



## **CRIMINAL AND YOUTH JUSTICE CLINIC**

### **SPRING 2026 SYMPOSIUM**

#### **NO EXIT:**

#### **CHALLENGING “CIVIL” COMMITMENT AND INDEFINITE CONFINEMENT OF PEOPLE CONVICTED OF SEX CRIMES**

**April 17, 2026**

**Rutgers Law School**

**Newark, New Jersey**

#### **Call for Papers and/or Presentations**

Over the past three decades, states across the country have expanded systems of involuntary commitment that authorize indefinite confinement of people convicted of sex offenses after they have completed their criminal sentences. Framed as public safety measures and justified through the language of treatment and risk management, these regimes are classified as civil rather than criminal, with a concomitant dilution of the procedural protections normally accorded those facing the threat of lengthy incarceration. In practice, however, civil commitment operates as an extension of punishment rather than an effective, time-limited course of treatment.

Commitment determinations rely heavily on widely questioned or discredited risk-assessment tools and broad psychiatric diagnoses that transform past conduct into enduring markers of dangerousness. Release is rare, oversight is limited, and the promise of treatment often serves as a barrier rather than a realistic pathway to freedom. The racial, ethnic, and sexual and gender identity disparities present at every stage of the criminal legal system, furthermore, persist among those subjected to post-incarceration commitment. Yet the public safety assumptions, psychiatric and psychological justifications, constitutional validity, and human consequences of this system remain underexamined by legal scholars and often unchallenged in the courts.

This one-day, in-person interdisciplinary symposium will bring together social scientists, legal scholars, mental health practitioners, lawyers, organizers, and community members to critically examine the civil commitment process. The symposium seeks to interrogate the legal frameworks, structural inequities, institutional practices, and lived realities of civil commitment systems and explore strategies for accountability, reform, and abolition.



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We invite proposals for papers, individual presentations, panels, and alternative formats addressing topics including, but not limited to:

- The legal foundations of and justifications for sexually violent predator statutes and civil commitment regimes, and the continuing validity of *Kansas v. Hendricks*, 521 U.S. 346 (1997), thirty years after it was decided.
- Exploring prevailing narratives of and assumptions about sex offenses and continuing / lifelong threats to public safety.
- Pathways from prison to civil commitment, review proceedings, and the roles of counsel and expert witnesses.
- Racial, ethnic, and sexual and gender identity-related disparities among those who are subjected to civil commitment.
- Recidivism rates among those convicted of sex offenses; the validity and reliability of commonly utilized risk assessment and actuarial tools such as Static-99R and STABLE-2007; the efficacy of widely utilized treatment modalities in civil commitment facilities; and alternatives to confinement.
- Conditions of confinement and the lived experiences of civilly committed people.
- Strategies for challenging civil commitment systems through state and/or federal litigation, legislation, regulation, and policy reform.
- Civil commitment and international human rights law.
- New Jersey-specific issues and reform/abolition advocacy strategies.

### Submission Details:

- Please submit a proposal of 300 to 500 words for your paper or presentation, along with a current curriculum vitae (CV).
- If you wish to propose a panel, include a panel description and suggest potential speakers, keeping the description to between 300 and 500 words. Include the name, institutional affiliation/role, and a one-paragraph bio for each speaker.
- Indicate whether you plan to submit a manuscript for consideration for publication in the *Rutgers Race and the Law Review*.
- **Deadline for submissions: February 13, 2026.**
- Send proposals to: Gabriela Ulloa Parra, [gru2@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:gru2@scarletmail.rutgers.edu).
- Authors will be notified via email by **February 20, 2026**, whether their submissions have been accepted for publication, presentation, or for both.
- For questions or more information, please contact Gabriela Ulloa Parra, Symposium Editor at [gru2@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:gru2@scarletmail.rutgers.edu).
- A stipend of up to \$500 may be available to support travel expenses for those attending the conference.



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Selected

submissions

may be invited to publish their papers or remarks in the *Rutgers Race and the Law Review*.

### Important Information Regarding Publication Opportunity:

#### Commitment to Publish:

- If you are interested in being considered for publication, please provide the following information:
  - (i) the title of the proposed article or essay;
  - (ii) your choice of either article or essay (note: articles are between 10,000 and 14,000 words and essays between 4,000 and 6,000 words).
  - (iii) a commitment to publish with the *Rutgers Race and the Law Review* if accepted, and
  - (iv) a current curriculum vitae.
- Acceptance for publication does not guarantee the opportunity to present, and acceptance to present does not guarantee publication.

#### Notification:

- Proposals will be accepted by **February 13, 2026**.
- Authors whose submissions are accepted for publication will be notified via email by **February 20, 2026**.
- Acceptance for publication of any paper or response to a presenter is at the sole discretion of *Rutgers Race and the Law Review*.

#### Publication Commitment:

- First drafts (5 to 10 pages, double-spaced with footnotes) of accepted articles and essays must be submitted by **April 3, 2026, by 11:59 PM**.
- Second drafts of accepted articles and essays must be submitted by **June 1, 2026, by 11:59 PM**.
- Final drafts must be submitted by **August 1, 2026, by 11:59 PM**.

#### Length of Final Submissions of Symposium Articles and Essays:

- The *Rutgers Race and the Law Review* prefers articles between 10,000 and 14,000 words and essays between 4,000 and 6,000 words.

If you have any questions, contact Gabriela Ulloa Parra, Symposium Editor at [gru2@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:gru2@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)