Rebellious lawyers, community liberators, comrades near and far:

Welcome to RebLaw 25. This year, we are calling our community together to seek hope, solidarity, and love. We are so excited to welcome you to this year’s conference, where we will learn from organizers, lawyers, scholars, and, most importantly, from individuals who have been directly impacted by systemic injustices. Every year of RebLaw is an opportunity to build: to listen to each other’s thoughts and experiences, to share organizing strategies, and to imagine legal systems that liberate rather than oppress.

Rebellious lawyers and our communities have had many reasons to feel defeated this year. We have seen more rampant violence against folks of color by the state; more life-threatening devaluing of the needs of trans and gender-nonconforming folks; more transparently racist and dehumanizing immigration policies inflicted on noncitizens; more devastatingly union-busting Supreme Court decisions; more entrenchment of the far right at all levels of the judiciary; and so many other threats to our safety and wellbeing. It may feel acute in its ugliness this days, and yet none of it is new. These are the products of the systemic injustices that RebLaw was organized to fight from its very beginning.

No single approach or vision defines RebLaw. Each year, this conference reflects what is happening in our world and the visions of the law students, practitioners, and activists who form our community. But there are things we hold fundamental.

We believe in an approach to law and lawyering that in its goals and in its everyday practice enacts radical equality, not one that entrenches hierarchy and dominance. We believe in an approach to law and lawyering that draws its strength from the voices of activists, organizers, and community members, not one that imposes its own vision of progress from above. We believe in an approach to law and lawyering that is, in Gerald Lopez’s words, “anchored in the world it tries to change.”

We believe in Rebellious Lawyering.

Twenty-five years after the first Rebellious Lawyering conference, we find ourselves continuing the fight for justice. These past twenty-five years have been difficult, and we have every reason to think that the next twenty-five years will be hard ones too. But we know too that we will keep on fighting. We will keep articulating new visions for what justice demands even as we keep falling short in our own time. We will not be perfect, and we will claim this with humility. But everywhere there is oppression, there will be someone there to call it out. That, if nothing else, is what Rebellious Lawyering demands: that we keep on striving, together, practicing equality in pursuit of equality.

With love and solidarity,
Your 2019 RebLaw Conference Organizers
Faith Barksdale
Jesse Williams
John Gonzalez
Mo Said
Nicole Billington
Sam Davis
Zoe Tucker