

NATE ELA

American Bar Foundation
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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Aug. 2020- Assistant Professor of Political Science and Law, University of Cincinnati
2017-2020 Visiting Scholar, American Bar Foundation
2019 Instructor, Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law
2007-2008 Teaching Fellow, Harvard Law School
Clinical Litigation Fellow, Harvard Law School Human Rights Program

EDUCATION

2018 Ph.D. (Sociology), University of Wisconsin-Madison
Dissertation: “The Land Fix: Experiments with Property, Land, and Welfare in Chicago, 1895-2017”
Committee: Erik Olin Wright (chair), Gary Green, Joel Rogers, Monica White, Alfonso Morales (Urban and Regional Planning)
Preliminary exam fields: sociology of law, economic sociology
2012 M.S. (Sociology), University of Wisconsin-Madison
2007 J.D., Harvard Law School, *cum laude*
2000 B.A. (Political Science), Columbia University, *magna cum laude*

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Sociology of law; community and urban sociology; environmental sociology; urban institutions; social policy; environmental justice; race and ethnicity; social theory; qualitative methods; food and agriculture; human rights.

PUBLICATIONS

Book Manuscript

Cultivating the City: Urban Agriculture and the Promise of Property. (Under review at University of Chicago Press)

Articles (* indicates peer review)

Forthcoming * “The Promise of Property: Legal Optimism and Collective Efficacy in Chicago’s Urban Agriculture District.” *Social Problems*. ([preprint](#))

- 2019 * “Use-Based Welfare: Property Experiments in Chicago, 1895-1935.” *Social Science History* 43(2): 319-344 ([SSH](#) | [preprint](#))
- 2017 * “Litigation Dilemmas: Lessons from the Marcos Human Rights Class Action.” *Law & Social Inquiry* 42(2): 479-508. ([LSI](#) | [preprint](#))
 - Best Scholarly Article Award (Honorable Mention), ASA Section on Human Rights, 2017.
 - Distinguished Graduate Student Paper Award, ASA Sociology of Law Section, 2016.
- 2016 “Urban Commons as Property Experiment: Mapping Chicago’s Farms and Gardens.” *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 43(2): 247-294. ([FULJ](#) | [preprint](#))
- 2012 “Reviewing Walker’s First Year: An Agenda for the One Percent.” *Social Policy* 42(1): 12-19 (lead author, with Edo Navot, and Emanuel Ubert).
- 2007 “Introduction: Reveling in Resistance, Imagining Reconstruction.” *Unbound: Harvard Journal of the Legal Left* 3: i-v. (with Lauren Coyle and Zinaida Miller, equal authorship). ([Unbound](#))

Book Chapter

- 2017 “Land Tenure for Urban Farming: Toward a Scalable Model.” (lead author, with Greg Rosenberg) In *Good Food, Strong Communities: Promoting Social Justice Through Local and Regional Food Systems*, Steve Ventura and Martin Bailkey, eds. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. ([MUSE](#) | chapter content as [website](#))
 - To be reprinted in *This Land is Ours: International Perspectives on the Community Land Trust*, John Emmeus Davis, Line Algoed, and María E. Hernández Torrales, eds. (2020)

Working Papers (Drafts Available)

- “Property and the Problem of Disuse.” (Law review article manuscript)
- “Reclaiming the Commons: An Institutional Genealogy.” ([SocArXiv](#))
 - Graduate Student Paper Prize (Honorable Mention), Social Problems Theory Division, Society for the Study of Social Problems, 2016.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- 2017 Best Scholarly Article Award (Honorable Mention), American Sociological Association Section on Human Rights
- 2016 Distinguished Graduate Student Paper Award, American Sociological Association Sociology of Law Section
- 2016 Graduate Student Paper Prize (Honorable Mention), Social Problems Theory Division, Society for the Study of Social Problems

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

Research and Writing

- 2016 Mellon-Wisconsin Summer Dissertation Fellowship (\$6,570).

