Through a child’s eyes…
A Law Professor describes what it’s like to have a father behind bars

Very few people know that I was a child of an incarcerated parent. I am a successful law professor with a stable family, a mortgage, and three cats. They don’t know that my father was in prison during important years of my life because I am successful, and successful people don’t come from families with incarcerated parents. And they don’t know because the families of incarcerated persons are invisible. They don’t have holidays named for them, and there aren’t parades to celebrate how they are coping in the absence of their father, mother, sister, or brother, like we do for families of veterans or the victims of crimes and natural disasters. The families of the incarcerated are invisible in our society. Yet they are visibly present in all the studies about poverty, income inequalities, crime, and the many social ills that politicians and statisticians trot out to support a social-policy agenda which usually entails punishing the most vulnerable populations for the greed and abuses of the powerful.

I was 16 when my father was arrested, tried, and sentenced. I drove him to the sentencing hearing because he knew my mother couldn’t handle it and they needed someone to drive the car home. Seeing your all-powerful, gentle, intelligent dad walk away in handcuffs, surrounded by police officers, is one of the most haunting memories I have. His was a non-violent crime – embezzlement. A dumb mistake that changed our family forever. We visited him every week until he was transferred 100 miles away. Then we only visited every other week. My mom and I were lucky – we had a car and could drive to see him on visiting days. We always stopped for pizza just before visiting hours began in the afternoon. I can still taste that pizza from that only restaurant near the prison because the taste and the smell of those weekends became an integral part of me. I remember going through security and sitting in the waiting room with twenty or thirty other family members, where time seemed to stop as we waited.

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waited endlessly to see our loved ones. We could hug and I could feel how skinny he was getting with each passing week. But I told him about school, my friends, and we tried to act as though ours was a normal family, that this is what all of my friends were doing on their Saturdays. For two and a half years we made the journey to visit him until he was paroled. But he had to have a job, and the only job he could get was in a city even further away. So I went off to college, my dad got an apartment, and my mom was left with nothing but a lonely drive every weekend. Because his was a non-violent crime, however, he soon came home and they moved to another state to try to restart their broken lives. I went away to college where no one knew my story or my experiences and I focused on me, on what I needed. And I know that helped my parents feel that I was not disadvantaged by their circumstances.

The children of incarcerated parents are often assumed to be defective, like the incarcerated parent himself or herself. As a society we judge those in prison to be incorrigible deviants, and their offspring to be future prison inmates themselves. We lock them up behind razor wire, and the families of the inmates are forced to act as though the gaping hole in their family occurred by accident, or even worse, that nothing has happened. Holding their collective breaths, they wait for the next family member to fall into the same hole, disappearing for a year, or a decade, or a lifetime. Those who are left put on a brave face to the world, trying to appear normal, while they desperately struggle to patch the wound in their lives. They don’t want to be painted with the same brush – so they are pressured to reject, repel, and disown their parent or their sibling. Their private and public lives become fractured, and they risk permanently wounding their humanity.

Having a family member go to prison quickly reveals who one’s friends are. As with victims of domestic violence, many people ask how you can stand by someone who broke the law, breaching the social and legal codes that maintain the image of a functioning and healthy society. The answer is simple: love. It transcends the legal system. When we criticize or denigrate the transgressor, we denigrate the person who loves him. And to avoid having one’s sense of self rejected, the children of incarcerated parents simply turn inwards, holding in check all of the natural impulses of love and relationship. They see no good from becoming vulnerable to the prurient gaze of a disapproving and hypocritical society.

We all have skeletons in our closets, and we are all in the closet in some way or another. But coming out of the closet as a child of an incarcerated person, or as a formerly incarcerated person, may help light a path toward a social and inner renewal. When it stops being a dirty little secret and becomes simply a part of our selves, it may lose its power to stifle our energy and our creativity and allow us to put our considerable talents and insights to work to meaningfully heal ourselves and heal the criminal justice system.

**Programs for Children of the Incarcerated — Small Grant Funding**

Available for Alachua County organizations. Please see our website for more information.
When crime happens, is it only the wrongdoer and the immediate victim who are affected? Who are the inadvertent victims of crime? This was the topic of discussion at the 12th annual Center for the Study of Race and Relations’ Spring Lecture last March. The lecture, entitled “Children of the Incarcerated: Collateral Victims of Crime,” focused on a growing and sometimes overlooked category of victims – the children of the incarcerated.

