality and uniqueness that were so much a part of the original *raison d’être* for the Seattle Journal for Social Justice? I am just positing a hypothesis here, but my guess is that the evolution toward a more traditional law review came as our students, who had originally been volunteering their time with SJSJ, understandably sought academic credit for their efforts in editing others’ work and in writing and publishing their own. As the law school administration considered the students’ requests, we would have naturally looked to traditional law journals such as the Seattle University Law Review as guidance for what kind of work was deserving of academic credit. The

inevitable result of this process would be to push the editorial board of SJSJ to produce a more traditional, less original and artistic journal to justify the awarding of academic credit.

While something has been lost in this natural evolution of SJSJ, much of value has been retained and added. The award of academic credit to our students is an appropriate recognition and reflection of the high quality of their work, the learning that is involved in producing a journal, and the value they bring to the enterprise. The range of topics published in symposia issues continues to be impressive: from healthcare ethics to gender and racial equity; from workers' rights in the wake of a global pandemic to environmental degradation of Native American lands; from visions of corporate law to visions of human rights, both domestic and international. And the extraordinary cover art has remained, as a reminder that achieving social justice will require that we explore dimensions that go far beyond law.

When I think about what SJSJ has meant to our law school, I can genuinely say that it has served to inform, advance, and elevate our social justice mission. The change in name from the Seattle Journal of Social Justice to the Seattle Journal for Social Justice helped move us from passive to active voice in a very powerful way. At this point in our history, it is impossible to imagine Seattle U Law without SJSJ, and we owe a debt of gratitude to those who did the hard work of bringing it to fruition.

Finally, you have asked me for some concluding thoughts and words of wisdom. And so, here they are, informed by what I learned in helping to create the Seattle Journal for Social Justice:

- Be present, show up, do the work, and follow through. You can't bring about change if you aren't in the room. It is truly that simple.
- Our mission is to educate our students for a life in the law at the service of justice. Keep reading, keep learning, and know that history matters. Learn from it.

- Seek joy and maintain hope. In this week where Ketanji Brown Jackson has been confirmed as the first Black woman justice of the United States Supreme Court, I am reminded of the prophetic words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Thank you.