

Letter from the Editors

Laws, rules, customs and norms bound us in multiple forms, and hence our experiences with the law are complex and diverse. Our social self influences and defines how we engage with the law as well. This sets the terrain of law to be much broader than just rules, and demands an understanding of law in all its spatial and temporal contexts. RJOLAS hopes to explore this tapestry of law and society through undergraduate research.

Our journal brings to light research on the socio-legal challenges of our times from the standpoint of our undergraduate students. RJOLAS is the product of extensive discussions amongst law and society faculty and students at Ramapo College and colleagues elsewhere. Often times, we find that undergraduate research and writing gets shelved in remote corners, and there are few options for engaging beyond class and advisors. Yet our student writers, especially at the level of senior theses, honor theses, and independent studies, often bring new perspectives and renewed passion to current socio-legal issues. Undergraduate writing is also silhouetted within disciplinary boundaries and there is very little conversation across the various disciplines. RJOLAS is an attempt to build a discourse on law and society through interdisciplinary engagement among the social sciences and humanities.

This first issue of RJOLAS itself explores the tensions in our socio-legal process and its implications for individual rights. Beginning with an essay on immigrants, our student authors explore the rights of individuals to their food choices vis-à-vis corporations' push for GMOs, types of citizenship in our post 9-11 state, religious rights, and the continuation of hazing practices on campuses. All the authors question institutional authority and the reach of the state. The first four essays portend to demonstrate the inextricable link between law and power and draw attention to how law marginalizes those in the fringes of society. The final essay on hazing adopts a social science perspective to comment on a widely prevalent practice in colleges across the nation, with harmful effects on the individual and very little conversation about its implications.

This journal would not have been possible without the support of Law and Society students and faculty at Ramapo, our colleagues in the School of Social Science and Human Services, and Dean Sam Rosenberg. The first issue itself has involved painstaking work by student editors and faculty in selecting papers, collaborating with the authors, and editing the papers for publication. We are particularly pleased to include in our first issue a paper from the law and society community in California (from California State University, Long Beach).

We proudly present to you the first issue of the Ramapo Journal of Law and Society (RJOLAS). We hope this will build a conversation among undergraduate students nationally on many of our socio-legal themes and set a mark for undergraduate research and publishing.