The imprisonment of parents “disrupts parent-child relationships, alters the networks of familial support, and places new burdens on governmental services such as schools, foster care, adoption agencies, and youth-serving organizations,” said keynote speaker Jeremy Travis, President, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

“There is a stigma or sense of shame associated with having an incarcerated parent, so not everyone wants to talk about it,” said Dr. Anju Kaduvettoor Davidson, CSRRR’s Assistant Director.

The CSRRR has chosen to talk about it. More than one hundred students, faculty and community members attended the discussion and heard how the issue affects real people.

The lecture began with a panel moderated by Dr. Davidson. It consisted of three people whose parents were in prison for a part of their childhoods. As they shared their experiences and answered questions, many in the audience, were surprised by their success and resilience. The panelists credited having other familial figures, programs and resources available to them and stressed the importance of these resources for children facing similar situations.

The second part of the lecture, entitled “What About the Children?: Assessing the Ripple Effects of Mass Incarceration” by President Travis, analyzed the incarceration trend. Since the 1980s, the U.S. incarceration rate has been rapidly increasing, leaving an increasing number of children without parents, in a somewhat secondary ripple effect. Travis suggested a major contributor may be policy changes implemented in the early ‘80s as part of the War on Drugs. This issue has disproportionately affected African-Americans and other communities of color.

By Chantelle McHugh
In response to our question about the relationship between race and legal studies, Dean Rosenbury shared this:

All lawyers are practicing in increasingly diverse environments. In order to build successful careers, law students must develop what Lani Guinier has termed ‘racial literacy.’ This includes an understanding of law’s historical role in enforcing and combating racial hierarchy; an attention to ongoing structural inequalities; and a consideration of the ways law continues to participate in the very construction of race. CSRRR is a leader in developing resources designed to help students develop this racial literacy.

**2015 Yegelwel Summer Fellow**

Rebecca Hendricks, 3L, was selected as the Yegelwel Summer Fellow for 2015. She graduated *cum laude* from Washington & Jefferson College with a B.A. in English and a minor in French. In college, she received the Magellan Project Kelso Grant, which allowed her to travel to Paris to study French perceptions of the Holocaust.

Hendricks is the vice president of the Immigration Law Association, and a student member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. She was an intern at the Law Office of Evan George, which specializes in immigration and nationality law.

The Evan Yegelwel Fellowship allows one UF Law student to complete a summer fellowship at the Anti-Defamation League’s Florida Regional Office in Boca Raton. A generous gift from UF Law alumnus Evan Yegelwel, who graduated in 1980, makes this fellowship possible. Mr. Yegelwel is a partner in the Jacksonville, FL law firm of Terrell Hogan Ellis Yegelwel, P.A. Hendricks is the ninth fellowship recipient.

**2015-16 Course Development Grant Awardee**

The CSRRR Course Development Grant funds the development and teaching of UF courses that substantially address issues of race and race relations.

Yen Loh is a doctoral candidate in English. Her research analyzes the literary representations of ghosts in contemporary Asian American literature. Her work focuses on the history and structures of power and inequality. This year, Loh will teach “Beyond Death: Ghosts and Race in Multi-ethnic American Fiction.” The course focuses on hauntings in select U.S. literary works. Course material includes texts that involve hauntings in multi-ethnic American literature to explore how writers utilize ghosts to critique and reinterpret the broader racialized, gendered, and sexualized contexts of American history. Readings include Edwidge Danticat’s “Ghosts,” Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*.
On March 7, 1965, civil rights activists, including Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis and Amelia Boynton Robinson, began a 50-mile march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to protest the mass disenfranchisement of African-Americans across the South. As the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, state troopers attacked, beating the activists and leaving many of them for dead. Images of the brutal attack reverberated around the world and spurred the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma, Gator Law ACLU, along with CSRRR and other organizations, held a civil rights march and peace rally in March.

At the rally, law student and Gator Law ACLU president Ben Silva acknowledged the work of earlier civil rights leaders. He stated, “We want to remember the courage and determination of activists like Dr. King, Amelia Boynton Robinson, John Lewis and thousands of others who faced violence, intimidation and repression on Bloody Sunday and throughout the civil rights movement, to advocate for fundamental rights.”

Joe Jones, a 1965 Selma marcher, spoke at the UF rally. In an iconic photograph from the Selma march, Jones can be seen assisting Amelia Boynton Robinson, who had been beaten and left unconscious. Attorney Harley Herman, spoke about Virgil Hawkins and his lengthy and financially and emotionally taxing fight to integrate the University of Florida.

