and survivors. The subsequent section on human rights trials succinctly, but comprehensively, introduces different types of trials (domestic, foreign, and international) and the interconnections between them. Specifically, Cardenas shows how domestic barriers to human rights trials, like amnesty laws, trigger foreign and international trials creating a transnational, interactive politics of justice. Cardenas ends this chapter on accountability by complicating the desire for accountability. She highlights the high political stakes involved in domestic and international debates about order and justice and the priority between them.

Using the English translation of the title of the Argentine truth commission report, *Nunca Mas* (Never Again), for her final chapter, Cardenas reminds her reader that while there have been advancements in the realization of human rights in Latin America, there also have been setbacks including repetitions of abuse. Cardenas argues that “Never Again” remains a partially fulfilled, yet partially unfulfilled, hope for Latin American societies. Many states in the region have achieved remarkable human rights reform but remain vulnerable to complex domestic sources of instability and weak democratic and legal institutions that permit impunity. Cardenas writes that “the history of human rights in Latin America is one of alternating terror and hope.”

The region has been characterized by horrific abuses and “has been a model of human rights activism and progress.” Like the experience of human rights in Latin America which it details, Cardenas’ text is rich and complex. *Human Rights in Latin America: A Politics of Terror and Hope* is a unique and engaging approach to the study of human rights in Latin America. It is a text that demands serious attention.

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Historian Jean Quataert has written a survey of human rights in the twentieth century, creating a new option for instructors alongside much-used survey texts such as Paul Gordon Lauren’s *The Evolution of International Human Rights* and Jack Donnelly’s *International Human Rights*. Quataert’s is not the first survey of the human rights movement since 1945 by a historian—Lauren is a diplomatic historian—but it is one of a number of recent publications that seek to bring a historical disciplinary self-consciousness to the subject matter of human rights.

Quataert is a well-known social historian of modern Germany. Her early work focused on women, work, and socialist movements. She then turned to projects

situating women’s and gender history in the writing and teaching of world history. In 2001 she published a monograph on nineteenth-century German women’s patriotic nursing organizations, which drew her attention to the Red Cross and international humanitarian law. She published a long essay, The Gendering of Human Rights in the International Systems of Law in the Twentieth Century, in an American Historical Association pamphlet series showcasing new historical approaches. Meanwhile, as a current co-editor of the Journal of Women’s History and an active author, Quataert continues her scholarly focus on German women’s history. Her longstanding engagement in the history of women, gender, and work in international perspective makes her an ideal author for a book such as the one under review here. Gender has moved to the top of the human rights agenda—it itself the sign of an interesting historical moment. Meanwhile, scholars working on the history of human rights are showing ever more clearly how the twentieth-century human rights movement arose both as a rival to socialist traditions and communist states and in interaction with them. The reader is in good hands with Quataert.

Advocating Dignity handles the problem of how to cover the vast amount of material by taking an institutional approach for the early years (1900–1949)\(^2\) and a thematic approach for the years after the 1940s. These themes are: the anti-apartheid campaign; Soviet dissidents; disappearances and the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo; women’s human rights; development, social and economic rights, and migrants’ rights; ethnicized wars and humanitarian interventions; and the World Conference against Racism in the context of the “war on terror.” Gender, social rights, and migration in particular are themes that have put pressure on traditional distinctions between public and private, between the state and civil society (or the market), and between states’ claims and individuals’ realities.

Quataert refers frequently to the United Nations and periodically to regional human rights regimes as institutional frameworks in all these chapters. Her main goal, however, is to shine the spotlight on individual activists and NGOs as she surveys globally-dispersed human rights mobilizations since 1945. The book highlights the impact of ordinary people who participate in human rights debates: whether at “people’s tribunals” and NGO forums at the big UN conferences, as litigants before international courts, or in the everyday public spaces where they live. This relatively recent and still-growing opportunity for participation of laypeople who are using the terminology of human rights, and yet are neither UN officials nor legal experts, has driven the transformation of the meanings of human rights as applied by the human rights establishment. Popular participation, Quataert shows, has challenged bureaucratic orthodoxies and put pressure on narrow interpretations of existing norms. To capture the popular face of human rights is, as Quataert sees it, the contribution of a social historian:

Human rights tragedies are tangible events about people with faces, names, families, and histories. They must be placed in their specific historical contexts. Approaching human rights as a powerful language of resistance, this “new” social history assesses individual and group agency embedded in discursive and structural contexts . . .

it demonstrates how social structures are built up from transnational interactions.\(^3\)

Of course, the execution of that research program would require at least a book on any one of the themes or examples she showcases. This book does not contextualize or provide a full history of any of its case studies, but it does make abundantly clear that ordinary people’s mobilizations have been the motor behind the tremendously expanded attention to human rights as a meaningful way to define people’s aspirations and violations. Human rights have indeed shown themselves to be a “powerful language of resistance.”