- 2014-2015 National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, Law and Social Sciences Division (Award ID SES-1423371) (\$24,690).
- 2014-2015 Lincoln Institute of Land Policy C. Lowell Harris Dissertation Fellowship (\$10,000).
- 2012 Social Science Research Council Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship (\$5,000).
- 2008-2009 Henigson Human Rights Fellowship, Harvard Law School (\$27,000).
- 2006 Harvard Law School Human Rights Program Summer Fellowship (\$5,200).

Training and Travel

- 2017 Law and Society Association International Meeting Graduate Student Travel Subsidy.
- 2016 Graduate Student Travel Award, Department of Sociology, UW-Madison.
- 2015 Funded participant, Harvard Law School Institute on Global Law and Policy, 2015 Workshop (Doha, Qatar).
- 2014 Funded participant, Harvard Law School Institute on Global Law and Policy, Workshop on Global Poverty and Heterodox Development Pathways, Sciences Po Law School.
- 2013 Funded participant, Summer Institute in New Economics.
- 2012 Graduate Student Travel Award, Department of Sociology, UW-Madison.

RESEARCH APPOINTMENTS

- 2015-2017 Associate, Harvard University Department of African and African-American Studies.
- 2014-2015 Graduate Research Fellow, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin - Madison.
- 2011-2013 Honorary Graduate Fellow, University of Wisconsin Law School Institute for Legal Studies.
- 2007-2008 Visiting Researcher, Harvard Law School.

PUBLIC-ORIENTED WRITING

Policy Reports and Analysis

- 2015 “Cultivating Productive Landscapes: A Vision for Urban Agriculture in the Millennium Reserve.” (equal authorship with Erika Allen) Chicago Food Policy Action Counsel report submitted to Coastal Program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Steering Committee of the Millennium Reserve. ([Report](#) | [Appendices](#))
- 2012 “Assessing Food Systems Sustainability and Resilience.” (lead author, with Satya Rhodes-Conway and Marion Reitz) Mayors Innovation Project.
- 2009 “Cultivos Contaminados, Culturas Amenazadas: La Situación de los Transgénicos y Los Derechos Humanos en Pueblos Indígenas de Colombia.” 2009. ([online](#))

- Lead author, report submitted by Colombian indigenous and environmental organizations to U.N. Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Issues.
 - English translation, “Contaminated Crops, Threatened Cultures: Genetically Modified Organisms and the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Colombia,” submitted as parallel report to the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, May 2010. (Available via [CESCR website](#))
- 2009 “Ya sabemos que el TLC es ilegal. Ahora, ¿Qué hacer?” (“We know that the free trade treaty is illegal. Now, what to do?”) *Revista Semillas* 40-41: 34.
- 2006 “On Salvaging.” *Philippine Human Rights Update* 20(2). ([TFDP](#))

Blogging

- 2014-2015 Regular blogging for the [Legislation Law Prof Blog](#).

INVITED TALKS

- 2019 “Cultivating the City: Urban Agriculture and the Promise of Property”
Northwestern University Sociology Department colloquium, May 9.
- 2018 “Reflecting on the Relevance of Marxian Concepts in Contemporary Sociology”
Money, Markets, and Governance Workshop, session on Marx’s relevance to contemporary social sciences, University of Chicago, May 1.
- 2013 “Cultivating a Commons?”
University of Chicago Law School, Nov. 19.
- 2013 “Modeling Progressive Law for States and Cities: The American Legislative and Issue Campaign Exchange”
Northwestern Law, Nov. 7.; Stanford Law, Nov. 2-3; IIT Chicago-Kent Law, Sept 7;
Northern Illinois University Law, Sept. 4; John Marshall Law, Feb. 25.
- 2012 “Introducing ALICE: The American Legislative and Issue Campaign Exchange”
Yale Law School, Feb. 18; Loyola Chicago Law School, Feb. 25.
- 2009 “Genetically Modified Organisms and the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Colombia.”
Universidad Libre Law School, Bogotá, Colombia, Aug. 21.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING

- 2018 “Law & Social Welfare Distribution,” open session, Sociology of Law Section, American Sociological Association annual meeting, Philadelphia, August 12-13.
- 2017 “Reimagining Access: Institutional Experiments in the Postindustrial City” (with John Robinson, Washington University in St. Louis Dept. of Sociology), session co-sponsored by the LSA collaborative research networks on Legal Geography and Technology, Law, and Society, and by the International Research Group on Law and Urban Space; Law and Society Association annual meeting, Mexico City, June 20-23.