Silva said the goal was to show that Selma is not some distant moment in time, but more important than ever as voting rights and civil rights are under attack once again.
The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism
Edward E. Baptist
Basic Books (2015)

A sweeping, authoritative history of the expansion of slavery in America, showing how forced migrations radically altered the nation's economic, political, and cultural landscape.

As historian Edward Baptist reveals in The Half Has Never Been Told, the expansion of slavery in the first eight decades after American independence drove the evolution and modernization of the United States. In the span of a single lifetime, the South grew from a narrow coastal strip of worn-out tobacco plantations to a continental cotton empire, and the United States grew into a modern, industrial, and capitalist economy. Until the Civil War, Baptist explains, the most important American economic innovations were ways to make slavery ever more profitable. Through forced migration and torture, slave owners extracted continual increases in efficiency from enslaved African Americans. Thus the United States seized control of the world market for cotton, the key raw material of the Industrial Revolution, and became a wealthy nation with global influence.

Told through intimate slave narratives, plantation records, newspapers, and the words of politicians, entrepreneurs, and escaped slaves, The Half Has Never Been Told offers a radical new interpretation of American history. It forces readers to reckon with the violence at the root of American supremacy, but also with the survival and resistance that brought about slavery's end—and created a culture that sustains America's deepest dreams of freedom.

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States
Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
Beacon Press (2014)

Today in the United States, there are more than five hundred federally recognized Indigenous nations comprising nearly three million people, descendants of the fifteen million Native people who once inhabited this land. The centuries-long genocidal program of the US settler-colonial regimen has largely been omitted from history. Now, for the first time, acclaimed historian and activist Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz offers a history of the United States told from the perspective of Indigenous peoples and reveals how Native Americans, for centuries, actively resisted expansion of the US empire.

In An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States, Dunbar-Ortiz adroitly challenges the founding myth of the United States and shows how policy against the Indigenous peoples was colonialist and designed to seize the territories of the original inhabitants, displacing or eliminating them. And as Dunbar-Ortiz reveals, this policy was praised in popular culture, through writers like James Fenimore Cooper and Walt Whitman, and in the highest offices of government and the military. Shockingly, as the genocidal policy reached its zenith under President Andrew Jackson, its ruthlessness was best articulated by US Army general Thomas S. Jesup, who, in 1836, wrote of the Seminoles: “The country can be rid of them only by exterminating them.”

Spanning more than four hundred years, this classic bottom-up peoples’ history radically reframes US history and explodes the silences that have haunted our national narrative.

Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship
Charles R. Epp, Steven Maynard-Moody, and Donald P. Haider-Markel
The University of Chicago Press (2014)

In sheer numbers, no form of government control comes close to the police stop. Each year, twelve percent of drivers in the United States are stopped by the police, and the figure is almost double among racial minorities. Police stops are among the most recognizable and frequently criticized incidences of racial profiling,
Loren Miller: Civil Rights Attorney and Journalist

Amina Hassan

Loren Miller was one of the nation’s most prominent civil rights attorneys from the 1940s through the early 1960s, particularly in the fields of housing and education. With co-counsel Thurgood Marshall, he argued two landmark civil rights cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, whose decisions effectively abolished racially restrictive housing covenants. One of these cases, "Shelley v. Kraemer" (1948), is taught in nearly every American law school today. Loren Miller: Civil Rights Attorney and Journalist recovers this remarkable figure from the margins of history and for the first time fully reveals his life for what it was: an extraordinary American story and a critical chapter in the annals of racial justice.

Born the son of a former slave and a white midwesterner in 1903, Loren Miller lived the quintessential American success story, both by rising from rural poverty to a position of power and influence and by blazing his own path. Author Amina Hassan reveals Miller as a fearless critic of the powerful and an ardent debater whose acid wit was known to burn "holes in the toughest skin and eat right through fear.

Pulled Over deftly traces the strange history of the investigatory police stop, from its discredited beginning as "aggressive patrolling" to its current status as accepted institutional practice. Drawing on the richest study of police stops to date, the authors show that who is stopped and how they are treated convey powerful messages about citizenship and racial disparity in the United States. For African Americans, for instance, the experience of investigatory stops erodes the perceived legitimacy of police stops and of the police generally, leading to decreased trust in the police and less willingness to solicit police assistance or to self-censor in terms of clothing or where they drive. This holds true even when police are courteous and respectful throughout the encounters and follow seemingly colorblind institutional protocols. With a growing push in recent years to use local police in immigration enforcement, Hispanics stand poised to share African Americans’ long experience of investigative stops.

