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Introduction

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Introduction

*Eloisa C. Rodriguez-Dod**

On October 23, 2015, the *FIU Law Review* hosted the Religion and the Law Symposium. While states' legislatures and the U.S. Supreme Court were tackling issues regarding religious freedom restoration acts, terrorist attacks and civil wars were taking place across the globe in the name of religion. Against this backdrop emerged the inspiration for this topical program.

At the full-day conference, nationally renowned legal scholars from various backgrounds and faiths convened to engage in a lively and thought-provoking discourse about the tensions between religion and the law. It included innovative legal discussions on how religious beliefs and religious leaders continue to have an impact in our modern society. The symposium was the most successful in the history of the *FIU Law Review*, with over two hundred persons in attendance, including attorneys, government officials, university professors, law students, and members of the community at large.

The symposium opened a dialogue that continues in the pages of this *Law Review* volume, which includes articles and essays from symposium panelists. This volume is organized topically, in the same manner as the symposium.

For the panel entitled *Holy Wars*, Professor Sahar Aziz insightfully presented issues related to Muslim stereotypes. Mr. Rahimjon Abdugafurov and Professor Beverly Moran described the historical underpinnings of *jihad* and challenged the perception that Muslims are obligated to engage in holy war. Professor Haider Ala Hamoudi engaged in a thoughtful and provocative discussion on Muslim expansionism and its compatibility with the modern world. Rounding out the panel, Professor Karima Bennouna brought to the forefront of the discussion the often-ignored opposition to fundamentalism among the diverse Muslim majority.

The *Gender and Religion* panel examined the intersection of religion with issues regarding gender, sexual orientation, and reproduction. Professor Shawn Crincoli deftly examined the Free Exercise Clause for its impact on sex assignment and gender. Professor Marie Failing skillfully presented an innovative analysis of the Free Exercise Clause through the

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lens of feminist theory. Professor Timothy Tracey raised profound questions regarding the tax-exempt status of religious institutions in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on same-sex marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.¹ Professor Mary Anne Case's insightful piece carried the discussion further and her essay, particularly as to reproductive rights and feminist fundamentalism, adeptly analyzes German abortion laws.

The symposium concluded with a panel on *Freedom of Religion and Expression*. Professors Frank Ravitch and Robert Katz furthered the analysis of *Obergefell*, informed by their unique and varied perspectives on the decision and its impact on private religious freedoms. Their pieces profoundly explore the right of government officials to deny marriage licenses to same-sex couples and the public reason justification for recognizing same-sex marriages. Ms. Asma Uddin offered an international perspective to the discourse, arguing that French speech laws are vague and overbroad. Finally, Professor SpearIt provided a fascinating exploration of how incarcerated Muslims have impacted modern society through popular culture.

On a personal note, it was an honor to serve as the faculty chair of this symposium. It was also a particular honor to introduce our keynote speaker, Professor Stanley Fish, who, in his inimitable style, tied together the multifaceted theme of the symposium. I am grateful to all of the scholars who took time from their busy schedules to participate in our ambitious conference and further thank each of those who were able to share their scholarly work in this volume. I also had the pleasure of working with the dynamic *FIU Law Review* team. I would also like to thank the members of the community, including scholars from other disciplines, whose insightful questions led to an even more enriching exchange of ideas. The contributions of all of these individuals allowed us to engage in a respectful and thoughtful discourse on a topic that often creates divisive lines. I am encouraged by the open and thoughtful discussion that we facilitated and look forward to the continuing dialogue.

¹ *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015).