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Symposium on Disability Rights in Asia: Introduction

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In April of 2008, the University of Washington School of Law hosted an international symposium dedicated to the exposition of disability rights in Asia. Scholars from around the world converged in Seattle to exchange ideas, share scholarship, and dialogue about disability rights and their status in Asia. The *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* has the privilege of publishing two pieces of scholarship from that Symposium. In publishing these two pieces, the Journal acts as historical recorder, and in an effort to represent the event as it happened, the Journal presents these pieces largely as they were offered at the Symposium.

The first piece is a keynote speech by Dr. Yanghee Lee. Dr. Lee is Professor at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, Korea and is also Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In her speech, *Expanding Human Rights to Persons with Disabilities: Laying the Groundwork for a Twenty-First Century Movement*, Dr. Lee discusses the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities as provided for in the UN Convention on Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the latter came into force on May 12, 2008). Dr. Lee argues that the new Convention represents a historic achievement for persons with disabilities, and she offers insight for its implementation gained from her experience working with the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The second piece is an article by Dr. Rangita de Silva-de Alwis, also presented at the Symposium. Dr. de Silva-de Alwis is the Senior Adviser for International Programs at the Wellesley Centers for Women, and is also a senior consultant to UNICEF, the UN Population Fund, and the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs. In her article, *Mining the Intersections: Advancing the Rights of Women and Children with Disabilities within an Interrelated Web of Human Rights*, Dr. de Silva-de Alwis argues for an integrated approach to implementing human rights treaties, one that recognizes the “intersectionality” of identities and human rights violations. Human rights instruments must recognize that many people, especially women and children, stand at the “intersection” of various identities, and thus they may be subjugated or discriminated against in multiple ways for multiple reasons. Dr. de Silva-de Alwis lauds the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as an advancement of the intersectionality model, but emphasizes that, for the rights of persons with disabilities to be truly realized, human rights treaties must be applied synergistically.

Enjoy.

Adam M. Andrews
Editor-in-Chief