In a country that celebrates democracy and racial equality, investigatory stops have a profound and deleterious effect on African American and other minority communities that merits serious reconsideration. Pulled Over offers practical recommendations on how reforms can protect the rights of citizens and still effectively combat crime.

The Emotional Politics of Racism: How Feelings Trump Facts in an Era of Colorblindness

Paula Ioanide

With stop-and-frisk laws, new immigration policies, and cuts to social welfare programs, majorities in the United States have increasingly supported intensified forms of punishment and marginalization against Black, Latino, Arab and Muslim people in the United States, even as a majority of citizens claim to support "colorblindness" and racial equality. With this book, Paula Ioanide examines how emotion has prominently figured into these contemporary expressions of racial discrimination and violence. How U.S. publics dominantly feel about crime, terrorism, welfare, and immigration often seems to trump whatever facts and evidence say about these politicized matters.

Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race

Derald Wing Sue
Wiley (2015)

Most people avoid discussion of race-related topics because of the strong emotions and feelings of discomfort that inevitably accompany such conversations. Rather than endure the conflict of racial realities, many people choose instead to avoid the topic altogether, or remain silent when it is raised. Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race puts an end to that dynamic by sharing strategies for smoothing conversations about race in a productive manner.

A guide for facilitating and participating in difficult dialogues about race, author Derald Wing Sue – an internationally recognized expert on multiculturalism, diversity, and microaggressions – explores the characteristics, dynamics, and meaning behind discussions about race as well as the hidden "ground rules" that inhibit honest and productive dialogue. Through emotional and visceral examples, this book explains why conversations revolving around racial issues are so difficult, and provides guidelines, techniques, and advice for navigating and leading honest and forthright discussions. Readers will develop a stronger ability to build rapport with people unlike themselves, and discover how not talking about race impacts society as a whole.

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Ron’s Big Mission  
Rose Blue and Corinne Naden  (2009)  
Illustrator: Don Tate

Nine-year-old Ron loves going to the Lake City Public Library to look through all the books on airplanes and flight. Today, Ron is ready to take out books by himself. But in the segregated world of South Carolina in the 1950s, Ron’s obtaining his own library card is not just a small rite of passage. It is a young man’s first courageous mission. Here is an inspiring story, based on Ron McNair’s life, of how a little boy, future scientist, and Challenger astronaut desegregated his library through peaceful resistance.

Delivering Justice:  
W.W. Law and the Fight for Civil Rights  
Jim Haskins  (2005)  
Illustrator: Benny Andrews

“Grow up and be somebody,” Westley Wallace Law’s grandmother encouraged him as a young boy living in poverty in segregated Savannah, Georgia. Determined to make a difference in his community, W.W. Law assisted blacks in registering to vote, joined the NAACP and trained protestors in the use of nonviolent civil disobedience, and, in 1961, led the Great Savannah Boycott. In that famous protest, blacks refused to shop in downtown Savannah. When city leaders finally agreed to declare all of its citizens equal, Savannah became the first city in the south to end racial discrimination.

Separate Is Never Equal:  
Sylvia Mendez and Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation  
Written and Illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh  (2014)

Almost 10 years before Brown vs. Board of Education, Sylvia Mendez and her parents helped end school segregation in California. An American citizen of Mexican and Puerto Rican heritage who spoke and wrote perfect English, Mendez was denied enrollment to a “Whites only” school. Her parents took action by organizing the Hispanic community and filing a lawsuit in federal district court. Their success eventually brought an end to the era of segregated education in California.
Collaborations of Note

**Threads of Silver and Gold: Women of the Panama Canal**
The play was co-sponsored by the UF Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere, Smathers Libraries, the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and the CSRRR.

![Image of L-R: Steven H. Butler, Jamali Tyler, and Amanda Edwards]

**African American Studies Program: Ronald Foreman Lecture**
“Racial Distancing in a Southern City: Latino Immigrants Views of Black Americans.” Keynote Address by Dr. Paula McClain.

**UF Center for African Studies**
“The Rise of Africa in China” Keynote Address by Dr. Howard French.

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**New Books on Race, continued**

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**Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities**

Craig Steven Wilder
Bloomsbury Publishing (2014)

A 2006 report commissioned by Brown University revealed that institution’s complex and contested involvement in slavery-setting off a controversy that leapt from the ivory tower to make headlines across the country. But Brown’s troubling past was far from unique. In Ebony and Ivy, Craig Steven Wilder, a rising star in the profession of history, lays bare uncomfortable truths about race, slavery, and the American academy.

