

Preface: Gwendolyn J. Gordon

Gwen Gordon passed away in December 2021, at the age of forty-one. She was a student and a scholar of law, of anthropology, and of psychology (as an undergraduate); an ethnographer who worked among the Maori and a corporate lawyer who worked among the financial and legal elite of New York and London; she wrote fan fiction and interned for the United Nations; she attended and taught at some of the most selective institutions in this country while maintaining a warmth and approachability that were universally remarked on; she gave freely of her time and her intellect—she was, in short, impressive. There is really no understanding the sudden, awful absence of such a vibrant, generous, creative, and young colleague, one who many of us in this small circle of legal anthropologists were beginning to know more personally after years of intellectual or institutional proximity.

Academics being academics, even as our group tried to process and grieve this loss, we found ourselves taken up by the question of Gwen's unfinished work. The essay that she wrote for this symposium had been undergoing peer review at the time of her passing: a first review had been submitted, a second was still pending. To us, this state of affairs signaled that the essay was both deeply advanced in its journey toward publication and considerably removed from completion. What would she have wanted us to do? What response would best preserve and enhance her legacy? What would acknowledge her participation in the conversations and the community that we had, by this time, been building for several years?

There are models—precedent may be too strong a word—for situations of this sort. Students finish the work of their professors, spouses and children edit the work of their relatives, and so on. In the weeks after Gwen's death, I asked to be reminded of these possible paths by the other members of this group, by the editorial staff of this journal, and by one of Gwen's teachers who had also been a teacher of mine. I asked to be advised of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Everyone responded with the generosity and the grace that I have come to expect from this small community of ours. No one should be faulted for the shortcomings of an approach that, choosing between imperfect responses to a terrible circumstance and after a series of conversations with Gwen's mother, I ultimately settled on: Gwen's essay would be published with only minor typographical editing and with the addition of this preface as well as a more substantive postscript situating the essay among her prior publications.

This approach was just one of many possible options. Nevertheless, it is our hope that this path strikes a balance between respect for Gwen's own judgment of her work and our desire to protect her legacy, between preserving her beautiful prose style and drawing connections to her other work that she herself might have pursued during revisions. Most of all, this path allows us, as a collection of moderately junior researchers

working to build community in the face of disciplinary divisions and a deeply isolating pandemic, to acknowledge Gwen as one of our own and to share her thinking with a broader universe of socio-legal scholars that may not have previously encountered it. Accordingly, what follows is a reproduction of Gwen's essay as it was submitted to the journal in mid-2021, as well as a postscript, more bibliographic than personal, that connects the essay with Gwen's already-published scholarship on corporate personhood.

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