- 2016 “The Sociolegal Researcher as Social Justice Advocate: Challenges and Opportunities” (with Thomas Mitchell, University of Wisconsin Law School), service panel, Law and Society Association annual meeting, New Orleans, June 2-5.
- 2015 “Bending Toward Justice? Reflecting on the Role of Sociolegal Research in Advancing Social Change” (with Thomas Mitchell, University of Wisconsin Law School), service panel, Law and Society Association annual meeting, Seattle, May 28-31.
- 2015 “Re-envisioning the City: The Limits and Possibilities of Property” (with John Robinson, Northwestern University Dept. of Sociology), Legal Geography Collaborative Research Network session, Law and Society Association annual meeting, Seattle, May 28-31.
- 2014 “The History of Urban Agriculture” (with Monica White, University of Wisconsin-Madison Dept. of Sociology), two sessions, Growing Power Urban & Small Farms Conference, Milwaukee, Nov. 6-9.
- 2012 Workshop on the Sociology of Urban Agriculture (with Erik Olin Wright, University of Wisconsin-Madison Dept. of Sociology), Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Oct. 5-7.
- 2007 “Resistance and the Law: Radicalism, Extremism, Legitimacy, Cooptation” (with editors of *Unbound*), spring *Unbound* symposium, Harvard Law School, March 16-17.

PRESENTATIONS

- 2020 “Redistributing through Use”
Law and Society Association, Socio-Legal Approaches to Property research network (CRN 49) session, Denver, May 28-31 (scheduled).
- 2020 “Property and the Problem of Disuse”
Law and Political Economy conference, Yale Law School, Apr. 1-2 (scheduled).
- 2019 “How Voting Became a Duty in Kansas City”
Social Science History Association, Chicago, Nov. 20-24 (scheduled).
- 2019 “Property and the Problem of Disuse”
Property Works in Progress conference, Boston, Sept. 20-21.
- 2019 “The Promise of Property: Cultivating Legal Optimism and Collective Efficacy in Chicago’s Urban Agriculture District”
American Sociological Association, Community and Urban Sociology Section roundtable session, New York City, Aug. 10-13.
- 2019 “Locking in the City We Want: Organizational Experiments as a Path to Urban Transformation”
ASA Community and Urban Sociology Section Pre-Conference Workshop, New York City, Aug. 9.
- 2019 “Properties of Urban Resilience”
Law and Society Association, Socio-Legal Approaches to Property research network (CRN 49) session, Washington, DC, May 30-June 1.
- 2019 “Making Property Useful”
Association for the Study of Law, Property, and Society, Syracuse, NY, May 17-18.
Law and Society Association, Toronto, June 9-11, 2018.

