

## Franco-American Conference in Law, Criminology, Economics, History and Philosophy

Columbia University – French House  
New York  
10 September 2019

### WHAT IS SUFFERING WORTH? PERSPECTIVES ACROSS DISCIPLINES ON THE TREATMENT OF VICTIMS

This interdisciplinary symposium explores a crucial but little-studied issue with growing importance today: what is the value of harm suffered by victims, whether of terrorism, crime or natural disasters. In law, politics, economics and public opinion, answers differ widely, and unequal treatment is the norm.

Across the globe, victims evoke a range of feelings, from compassion verging on celebrations of heroism, to denial, anger, indifference and even repulsion. Those reactions translate into wide variations in legal and economic responses to their harm.

The symposium will bring together experts in law, economics, psychology and public health to compare perspectives from the United States and France. It will be held in English at the French House at Columbia University in New York and is part of the Matrice Memory Program, (<http://www.matricememory.fr>) and the 13-Novembre research Program (<http://www.memoire13novembre.fr>).

The speakers include prominent experts from the United States and France, including three prominent public officials, François MOLINS, Attorney General at the French Court of Cassation (Supreme Court), Cyrus VANCE Jr. (District Attorney for New York County) and Elisabeth PELSEZ (Inter-ministerial Delegate for Victims Assistance, France). They will be joined by professors of law, economics, history and philosophy. Speakers will address questions such as:

- Do we really care about all victims?
- Should all victims be treated equally? Is there a moral or legal «hierarchy» of victims?
- Why do some victims touch us more and some less? Why do they evoke such a range of feelings?
- What does this diversity of reactions teach us about society? Does it exacerbate an ideological divide? Does our treatment of victims have a cathartic effect?
- What can we learn from the approaches of civil liability law, criminal law, economics, history and philosophy?

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**PROGRAM**

9 a.m. – 12 :30 a.m.

**MORNING** (Chair: Pierre-André CHIAPPORI, E. Rowan and Barbara Steinschneider Professor of Economics, Columbia University)

*The Perception of the «Value» of the Victim by the Judicial Authorities in the Initiation and Conduct of Criminal Proceedings and of the Greater or Lesser Compassion of the Magistrate*

- Cyrus VANCE Jr, New York County District Attorney: *in the United States*
- François MOLINS, General Attorney of the French Court of Cassation: *in France*

*The Value of the Victim : an Economic Approach*

- Mark COHEN, Justin Potter Professor of American Competitive Enterprise & Professor of Law Vanderbilt University: *Economics of crime*

*Who is and who is not an “Ideal Victim”? A Criminological Approach*

- Patrick MORVAN, Professor of Law, Pantheon-Assas University, Paris

2 p.m. – 5 :30 p.m.

**AFTERNOON** (Chair: Elisabeth PELSEZ, Inter-ministerial Delegate for Victims Assistance, France)

*The Value of the Victim in Tort and Compensation Law*

- Philippe PIERRE, Professor of Law, Rennes I University (France): *European and French Law*
- Robert FIELD, Professor of Law and Professor of Health Management and Policy, Drexel University, Philadelphia: *American Law*

*Compassion Towards Victims Throughout History and Political Science*

- Denis PESCHANSKI, CNRS, Director of Matrice Memory Research Program, Co-leader of 13-November Program
- Bernard HARCOURT, Isidor and Seville Sulzbacher Professor of Law and Professor of Political Science, Columbia University

*Conclusion : Hate, Fear and Violence in Philosophy*

Marc CREPON, CNRS, Director of the Philosophy Department of the École normale supérieure, Paris

Symposium registration:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/what-is-suffering-worth-tickets-64411263824>