Many of America’s revered colleges and universities—from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton to Rutgers, Williams College, and UNC—were soaked in the sweat, the tears, and sometimes the blood of people of color. The earliest academies proclaimed their mission to Christianize the savages of North America, and played a key role in white conquest. Later, the slave economy and higher education grew up together, each nurturing the other. Slavery funded colleges, built campuses, and paid the wages of professors. Enslaved Americans waited on faculty and students; academic leaders aggressively courted the support of slave owners and slave traders. Significantly, as Wilder shows, our leading universities, dependent on human bondage, became breeding grounds for the racist ideas that sustained them.

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**Dialogues & Discussions**

**Sister to Sister Diversity Dialogues**
This dialogue series is a monthly discussion forum on issues facing women of color at U.F. Participants discuss race-related issues in the workplace, network with one another, and give and receive mentoring support. This year Sister to Sister hosted conversations led by Dr. Zina Evans, VP for Enrollment Management and Associate Provost, and Dr. Milagros Peña, Associate Dean for Social and Behavioral Sciences. These women led discussions on navigating the university as a woman of color and establishing work-life balance as a woman of color.

![Image of L-R: Steven H. Butler, Jamali Tyler, and Amanda Edwards]

Film & Discussion: “A Sentence Apart”
Students, staff, and faculty discuss issues facing children with incarcerated parents
7 Questions for Meera Deo

1. Why study race?
Race is now widely accepted to be a social construction. In some ways this makes it seem like race is not “real,” but simply a meaningless set of categories applied to various people depending on how they present themselves. Yet, racism and discrimination—believing people of a certain race are inferior and acting on that belief to the detriment of disfavored individuals and groups—are real and alive in the world today. By studying race we can come to understand how this social construction ends up influencing virtually every aspect of our lives, not just whom we marry and what kinds of foods we eat, but whether we have access to quality education, housing, healthcare, and other critical resources.

Only by studying race can we hope to understand racism. How do we overcome it? How can we move to a place where people truly do see one another as equals, where difference does not have a hierarchy applied? I have seen this in action on a small scale, so I know it is possible. I was a student at Long Beach Polytechnic High School in 1992, during the time of the Los Angeles uprising following the acquittal of the officers accused of beating Rodney King. Poly was dramatically racially diverse, with roughly equal percentages of African American, Asian American (primarily Filipino), white, and Latino in the student body. I remember news commentators warning parents that a school like ours would likely erupt into conflict mirroring nearby L.A. As students, we laughed at that implication, confident that diversity did not necessarily result in tension. We respected one another. We recognized our diversity as a source of pride, not conflict. Students, administrators, and staff worked to make that vision a reality at Poly. We did not all agree with one another, but there were no riots, hate incidents, or physical altercations at school during a time of great tension outside of school. I saw firsthand the fires in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas. Yet, I knew my school was a safe space. How do we replicate Poly on a large scale? First, we must take account of race, not pretend it does not exist. We must study it, understand it, and appreciate the benefits that come with diversity.

2. How do you incorporate race into your teaching?
As a Civil Procedure professor, my primary goal is to ensure that my students are practice-ready. Attorneys in our increasingly globalized society must be prepared to work with people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Lawyers never know if they will represent, oppose, or come before a judge who is different from them, regardless of their personal preferences or cultural competency. Part of meeting my goal is getting students comfortable talking about race.

My pedagogical approach therefore facilitates conversations not only about race, but also about ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other experiential phenomena and identity characteristics. Whether teaching Civil Procedure to first-year law students or a Law & Society seminar to students from various disciplines, I utilize an intersectional approach. My students learn black letter law not only through statutory analysis and textual interpretation, but also through secondary sources including law review articles, social science materials, and even documentary films and other media. Including context in class, providing an avenue for active learning through participation in “diversity discussions”—classroom conversations about race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.—is important to me, regardless of the course I teach. Drawing from students’ own observations and experiences also allows them to better understand one another and prepares them to enter professions where it is increasingly important to navigate our multi-racial, multi-ethnic population.