Chapter 2 presents the anti-apartheid movement and the Soviet dissidents as two key cases that laid the basis for postwar human rights activism. It is, as she notes, an unusual juxtaposition for an author to make, but an effective one, for each case served to internationalize human rights mobilizations. Chapter 3 takes up the human rights violation of “disappearing” in Argentina and elsewhere, and the classic case of mobilization by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Over the late 1970s and the 1980s, victims, families, and NGOs forged connections to the UN that served to increase the latter’s responsiveness, and to shift discussion away from national specificities and toward a thematic approach highlighting commonalities among cases of human rights violations.

Chapter 4 traces the profound reorientation of human rights norms brought about by focusing on women’s lives, instead of taking men’s lives as the norm. Here Quataert discusses the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (which initially did not intend to overlap with the Human Rights Division), the UN series of conferences on women, and the fusion of women’s rights with human rights since the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights. Human rights norms now address gender-based violence and non-state actors, albeit to a limited extent. However, the very idea that domestic violence could be grounds for asylum would have amazed human rights officials in the early postwar years. The fusion of women’s rights with human rights has also changed feminism, by making international law norms and international networking into tools of greater importance than ever before. Quataert discusses the example of female genital cutting to indicate how international networking outside intergovernmental forums allowed this issue to surface at the UN in a fashion that could no longer be ignored. Moreover, the Decade for Women conferences pioneered the “NGO forum” format, in which individuals and NGOs who would otherwise have no voice at a UN conference make presentations at a parallel assembly. These days, tens of thousands of individuals and NGOs attend such parallel gatherings, which are as much “must-see” events as are the official conferences.

In Chapter 5, on “Citizenship, Socioeconomic Rights, and the Courts in the Age of Transnational Migrations,” Quataert traces the emergence of a new concept of development in the 1970s that rejected economic growth as the main index of human well-being. Ironically, this insight in the development community was to be accompanied by the neoliberal era of structural adjustment plans in the 1970s and 1980s. Quataert describes the gender-specific consequences of the rollback of poor countries’ welfare states,

3. Id. at 12.
and links structural adjustment plans to the ensuing increases in labor migration, especially by women, that have characterized our global economy ever since. It was in this context that human rights NGOs have given renewed attention to social and economic rights. Many states began to confront the untenable rights situation faced by migrant workers within their own borders and to commit themselves to basic rights for them—a hint of what globalization on behalf of workers, as opposed to capital, might look like.

Usually “incorporation” refers to a state’s integration of the content of an international treaty into domestic law after that state has signed the treaty. Quataert presents examples in which incorporation has even taken place where a state—such as the United States—has refused to sign the relevant international treaty; in other cases, a regional human rights regime has called a state to task. US and other cases concerning undocumented migrants have created precedents against indefinite detention of noncitizens, assured education for children, and protected migrant workers from wholesale, sudden deportations. Human rights litigation against non-state actors, such as multinational corporations, also marks a milestone in accountability. Quataert’s historical knowledge of workers’ experiences and rights makes vivid this account of the particular human rights challenges of workers moving across borders—and sometimes even litigating across borders. As she mentions at the conclusion of this chapter, human rights advocates must be careful what they wish for: not only are these victories few and far between, but they point to problems of legitimacy. Xenophobia in the polities that must legitimize—or else oppose—such human rights successes is not of course any fault of human rights advocates, but it must enter into their political calculations.


Chapter 6 takes up ethnicized wars that spill over borders and humanitarian interventions as responses to ethnic cleansing and genocide (her main examples are Yugoslavia and Rwanda). As she notes, humanitarian interventions in general are problematic in terms of legitimacy. She lays out, but does not shed new light on, the problem of what exactly other states can do. One of the biggest problems of “humanitarian intervention” is, as she notes, that more war, whether it bears the euphemism of humanitarian intervention or not, creates yet more human rights violations. Yet when states avoid military interventions—a more accurate term—then they may be blamed for a “failure of will,” or for substituting the “humanitarian approach” for “political [military?] action.” She notes that “[b]uilding the [humanitarian] missions meant entering the murky world of power, greed, and self-interest, as they

4. *Id.* at 235.
5. *Id.* at 242.
intertwined with the compromises of state diplomacy and U.N. decision-making down through the workings of local power.” By this point, at the latest, the reader is wondering: Are “power, greed, and self-interest” unique to states? Who are these UN officials (such as Theo van Boven, frequently invoked)? Who is really in these NGOs that represent the grassroots of human rights activism? Quataert is very aware of these questions, but she chooses only to mention them here, and not to delve into them. Politics is very much a part of human rights activism, but she implies, apparently for analytic and hortatory purposes, that they are poles apart.

