

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Thank you for taking the time to read the 36th Volume of *Harvard's BlackLetter Law Journal*. When the editors of this journal got together at the beginning of the school year, we decided to prioritize an important theme when accepting submissions: Uplift.

BlackLetter Law Journal, since 1983, has been devoted to focusing on legal issues that affect the Black community. We critically analyze the myriad of laws, societal structures, and coercive forces that persist in our society, which are designed—both explicitly and implicitly—to keep Black people down. Recently our scholarship has shifted to focus on countering anti-Blackness. With a focus on scholarship that explicitly calls out those forces that have a negative affect on the Black community. This volume does precisely that.

While diving deep into the undercurrents of anti-Blackness in America can be mentally and physically exhausting, we wanted to focus on pieces that avoid falling into Black nihilism and instead focus on scholarship that seeks to uplift the Black community. As Cornel West warns in his classic book *Race Matters*, the struggle for Black liberation must always be centered on hope. For without the life preserver of hope, the movement of liberation will drown in the undertow of nihilism.¹

I am sure that many readers of this journal who share a passion for Black liberation often will have reached that same conclusion that King Solomon did when he studied the never-ending oft-repeating cycle of injustice in the world:

“Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? . . . What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is *nothing new under the sun.*”²

Anyone who has studied the history of race in America is aware that the same injustices that happened before the Civil War, reinvented themselves under a new name in the Reconstruction Era. The same injustices that occurred in the Reconstruction Era, reinvented themselves under a new name in the Jim Crow Era. The same injustices that occurred in the Jim Crow Era, reinvented themselves under a new name and remain today in the modern era of Mass Incarceration. There is truly nothing new *under sun*; however, the torrent does not end there.

There is a force *above* the sun. There is a power greater than any thing on this earth. I call him God, Jesus Christ, and *Jehovah-Rapha*, meaning the Lord who Heals. While the undertow of injustice in this nation is strong and cyclical, the ever-flowing stream of justice and righteousness is

1. CORNEL WEST, *RACE MATTERS* 14-15 (1993).
2. Ecclesiastes 1:2-9 (ESV) (Emphasis added).

stronger.³ Even when the injustice of this world leads me to despair, I put my hope in Jesus Christ, and that hope will never put us to shame. I pray that this 36th Volume of the *BlackLetter Law Journal* challenges you, enriches you, uplifts you, and ultimately inspires you to pursue justice with fervor and never-ending hope.

With Love,

Julian Nunally
Editor-in-Chief of Volume 36

3. "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos 5:24 (ESV).