3. Can you suggest a book for “beginners”?
I would start with Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s classic, Racial Formation in the United States. The book explains the origins of race and racism in the U.S. What is race? Why does race matter in the U.S.? Why do we rely on these social constructs to categorize people, and how does this categorization lead to forging networks with those who are like us or operationalizing oppression over those who are different? When you have a clear framework for how to understand race, you can use that to start to make sense of your world.

4. What book, article, or DVD caused you to think about race in a new way?
In law school, I joined the landmark affirmative action case of Grutter v. Bollinger as an Intervening Defendant. I continued to work with the Grutter legal team as a young attorney, while the case wound its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. When I later entered graduate school in pursuit of a Ph.D. in Sociology, I had already practiced civil rights law as a litigator, policy advocate,
and community builder. Yet, an article I read during my first year in graduate school truly opened my eyes to why we have racial conflict in the U.S. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s American Sociological Review article, “Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation,” both critiques other theories of race/racism and offers a broader structural explanation showing why racism may actually be rational and based on the goal of advancement of one’s own racial group at the expense of others’.

I also read two master works that though not directly about race, nevertheless gave me a completely new perspective on race. Mark Granovetter’s American Journal of Sociology article, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” is the most cited social science article of all time; yet, his premise—that building loose connections with those who may not be like you is actually more beneficial than forging strong, close bonds with people who are more similar—still seems counterintuitive to many. Similarly, Robert Putnam’s book Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital, examines how social networks contribute to advancement or decline. Combining these two studies with what I already knew about race, I came to realize that we have to work collectively, cooperatively, and outside of our individual communities to ameliorate racism and reach other broad goals. Applying social capital theory to race relations, both between groups and individuals, can help us move beyond racial subordination and towards equality.

5. What’s the best part of your job?
The best part of my job is being able to use my research as an advocacy tool. When I first began practicing law, I was certainly an advocate. I worked on many of our most pressing contemporary social issues, from affirmative action to cyberspace access, and privacy to women’s health. I knew I wanted my work to matter, whether the avenue was impact litigation or legislative efforts. Now I let my research do the advocacy. My empirical scholarship has been cited in numerous amicus briefs filed before the U.S. Supreme Court. Through my research, I am able to give voice to those who are otherwise marginalized, reach a wide audience, and have real influence on decision-makers at various levels.

6. What are you reading now?
Right now I am reading Blinded by Sight, a book by renowned sociologist and legal scholar from UC Hastings College of the Law (and my good friend) Dr. Osagie Obasogie. Many people think of racism as a visceral, visual response to color. Yet, even the blind are not color-blind when it comes to race. Understanding this will hopefully move us away from the myth of color-blindness and toward the reality of recognizing race in order to move beyond racism.

7. What’s your take on how the legal academy is doing with regard to incorporating race into the curriculum?
Legal education has made incorporating race into the curriculum a completely individual choice. Some do this quite well. Other faculty members seem to ignore race and ethnicity altogether. I spent a year conducting interviews and collecting survey data from almost one hundred law professors for my Diversity in Legal Academia project, in order to better understand how race and gender affect the law faculty experience. I have also spent over a decade conducting empirical research with law students, discussing their attitudes and experiences in the classroom, elsewhere on campus, and in life away from school. In the course of my research, I have found that almost all law students appreciate opportunities to incorporate diversity discussions into the curriculum. They believe it facilitates their learning of otherwise vague and abstract concepts in the law. Many professors believe this too. Yet, few law faculty members regularly do incorporate these conversations into classroom learning. Those who do tend to identify with a minority status, whether non-white, female, LGBTQ, or lower income. Many white men believe in racial justice and recognize how context improves learning, yet shy away from these sensitive topics for fear of saying the wrong thing.

We must train law teachers to better incorporate race into the classroom. Context matters. I believe that race can make the law come alive, whether a student is learning Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, Corporations, or Tax. Law schools could include a question on standard student evaluation forms asking whether the faculty member effectively incorporated context—and specifically racial/ethnic context—into the course, and another on the faculty member’s ability to facilitate diversity discussions. Of course, we need real commitment and cooperation from law schools to make this happen.

About Professor Meera Deo

Meera E. Deo is an interdisciplinary scholar who utilizes empirical methods to interrogate trends in legal education, institutional diversity, and affirmative action. She is currently an Associate Professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, California. Professor Deo holds a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School, and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles.
Children of the Incarcerated: Collateral Victims of Crime

A RESOURCE GUIDE

UF Levin College of Law Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations
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New CSRRR Publication

Download your copy at www.law.ufl.edu/centers/csrrr

Hard copies are available by request.