

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

Economic inequalities are among the greatest human rights challenges the world faces today due to the past four decades of neoliberal policy dominance. Globally, there are now over 2,000 billionaires, while 3.4 billion people live below the poverty line of US \$5.50 per day. Many human rights scholars and practitioners read these statistics with alarm, asking what impact such extreme inequalities have on realizing human rights and what role, if any, should human rights have in challenging them? This edited volume examines these questions from multiple disciplinary perspectives, seeking to uncover the relationships between human rights and economic inequalities, and the barriers and pathways to greater economic equality and full enjoyment of human rights for all. The volume is a unique contribution to the emerging literature on human rights and economic inequality, as it is interdisciplinary, global in reach and extends to several under-researched areas in the field.

GILLIAN MACNAUGHTON, JD, DPhil, is Associate Professor of Human Rights at the University of Massachusetts Boston, co-editor of *Economic and Social Rights in a Neoliberal World* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), and co-founder of the Collaborative Research Network on Economic and Social Rights in the Law and Society Association.

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“This volume directs a spotlight on one of the most fundamental consequences of decades of neoliberal policies – the soaring inequalities in income, wealth, and economic power within and between countries – and shows how human rights standards provide an ethical frame for confronting this challenge. This book is a must-read for human rights experts, advocates, and economists who are concerned with advancing social and distributive justice.”

— James Heintz, Andrew Glyn Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts Amherst

“This book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the relationship between inequality and human rights . . . and an important book for scholars and practitioners working on economic policy and human rights.”

— Radhika Balakrishnan, Faculty Director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership and Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies, Rutgers University

“This important volume brings together a range of interdisciplinary perspectives to analyze economic inequality as one of the critical human rights challenges of our time. It sheds useful light not only on the relationship of human rights standards to economic inequality, but on how they can be used to tackle it. As such it is a valuable contribution to the growing academic literature and advocacy practice on this issue.”

— Ignacio Saiz, Executive Director, Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)

“It is now clear that economic inequality profoundly affects both the workings of democracy, and equal opportunities that the law holds dear. However, human rights law remedies economic ills only when civil rights and political rights are directly harmed. This volume contributes to restoring the rightful breadth of human rights, acknowledging economic inequality as both a moral and practical human rights concern.”

— Julia Harrington Reddy, Director, Equality & Inclusion, Justice Initiative, Open Society Foundation

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ECONOMIC
INEQUALITIES

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Dedicated to
Mariah L. McGill
Human Rights Champion
1977–2020
and
People everywhere working for equality
in all its dimensions

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This idea for this volume was conceived by the editors in spring 2018 while Catherine Porter, one of the editors, was a visiting scholar, hosted by Gillian MacNaughton, another of the editors, at the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, University of Massachusetts Boston. The central aim of the project was to bring together our expertise as a development economist and a human rights lawyer, as well as the expertise of our networks, to consider one of the greatest challenges of our time, extreme economic inequalities, and the potential of human rights to play a role in bringing about greater equality at local, national and global levels. Toward this end, Diane F. Frey, Catherine Porter and Gillian MacNaughton, the three editors of the volume, organized three panels – Human Rights and Economic Inequalities I, II and III – at the annual meeting of the Law and Society Association (LSA) in Washington, DC, on June 1, 2019, sponsored by the Collaborative Research Network on Economic and Social Rights (CRN 47). The papers presented at the LSA annual meeting constitute the majority of this volume.

Additional contributors were invited by editors Diane F. Frey and Gillian MacNaughton from among participants at a workshop they attended on “Human Rights and Vertical Economic Inequality,” sponsored by the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR), held at Sciences Po Paris, École de Droit, on May 17, 2019. This volume is a product of these two 2019 meetings of experts – both scholars and practitioners. We are grateful to LSA for its support of CRN 47 on Economic and Social Rights since 2013, the 2019 CRN 47 co-chairs LaDawn Haglund, Ben T.C. Warwick and Wahab Egbewole for hosting the three panels at the 2019 LSA annual meeting, and Sylvain Aubry and Lucy McKernan of GI-ESCR for including us at the Sciences Po workshop.

A diverse group of scholars and practitioners have contributed chapters to this volume. The contributors are from Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, India, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, the UK and

the USA, and their chapters discuss economic inequality at the global level, between countries and within countries, including Brazil, Canada, India, South Africa and the USA. The contributors are also from diverse disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, including economics, education, global affairs, human rights law, international relations, labor studies, political theory, public health and sociology. As with our previous volume, *Economic and Social Rights in a Neoliberal World* (Cambridge University Press 2018), several contributors are widely published international scholars; others are junior scholars, bringing new voices into this conversation on human rights and economic inequality, as well as into the CRN 47 community of scholars and practitioners focused on economic and social rights. In short, the volume cuts across law and social sciences, experienced and emerging scholars, research and practice, and national and international jurisdictions. We thank all the contributors for their chapters and the thoughtful discussions over the past two years on economic inequality and human rights. We are also thankful to those who participated on the three LSA panels in June 2019 and the attendees at those sessions. For research and reference assistance in preparing the manuscript for submission, we are also very grateful to Mariah McGill.

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