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## Opening Remarks (2012 Intercultural Human Rights Law Review Annual Symposium)

Douglas E. Ray  
*St. Thomas University College of Law*

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JUSTICE AT THE DOOR:  
ENDING DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

*Intercultural Human Rights Law Review Annual Symposium*

January 27, 2012

**OPENING REMARKS**

DEAN DOUGLAS E. RAY\*

Good morning. It is my privilege to welcome you to the St. Thomas Law community.

This is one of those days when it is a genuine pleasure to be the dean of a law school like this that makes a difference. I'd like to begin by telling our guests a little bit about our students and our law school. This is a place where service and justice matter. Our students provide over 16,000 hours of volunteer service to the community each year. Our Human Rights Institute represents over 6,000 immigrants a year providing legal and other services. Through our Immigration Clinic, our Tax Clinic, and our legal externships in the community, our students help thousands of other people. Today's program exemplifies that mission of service and justice.

As Monsignor Casale mentioned, we have a graduate law program in intercultural human rights that attracts lawyers from all over the world. They come here to learn more about global justice and then go back to their home countries to serve others. Students on our *Intercultural Human Rights Law Review*, which co-sponsors today's program, publish important articles including those that will arise out of this conference. Their work will bring help bring justice to the world and open the door of understanding on some serious topics. I ask at this moment that all the members of our *Intercultural Human Rights Law Review* stand so that we may recognize all of their contributions. (Applause.)

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\* Dean, St. Thomas University School of Law.

I mention the service by our students and our school for two reasons. My first reason is to send a message to those attorneys who have joined us today, those of you who have spent years serving others, bringing justice to the world, and helping the underprivileged. We want you to know that we are indeed your partners, that we share your values, and that we admire what you do. Secondly, as dean of the law school, I share this good news about our students, because I encourage you to consider them for positions when you have openings. This is said with a smile, but it is also seriously intended. They will be confident, competent, and caring advocates wherever they go, and we invite you to meet them at the reception following this program.

As Monsignor Casale mentioned, today's program is an important one about a vexing global problem. Not everyone is aware that human trafficking is a multi-billion dollar, multi-national criminal enterprise. Of those who are aware, most of the newspaper coverage and most of the awareness is about the evils of trafficking in sexual slavery and the sex trade. Others are aware of the problems of trafficking involving forced labor in agriculture and manufacturing, another serious evil. Today we talk about another and truly hidden aspect of the human trafficking problem.

Trafficking involving domestic servants creates victims who are truly without voice. In this country, most are often foreign national women with or without documentation. They live in the homes of their employers. They are controlled in many ways including through threats of deportation or withheld documents, withheld wages, and threats of harm or actual harm to the victim or members of the victim's family. There might be domestic violence, there might be sexual exploitation, and there might be degradation in many different forms. Certainly, most victims are under-compensated or uncompensated and work exhaustingly long hours. These people may lack English language skills, and without documents or with their documents confiscated by slavers, they live in fear for themselves or their families. They have no way to seek help even if horrible things are being done; they have no voice.

I think that part of the reason that human trafficking survives and the forms of slavery it represents continue into our allegedly

enlightened age is that most people find even imagining this thing to be so abhorrent that they ignore it. Unfortunately, the silence that ensues is what allows this massive criminal enterprise to thrive and prosper. Our goal today is to help be the voice for those voiceless victims and help end the silence about some of these terrible crimes.

Thank you for joining us in this mission.

