In This Issue

Law & Social Inquiry is pleased to present a major symposium on the "New Legal Realism" project. Our symposium consists of six articles organized in two segments, one "domestic," the other "transnational." Each segment has been developed under the guidance of invited guest-editors—Mitu Gulati and Laura Beth Nielsen (domestic), and Bryant G. Garth (transnational). On behalf of the Journal, I wish to thank our guest editors and all our authors for their efforts in bringing this enterprise to fruition.

The purpose of this symposium issue is to introduce the New Legal Realism project, an effort to bring professionals from law and social science together in a new kind of dialogue intended to refurbish and extend the interdisciplinary research agenda of contemporary sociolegal scholarship. The essays in the symposium demonstrate many aspects of what the New Legal Realism project portends: the combination of multiple methodologies, including both qualitative/interpretive and quantitative research; the insistence that empirical investigations combine "bottom-up" perspectives with "top-down" to generate a more complete picture of law and the social world it inhabits; and the employment of empirical research to shed light on issues of importance to lawyers and policymakers. The last, in particular, is considered a core mission of the New Legal Realist project—the development of a sophisticated process of translation and exchange between law and social science. In this translation process, the goal is to create a positive agenda, building from but not ending with critique, through which the best learning from the social sciences can be brought to bear on legal problems without losing the nuances and priorities of either field. Because the project is young, there is still much room for elaboration and fruitful debate; the authors in this symposium chart the beginning of a conversation and, through example, suggest some important directions for the ongoing discussion.

A notable feature of the New Legal Realist project is its incorporation of pragmatist perspectives from multiple fields. In keeping with this focus,
participants in the Symposium develop their new approach in large part through practicing it. Both parts of this special issue—on employment discrimination and on transnational legal dynamics—provide important examples of how new legal realist research brings sociolegal perspectives and empirical expertise to the elucidation of policy issues in specific arenas.

—Christopher Tomlins