Here and in Chapter 7, the book raises important truths, but the author offers no particular take on them. She rightly points to an underlying long-term problem of conceptualizing development separately from human rights. Yet there are honest differences of opinion about how to spur development (as our ongoing financial crises and the political responses to them make clear). “Universalizing accountability” is a worthy goal. Yet wouldn’t greater moral purity drive powerful states (such as the US, Russia, or China) out of human rights diplomacy altogether?

In Chapter 7, Quataert recovers for readers the importance of the much-maligned World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa in late summer 2001. Represented in the media primarily through attendees’ statements defining Zionism as racism and calling for reparations for slavery and colonialism, and the ensuing walkouts by US and Israeli representatives, WCAR was then overshadowed by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Quataert places WCAR in a longer chronological context of reparations proposals, and groups it with other efforts in the 1990s at redress, or restitution for human rights violations in the past. This all-important process, Quataert contends, was of value after 11 September, when the same problems that had animated WCAR remained, in a now more difficult international environment of US repudiation of UN authority. She suggests that the energies and themes of WCAR activists perdured into the age of the “War on Terror” with its concomitant abuses of foreigners’ and minorities’ rights. One activist, Aaron Rhodes, makes the connection that Quataert apparently seeks to present: “‘Terrorism reveals how dangerous racism is.’” Indeed, the overall structure of the chapter seems to fold the problem of terrorism into that of racism, which is not entirely convincing. Coming back to the most important argument in the entire book, the formative role of popular participation, Quataert highlights how preparation for the Durban conference comprised a long series of conversations that were as important as the discussions at the conference itself. Regional meetings held beforehand sent diverse local concerns “funneling upward.” Durban showed once more, in its “Voices” sessions, how state-defined and even NGO-defined narratives can be challenged by individuals’ stories. The ramifications of putting such stories on record in such sessions, as in the war crimes tribunals, cannot be predicted.

6. *Id.* at 235–36.
7. *Id.* at 260.
8. *Id.* at 247.
9. *Id.* at 236.
10. *Id.* at 292.
11. *Id.* at 267.
or delimited. Simply the act of speaking about one’s experiences has “spiraling effects,” even where there is no short-term tangible result. Even though it is difficult to include ordinary people’s perspectives in a potentially solipsistic bureaucratic event or ritualized standoff, this feat is regularly accomplished in human rights gatherings. Yes, there are many flaws, but it is silence that is the real enemy.

This is a dense book—not one that undergraduates can be expected to digest in a week! Quataert’s prose is not as fluent as Lauren’s or Donnelly’s, but her main examples in Chapters 2 through 5 are well-chosen and in some cases refreshingly unusual. In my experience some students find Lauren too relentlessly upbeat, and I have to remind them that he has some deeply disturbing things to tell us: that horrific warfare has been the most powerful spur to human rights innovation, and that international legal sanctions often lead states to change their terminology, but not their deeds. War is now armed conflict; the US army used to carry out torture, but now that torture has been recognized as torture, it no longer does—the CIA does it instead. Quataert maintains a more dispassionate tone than Lauren, but her underlying message may be more optimistic.

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Several conceptions of international relations have clashed since the 9/11 era. The events of 11 September 2001, and the ensuing “war on terror” have had the effect of further securitization and the steady, almost inexorable, militarization of international politics. Security and geopolitical concerns have supplanted rights spaces, privileging the dynamics of hegemony over the emancipatory potential of the practice of human rights. Despite these recent trends, *Global Good Samaritans* deftly advances the proposition that indeed *values do matter*, by linking interests and values in a compelling historical comparative analysis. In this intriguing book, Brysk explores both the intellectual and practical relevance of liberal mores and human rights traditions, while providing a framework for analyzing how the respect for human rights, the rule of law, and democracy are inextricably intertwined with the struggle for international security. Many uncertainties notwithstanding, some states have chosen to support human rights in

12. Id. at 276.