- 2017 “Visions of a City Transformed: Urban Farming in Progressive-Era Chicago”
Newberry Library Urban History Workshop, Nov. 11.
- 2017 “Use-Based Welfare: Property Experiments in Chicago, 1895-1935.”
American Sociological Association, Welfare State Regular Session, Montreal, Aug. 12-15.
- 2017 “The Promised Land? Englewood Reckons with an Urban Agriculture District”
Law and Society Association, Mexico City, June 20-23.
- 2017 “Experimental Fields: Inventing the Urban Agriculture District.”
American Association of Geographers, Boston, Apr. 5-9.
Law and Society Association, Mexico City, June 20-23.
- 2016 “Use-Based Welfare: Property Experiments in Chicago, 1895-2015.”
ASA Economic Sociology Section Pre-Conference Workshop, Seattle, Aug. 19.
Boston College Environmental Sociology Working Group, Apr. 1.
Workshop on Economic Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mar. 31.
- 2016 “Reclaiming the Commons, Activating Space: A Dual Genealogy.”
American Sociological Association, Seattle, Aug. 20-23.
Society for the Study of Social Problems, Seattle, Aug. 19-21.
Workshop on Economic Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Feb. 25.
- 2016 “Urban Commons as Property Experiment: Mapping Chicago’s Farms and Gardens.”
Society for the Study of Social Problems, Seattle, Aug. 19-21.
International Association for the Study of the Commons, Bologna, Nov. 6-7, 2015.
- 2015 “Reclaiming the Commons: Genealogy of a Sociological Imaginary”
International Association for the Study of the Commons, Bologna, Nov. 6-7.
Law and Society Annual Conference, Seattle, May 28-31.
- 2015 “Claiming land by cultivating identity: The search for common ground in Chicago’s farms and gardens.”
Rural Sociological Society, Madison, WI, Aug. 6-9.
- 2015 “Commoning as an Urban Social Practice.”
Workshop on Economic Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mar. 25.
- 2015 “Regulating the Resilient City: A Project to Study Socio-Ecological Urban Governance.”
Workshop of the Harvard Institute for Global Law and Policy, Doha, Jan. 2-10.
- 2014 “Jensen’s Dream, Deferred.”
Growing Power Urban & Small Farms Conference, Milwaukee, Nov. 6-9.
- 2014 “Commoning as an Urban Social Practice.”
Midwest Law and Society Retreat, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Oct. 24-25.
- 2014 “The Urban Agriculture Land Trust as a Vehicle for Commoning.”
Urban Agriculture Law Conference, University of Maryland School of Law, Sept. 19.
- 2014 “Cultivating a Commons? Urban Farming and Property Law in Chicago, 1893-1920.”
Fifth Workshop on the Ostrom Workshop, Indiana University, June 18-21.
- 2014 Participant, Roundtable on Global Development and Heterodox Development Pathways.
Sciences Po Law School, Paris, May 19.

- 2013 “Cultivating a Commons? Urban Farming and Emerging Property Norms in Chicago, 1909-1920.”
Association for Law, Property, and Society, Minneapolis, April 26-27.
Law and Society Association, Boston, May 30-June 2.
- 2013 “Jensen’s Dream, Deferred: Urban Farming and Property in Chicago, 1909-1920.”
American Society for Environmental History, Toronto, April 4-6.
- 2012 “Law, Land, and Urban Farming in Chicago.”
Midwest Law and Society Retreat, Madison, WI, Sept. 20-21.
- 2012 “Urban Agriculture Growth Coalitions: Laying the Legal Groundwork for the Garden Cities of Tomorrow.”
Law and Society Association, Honolulu, June 5-8.
- 2011 “How to Analyze Alien Tort Litigation and Social Movement Mobilization? Lessons from the Marcos Human Rights Class Action.”
Law and Society Association, San Francisco, June 2-5.
- 2011 “Four Ways of Thinking About Alien Tort Litigation and Social Movement Mobilization.”
Conference on Renewing Radical Scholarship, Upham Woods, WI, May 27-29.
- 2010 “The Resilience Research Center.”
Workshop on the Social Economy, Upham Woods, WI, Dec. 11-12.
- 2007 “The Globalization of Collective Litigation: A Structural Approach.”
Visiting Researcher Colloquium, Harvard Law School, Nov. 28.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Spring 2019 Instructor, Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law
Developed and taught International Law, a general doctrinal course.
- Fall 2015 Adjunct Professor of Sociology, Lasell College
Developed and taught Social Policy, an upper-level undergraduate seminar.
- 2007-2008 Teaching Fellow, Harvard Law School
Assisted Professor Lucie White in teaching Community Action for Social and Economic Rights; supervised student projects with community-based organizations in Boston area.
- 2007-2008 Clinical Litigation Fellow, Harvard Law School Human Rights Program
Supervised student legal drafting for human rights litigation filed in U.S. federal courts; led fact-finding mission to South Africa.
- 2000-2002 Secondary School Teacher, Sussendenga, Mozambique
Taught Geography and English as a Foreign Language as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Guest Teaching

- 2015 Advisor on interviewing and fieldwork techniques, Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic, Oct. 16.
- 2008 Guest lecture, “The Practice and Ethics of Human Rights Litigation in United States Courts” (with Meghan Morris), Universidad de los Andes Law School. Bogotá, Colombia, Nov. 12.

