

Panel 2

Failing Institutions: How inequality is maintained in the nation where all men are created equal

11:45am - 1:00pm

A society defines itself by the institutions it creates; these same institutions may also serve to expose society's illegitimacy when they perpetuate inequality. For instance, when the law favors the privileged, justice becomes an expression power and the majority are disenfranchised; when schools educate only the wealthy, and serve, for everyone else, as training grounds and holding cells, they replicate rigid identities and maintain systems of class; when good health and nutrition are available only to those who can pay the highest price, the cost of healthcare becomes a burden on everyone.

Panelists will give voice to these realities and will discuss how the institutions of America often fail to serve majorities while they succeed at serving the opulence of one minority.

Speakers: **Celia Pistolis, Lisa Pruitt, Ronny A Bell**

Speakers

CELIA PISTOLIS J.D.

Celia is Assistant Director of Advocacy and Compliance with Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc, a statewide non-profit law firm providing free legal services to low income persons. She is a member of the NC Bar Association, the NC Advocates for Justice and the NC Association of Women Attorneys. Currently, Celia serves as an advisory member of the NC State Bar's Authorized Practice Committee and has done so for more than seven years. In 2001, the NC Bar Association recognized her as the Outstanding Legal Services Attorney of the Year. She has provided training and written on various consumer law topics, including debtor exemptions and consumer finance company loans. She is a double Tar Heel, having received a BA with Honors in Classics and her JD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

LISA PRUITT J.D., Ph.D.

Professor Pruitt is a Professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law. She received her B.A. in Journalism and J.D. from the University of Arkansas and her Ph.D. from the University of London.

She worked abroad for almost a decade in settings ranging from international organizations to private practice. Pruitt worked with lawyers in more than 30 countries, negotiating cultural conflicts in several arenas. A common theme of her research interests is how law and legal institutions manage and respond to cultural difference and cultural change. Pruitt's recent scholarship is about the intersection of law with rural livelihoods, thus bringing her focus to that which is popularly perceived as quintessentially local. Her work considers a range of ways in which rural places are distinct from what has become the implicit urban norm in legal scholarship. Pruitt reveals, for example, how the economic, spatial, and social features of rural locales profoundly shape the lives of residents, including the junctures at which they encounter the law. Her most recent work considers how rural spatiality inflects dimensions of gender,

race, and ethnicity. In it, Pruitt challenges the association of the rural with the local by revealing the ways in which rural lives and rural places are enmeshed with national and global forces including legal ones.

RONNY A. BELL Ph.D.

Dr. Bell is Professor in the Division of Public Health Sciences, Department of Epidemiology and Prevention, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, with training in nutrition and epidemiology.

Dr. Bell's primary interests are chronic disease prevalence and risk factors, with particular emphasis on ethnic minority populations. He is Director of the Maya Angelou Research Center on Minority Health. Dr. Bell served as the Principal Investigator of the HEARTQUEST project, an NHLBI-funded contract serving as one of six vanguard Enhanced Dissemination and Utilization Centers (EDUCs) nationwide. The project targeted African Americans, Native Americans and whites in Robeson and Columbus counties, North Carolina, to address the tremendous cardiovascular disease burden in these communities. Dr. Bell also serves as the Coordinating Center director for the SEARCH for Diabetes in Youth Study, a multi-center study funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with support from the NIDDK. The SEARCH study is designed to estimate the population prevalence and incidence of diabetes in youth by type, age, gender and ethnicity, and to develop practical approaches to diabetes classification. Dr. Bell received a minority investigator R03 from the NIDDK to estimate the prevalence of self-reported chronic health behaviors and chronic conditions among Lumbee Indians, and received a minority investigator supplement to the Strong Heart Study to examine dietary factors related to diabetes and insulin resistance in the Strong Heart cohort.