Institutional mechanisms of “conflict resolution” have at their heart the twin assumptions that conflict is resolvable and that the law is the prime vehicle for achieving this resolution. This narrative is reproduced consistently from very large-scale institutions, such as national truth and reconciliation commissions and criminal tribunals, to very small-scale ones, such as local magistrates’ courts and ADR initiatives. The ease with which the “resolution” narrative is replicated across different institutional scales suggests that resolution has become the pre-eminent index against which these institutions are designed and their success measured.

In this special issue, we propose to unsettle the resolution narrative by engaging with a number of case studies that illustrate the migration of this narrative between varying social and political scales of action. We ask whether people who engage with conflict resolution institutions seek the resolution of conflict as their ultimate aim, or do they make use of them as, inter alia, forums for public shaming and other modes of affective coercion, spaces for the negotiation or assertion of moral claims, or place-holders for the possibility of future conflict?

At a broader level, we question the utility of the concept of conflict resolution in societies that are grappling with enduring structural injustice. In these contexts, a preoccupation with resolution may lead to restrictive legalistic responses that divorce conflict from its political and historical context. It may also overlook the extent to which dominant understandings of, and responses to, conflict, are deeply gendered. We consider whether there might be other, more creative, ways of responding to conflict that hold potential for moving beyond the constraints of the resolution narrative.
The AFLJ seeks to focus upon scholarly research using critical feminist approaches to law and justice, broadly conceived. As a critical legal journal we publish research informed by critical theory, cultural and literary theory, jurisprudential, postcolonial and psychoanalytic approaches, amongst other critical research practices. Articles are limited to 8000 words. Prospective contributors are invited to discuss any proposed submissions with one of the editors.

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Intending authors should send an abstract and accompanying CV noting relevant publications to Special Issue Editors, Dr Melissa Demian, The Australian National University, melissa.demian@anu.edu.au or Dr Lia Kent, The Australian National University, lia.kent@anu.edu.au by 1 June 2015. Manuscripts will be due by 15 August 2015. Earlier submissions are welcomed.

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