

## **Research Grant Proposal to the Zicklin Center for Business Ethics Research**

### **Summary**

#### **Working Title: Business and Peace: The Search for Justice in Transitional**

#### **Economies**

**Requestor: Tara J. Radin**

#### Special Opportunity

An opportunity has recently arisen to obtain access to firsthand research (data and interviews) at the Hague and potentially in Bosnia (and elsewhere) through Michael Johnson, Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, Executive Director of the Institute for Justice Sector Development, and former registrar for the War Crimes Chamber of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This summer, I would very much like to take advantage of this rare opportunity as I continue to research and write in the area of business and peace. This is an exciting project—personally rewarding as well as a meaningful contribution to the literature. It is well-timed and suitably positioned to leverage existing connections.

#### Contribution

This research is distinctive in its approach. First, it focuses on transitional economies— i.e., economies moving toward free market systems—such as those recovering from war (i.e., Bosnia). Second, it examines the roles of business and law together to overcome the so-called “separation thesis.” Freeman (2004) argues that business is built on this thesis—i.e., the fallacy that disciplines can and should be viewed in isolation from one another. A key goal of this project lies in overcoming this thinking by examining the multiple, interconnected stakeholder relationships and their combined, integrated impact on justice in these economies through business and law. A primary contribution of this research will be derived from its findings regarding how transitional economies evolve and how business and law contribute toward this. My intention is to offer case study examples of positive role models—similar to work I have done previously in the area of global labor practices with Chiquita and Levi Strauss & Company.

#### Business and Peace

In Fall 2001, Tim Fort (formerly University of Michigan, now George Washington University) and Cindy Schipani (University of Michigan) organized a conference, in conjunction with the William Davidson Institute, to which they invited a diverse array of scholars spanning multiple disciplines. They then hosted two additional such conferences in Fall 2002 and Fall 2003 (and Tim has organized subsequent conferences at George Washington University as well). In all of these events, attendees have explored the dynamics between business and peace and questioned the role of organizations as potential facilitators of peace.

Business and peace can be viewed as interconnected along a number of dimensions. Some scholars have explored many of these intersections, including the relevance of war (Bennett, 2002; Orts, 2002), corporate governance (Fort & Schipani, 2000; Mayer, 2002; Tavis, 2002; Whitman, 2003), and international initiatives (Greathead, 2002; Tavis, 2003). Others have looked inside organizations to examine the connection between internal workplace issues and the external environment (Capozzoli, 2003; Jackson & Coolican, 2003; Muir, 2003; Zollers & Callahan, 2003). Through all such efforts, scholars have identified particular ways through which corporations can have a direct influence on peace. More broadly, significant efforts have been made toward developing arguments in favor of the responsibility of firms to be proactive in the promotion of peace (Fort & Schipani, 2003) and identifying frameworks for understanding how firms can and do exercise this responsibility (Dunfee & Fort, 2003). It has also been argued that observing the roles firms play in contributing to peace helps to create a more robust understanding of the role of firms in society (Radin, 2003).

Noticeably absent from these very rewarding exchanges have been adequate contributions from multi-disciplinary perspectives. Legal systems have largely been viewed in isolation from business, and little attention has been directed toward transitional economies. The purpose of this project is to begin developing this niche—targeting the integrated roles of business and law with regard to transitional economies—within the general business and peace literature.

#### Probability of Success

In 2002, I participated in a very successful project on global labor practices—similar in that it involved gaining access to companies and their stakeholders in developing countries. The results from that project were timely and significant, and involved the publication of multiple cases, articles, and conference presentations. Through my work on the past project, I demonstrated the ability to gain access to key stakeholders, and the companies and organizations with which I worked were extremely pleased with the results. While that project focused specifically on global labor practices, implementation would be comparable for this project.