

O'Neill Institute Spring Conversation Series
with
Erika George

*Incorporating Rights: The Human Right to Health and Pharmaceutical Industry
Responsibility for Access to Medicine*

Thursday, April 9, 2015
1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Georgetown University Law Center
Hotung Building, Room 5013
550 First Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Abstract

The presentation examines the role of pharmaceutical corporations in influencing access to essential medicines and the risks posed to the right to health by the high price of antiretroviral treatment in the context of South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic. It explores how understandings of responsible corporate conduct regarding access to essential medicines evolved as controversies over patent protection and pricing served to elevate human rights issues and escalate the social expectations assigned to pharmaceutical corporations. The access to medicines controversy is presented to demonstrate the power of evolving social norms when supported by social movements to protect human rights and change business practices where the pressures of globalization may render a government unable or unwilling to promulgate laws to protect its people. The presentation draws from interviews with activists, lawyers, policy makers, public health professionals, and investors. The analysis is also informed by participant observation ethnographic field research among corporate social responsibility professionals and policy makers.

Biography

Erika R. George is Professor of Law at the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law where she teaches constitutional law, international human rights law, international environmental law and seminars in corporate citizenship. She earned her B.A. with honors at the University of Chicago and her J.D. at Harvard Law School, where she served as Articles Editor of the Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review. She also holds an M.A. in International Relations from the University of Chicago. Her recent scholarship has appeared in the California Law Review, the Michigan Journal of International Law, the New York Journal of International Law and Policy, and the annual proceedings of the American Society of International Law. Her current research explores the responsibilities of multinational corporations to respect international human rights and various efforts to hold corporations accountable for alleged rights violations. Prior to joining the Utah faculty, Professor George served as a fellow and later consultant to Human Rights Watch. In addition to her experience as an academic and human rights advocate, Professor George has extensive practical experience in private practice, from her work as a litigation associate for the corporate law firms of Jenner & Block in Chicago and later Coudert Brothers LLP in New York City.

This event is open to all students, faculty, staff, and interested members of the public.

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