SERVICE

To Universities

University of Wisconsin-Madison:

Sociology Department Social Committee, 2012-2013.

Workshop Planning Committee, Center for Culture, History, and the Environment, 2013.

Harvard Law School:

Co-Editor-in Chief, *Unbound: Harvard Journal of the Legal Left*, 2005-2007.

Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights

Vice President for Projects, 2006- 2007; U.S. interest group leader, 2005-2006.

Co-founder and member, HLS Peace, 2005-2007.

To the Profession

American Sociological Association, Section on the Sociology of Law

Graduate Student Member, Section Council, 2017.

Member, Distinguished Student Paper Award committee, 2017.

Law and Society Association

Co-organizer, Service Panels on sociolegal research and social change, 2015 and 2016.

Chair/discussant, panel on “Inter/Action in Environmental Law Settings: Constituting and Understanding Social Action,” 2011 Annual Conference, San Francisco.

Occasional Peer Review: *International Journal of Transitional Justice*; National Science Foundation.

To the Community

Working Families Party

Pro bono consulting on strategic litigation, 2015-2019.

Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council

Volunteer research on urban agriculture and land use policy, 2011-2015.

Co-Organizer (with Erika Allen, Growing Power) of roundtable discussions on potential urban agriculture land use in the Millennium Reserve, September 2014 - February 2015.

Co-Organizer (with Erika Allen, Growing Power) of discussion session on land tenure strategies for urban agriculture, Chicago Food Policy Summit, March 2014.

Co-Organizer (with Erika Allen, Growing Power) of panel discussion on land use and urban agriculture, Chicago Food Policy Summit, March 2013.

Urban Pathways Project

Volunteer research on cooperative business models for urban farming, 2015.

Northwestern University Conference on Human Rights, Jan. 2012.

Chair and Discussant, Session on “Defining the Right to Food.”

OTHER RELATED EXPERIENCE

- 2010-2016 Project Assistant, COWS (Center on Wisconsin Strategy)
Research and writing for think-and-do tank based in the UW-Madison Sociology Department. Helped launch ALICE (American Legislative and Issue Campaign Exchange), an online library of model law for US states and cities. Wrote policy briefs on state preemption of municipal law; local food systems; and energy-efficiency financing.
- 2014-2015 Project Assistant, Community and Regional Food Systems Project
Ethnographic research on land tenure and urban agriculture in Chicago. Funded by U.S. Department of Agriculture grant 2011-68004-30044.
- 2010 Project Assistant, Interdisciplinary Study of Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery
Interviewing and archival research on creation of public/private scientific institute at UW-Madison.
- 2009-2010 Apprentice Farmer, Maysie’s Farm and Conservation Center
Worked on small organic farm in exurban Philadelphia.
- 2008-2009 Researcher, Grupo Semillas
Research and writing on food sovereignty for advocacy organization in Bogotá, Colombia.
- 2006 Human Rights Fellow, Task Force Detainees of the Philippines
Research on litigants’ experience with human rights case against Ferdinand Marcos.
- 2005 Legal Intern, Amnesty International
Scenario planning for future of human rights at Amnesty secretariat in London.
- 2005 Law Clerk, Shonbrun, DeSimon, Seplow, Harris & Hoffman
Legal research and writing for international human rights cases brought in US courts.
- 2003-2004 Investigator, New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board
Investigated complaints against police officers, interviewing complainants, officers, and witnesses. Recommended disposition of allegations.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Sociological Association, 2012-

Section member: Sociology of Law; Community and Urban Sociology; Economic Sociology; Human Rights

Law and Society Association, 2011-

Rural Sociological Society, 2012-

American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, 2013-2015

LANGUAGES

English	Native speaker
Spanish	Proficient (speaking, writing, reading)
French	Proficient (speaking, reading); Working knowledge (writing)
Portuguese	Proficient (speaking, reading); Working knowledge (writing)

BAR ADMISSION

Massachusetts, 2007-