

VISITING SCHOLAR TALKS

THE CONCEPT AND CONCEPTIONS OF GIRLHOOD UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

The girl child experiences a series of human rights violations which are unique to her or which predominantly affect her. Since many international treaties protect her human rights and fundamental freedoms, one can raise the question as to why she is still vulnerable to these violations. Is something missing in the international legal framework? This presentation argues that one of the problematic features of the international legal apparatus is the terminology employed to define the girl child and phrase her rights. Indeed, terminology plays a central role in shaping the substance of human rights in the international legal realm. It operates both legally, as it determines the scope of rights and corresponding duties of States parties, and symbolically, as it constitutes an apparatus of signs through which the very existence of rights becomes universally acknowledged. This presentation contends that the provisions protecting the girl child as formulated in international treaties fail to take into consideration the obstacles she faces in exercising her rights as a result of sexism, childism, and intersectional discrimination. As a female and a child, the girl child encounters multiple, compound and interactive discrimination that place her in a triple subordinate position. This presentation examines the terminology presently used to define the girl child and investigates whether the boundary separating girlhood and womanhood is clearly identified. It explores the problems associated with establishing a universal definition of the girl child that accounts for the numerous conceptions of girlhood globally. Lastly, it suggests a definition that would both protect and empower the girl child under international law.

This event qualifies for 1 CPD credit.

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Clara Chapdelaine-Feliciati specializes in child rights, international law, family law, feminist law, discrimination law and semiotics of law. She worked for the United Nations as Project Officer within the Implementation of International Standards unit of the UNICEF Research Centre in Florence (Italy), and conducted research with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Prior to this, she directed the Child trafficking study at the International Bureau for Children's Rights. Clara articulated at the International Criminal Court in The Hague (The

Netherlands) within the Prosecution Division, and clerked at the Court of Quebec Youth Division and the Tribunal pour enfants de Bobigny in Paris (France). She published articles in English and French in international law journals, and co-authored UN publications, such as the *UN Handbook on the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* (2009). Clara holds bachelors of civil law and common law (McGill), an LLM in Human Rights (King's College London), a certificat supérieur de droit français (Paris II Assas) and is completing a PhD on the Status of the Girl child under International law at Oxford University. She is a qualified barrister and solicitor with the LSUC.

NOVEMBER

26

THURSDAY

12:30PM

FASKEN MARTINEAU
CLASSROOM
(ROOM 122)



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