

## LAURA E. GÓMEZ

Professor of American Studies and Professor of Law



Laura E. Gómez is a Professor of Law and American Studies at the University of New Mexico, and she is also Associate Dean for Faculty Development at the School of Law. Her educational background includes an A.B. from Harvard in Social Studies (where she was a Harry S Truman Scholar), an M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from Stanford University (where she had a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship), and a J.D. from Stanford Law School. She is the only law professor with a joint appointment in UNM's College of Arts & Sciences; she has a one-quarter appointment in the Department of American Studies. She regularly teaches "Race and the Law in American History" to classes that include law students and both undergraduates and graduate students from a variety of departments, and as of fall 2008 began teaching the graduate seminar "Historical Studies in the Social Construction of Race."

### **Background:**

Professor Gómez was born in Roswell, but was raised in Albuquerque. She and her son live in the North Valley, where she attended APS public elementary, middle and high schools. Her volunteer activities have included serving on the governing council of the South Valley Academy, serving on the board of directors of the ACLU of Southern California, and serving on the MALDEF scholarship committee. Before joining the UNM faculty in 2005, Gómez spent 12 years as Professor of Law at UCLA (where she also was appointed in the Sociology Department). She was a co-founder and the first co-director (with Jerry Kang) of UCLA's Critical Race Studies Program, the first specialized program of study on race and law in any U.S. law school.

Professor Gómez is active in several national scholarly organizations, including the Law and Society Association (where she has served as Treasurer and on the Board of Trustees), the American Sociology Association's Sociology of Law Section, the American Association of Law Schools Minority Section, the Critical Race Theory Workshops, and LatCrit. Gómez is an Associate Editor of the Law & Society Review; she will serve as co-editor of a special volume of the Review on law, race and inequality to be published in 2009. Gómez has been a peer reviewer for several other journals in legal studies, gender studies, Chicano/a studies, legal history and sociology, and she has been a member of the editorial boards of SIGNS and Studies in Law, Politics and Society. Gómez has held prestigious residential fellowships at the School for American Research in Santa Fe (where in 2004 she was the first legal scholar selected) and the Stanford Humanities Center, where in 1996-97 she was the last Rockefeller Fellow in Legal Humanities.

### **Publications:**

Professor Gómez has lectured widely and has published numerous articles (including a 2000 article in Law and Society Review), book chapters, and op-ed commentaries, as well as two books. Her scholarship has focused on the intersection of law, politics and social stratification in both contemporary and historical contexts. In *Misconceiving Mothers: Legislators, Prosecutors and the Politics of Prenatal Drug Exposure* (1997), she documented the career of the "crack baby"/"crack mother" social problem in the media and public policy, situating it at the nexus of the abortion debate, the drug war, and competing discourses of criminalization and medicalization as they played out in the late 1980s. In her 2007 book, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (released in paperback in September 2008), Gómez examines how law and racial ideology intersected to create new racial groups and to re-structure the turn-of-the-twentieth century racial order in the U.S. In a new project with sociologist Nancy López (funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico), she will explore the contemporary legacy of that racial order for the scientific study of "race"; how has the right's co-optation of the fact that race is socially constructed promoted the reigning color-blind ideology and what does that mean for how scholars and policymakers operationalize race?

### **Titles of Publications:**

*Misconceiving Mothers: Legislators, Prosecutors and the Politics of Prenatal Drug Exposure* (Temple University Press, 1997).

*Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (NYU Press, 2007).

### **Courses:**

Professor Gómez teaches and writes in the broad areas of law, race, and gender in both the American Studies Department and the Law School, and specifically focuses on constitutional law, civil procedure, criminal law, law and society, and the intersection of race and the law.

Course Titles (in American Studies):

Race and the Law in American History and Contemporary Society

Historical Studies in the Social Construction of Race

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