

In This Issue

Our first issue of 2021 begins with Alan McPherson's study of the civil litigation that resulted from the 1976 murder of Chilean exile Orlando Letelier and his U.S. co-worker, Ronni Moffitt, in Washington, DC. The Letelier family sought to use the 1977 Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA) to secure civil damages against Chile. After failing in their first attempt, the Letelier family used an enhanced version of the FSIA passed in 1996. McPherson demonstrates how the cases revealed gradual improvements and persisting problems in the civil prosecution of state sponsored terrorism in the U.S. courts.

Ofra Bloch's sweeping history of Israel's labor and hiring quotas between 1948 and 1968 makes an innovative and provocative argument: Israeli officials hiring quotas and related policies for Arab workers constituted an "affirmative action" program. These measures were intended to be part of a transition in the Israeli state's attitude toward Arab citizens from a strictly regulated military economy to a system of "hierarchical inclusion" through the lower sectors of the Israeli economy for a sector of laborers with second-class status.

Vanessa Mongey's article, "Protecting Foreigners: The Refugee Crisis on the Belize-Yucatan Border, 1847–71" uses the example of nineteenth-century Belize to examine the regulation of migration in a region with limited state capacity and contested borders. She illustrates how local administrators used the language of humanitarianism to protect British sovereignty at the expense of newcomers. Ultimately, Mongey provides a granular explanation of how the extension of imperial control that was perhaps unlikely led to the transition to Crown colony status in 1871.

Around the same time as this story unfolded in Belize, municipal judicial officers in southern Mexico were recording contracts between small-scale debtors and creditors called *libros de conocimientos*. According to Casey Lurtz, these were the foundation for a pervasive yet often overlooked credit market, and a powerful example of how Mexicans distant from the center of power shaped and experienced the country's civil code, and also of the broad acceptance of core tenets of liberal economic policy.

Emma Cavell's article turns to Jewish women's litigation at the "Exchequer of the Jews" in the thirteenth-century. She argues that

Jewish women did not enjoy greater equality than their Christian counterparts, as has been contended in the literature. On the contrary, Jewish women's experiences with law and justice were quite similar to those of Christian women at the time.

In our final article for this issue, Catherine Fisk rewrites the history of the 1950 U.S. Supreme Court Case, *Hughes v. Superior Court*. Historians have long remembered *Hughes* as a case about affirmative action, but Fisk finds instead finds a defining movement in the history of organized labor in the United States. The path to *Hughes* ran through an alliance between civil rights and organized labor who, on the back of state legislatures' failure to pass fair employment legislation, sought "a people's law" that would allow labor to use direct action to challenge unfair labor practices. But the Court and Congress would force labor to relinquish direct action, which was ultimately an ominous harbinger of organized labor's fate in the twentieth-century United States.