Beyond and Against the State: Anarchist Contributions to Human Rights History and Theory
Mark Bray

Scholars of human rights have grappled with tensions between universal rights and state sovereignty. By incorporating the turn of the century anarchist conception of human rights against the state into the broader history of human rights, we gain an alternative vantage point to assess this fraught relationship. This article briefly surveys transnational anarchist activism against state atrocities before focusing on the implications of anarchist conceptions of natural, equal, universal rights for our understandings of freedom and autonomy.

Saving the Slaving Child: Domestic Work, Labor Trafficking, and the Politics of Rescue in India
Vibhuti Ramachandran

In recent years, anti-trafficking NGOs in New Delhi have highlighted the exploitative aspects of domestic work in India, rescuing impoverished young rural migrant girls brought by unregulated “placement agencies” to work in urban homes. This article examines how these donor-driven NGOs employ the U.S.-driven, globally pervasive frameworks of human trafficking and “modern-day slavery,” while working within the provisions of postcolonial Indian laws, and conducting rescues with the local police. Through ethnographic observations of a rescue operation, the article explores what it means to save a slaving child from domestic labor. It argues that the tensions between and among those subjected to exploitative work conditions and those rescuing them reveal conflicting constructions of slavery, trafficking, child labor, and childhood itself.

Introduction: Human Rights and Economic Inequality
Daniel Brinks, Julia Dehm, Karen Engle

The introduction situates this dossier on “Human Rights and Inequality” within broader scholarly and policy debates about the relationship between human rights and economic inequality, specifically about the extent to which human rights do, can, or should attend to economic inequality. It draws out the key arguments of each of the contributions and puts them in conversation with one another by describing the different strands and traditions of human rights scholarship and practice with which...
the various authors engage. Along the way, the introduction specifies the various types of economic inequality that have too often been lumped together—inequality within countries, among countries, and among individuals from around the world—and identifies the questions of measurement that must be addressed for a fruitful debate to take place. It concludes by recognizing that, notwithstanding their differences, all the contributions share an outrage at the scandal of inequality in our present and a commitment to imagining paths towards a more egalitarian and just world. The dossier demonstrates the continued need for engaged, ongoing, conversations about the multiple forms of economic inequality and the potential roles of human rights in addressing them.

**Inequality, Human Rights, and Social Rights: Tensions and Complementarities**  
*Rodrigo Uprimny Yepes, Sergio Chaparro Hernández*

Economic inequality is increasingly recognized as one of the main problems of our time. But what human rights have to say about it? Are human rights effective tools for tackling inequality, as human rights practitioners have argued, or are they powerless and inadequate tools to challenge inequality in the age of neoliberalism, as stated recently by Yale’s professor Samuel Moyn? This article examines the complex relations between economic inequality and human rights, especially economic and social rights (ESR), by exploring the arguments behind these two opposite views. We propose an intermediate position: while human rights and discussions about inequality predominantly take place in autonomous fields, it is not only possible but crucial to overcome some of the pitfalls of human rights law in relation to inequality in order to use it as an equalizing instrument. Extreme inequality poses not only strong empirical obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights but also undermines core tenets of human rights law, such as the principle of equality of opportunity. These links allow us to bridge the gap between the two fields and to speak of inequality as a human rights issue. We explore five paths to reinforce the equalizing potential of human rights law: 1) moving towards ‘empirical based normative standards’, 2) advancing interpretations of human rights law more sensitive to economic inequality, 3) enhancing the equalizing potential of human rights accountability mechanisms; 4) incorporating human rights concerns across different regimes of international economic law, and 5) providing strategies and arguments for supporting redistributive policies between and within countries.

**Human Rights in an Unequal World: Structural Inequalities and the Imperative for Global Cooperation**  
*Radhika Balakrishnan, James Heintz*

Efforts to realize social and economic rights are currently being exercised in a context of extreme inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth. This question of the impact of global inequalities on the realization of rights and development objectives extends to inequalities in power dynamics and policy space. The economic interdependencies that structure the global economy mean that the actions of governments in influential economies frequently constrain the ability of other countries to fully support the enjoyment of rights. This essay explores the relationship between global economic inequality and human rights. It demonstrates how inequality affects the enjoyment of rights worldwide, and how the human rights framework has implications for how we think about global inequalities.
Richard Falk

In the current phase of global and national economic development, income inequality has become a widespread concern. This article focuses on what it calls “toxic inequality” in the United States that is attributed to several elements including the underlying individualism associated with capitalism and the tendency of neoliberal globalization to exert pressures that minimize social protection of vulnerable parts of the population. International law has not been effective in protecting societies against the disruptive effects of inequality, including its de-democratizing effects brought about by the reaction of the state to social rage directed at the established order. The article argues for a revised human rights approach to overcome toxic inequality, including the conditions that bring it about. One aspect of such an approach would be more energetic efforts to implement the norms of the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, taking political steps to persuade the United States to become a party to the treaty regime.

The Imperative of Redistribution in an Age of Ecological Overshoot: Human Rights and Global Inequality

Jason Hickel

Legal scholars worry that the human rights framework offers little leverage against the problem of economic inequality. By contrast, I argue that Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the right to an adequate standard of living) does provide such leverage. Given the realities of ecological overshoot, if we want to ratchet up the incomes of the poor in order to satisfy their rights under Article 25, we can no longer rely on the usual strategy of aggregate economic growth. Instead, this objective requires shifting existing income from the global rich to the global poor.

Inequality, Human Rights, and the New International Economic Order

Antony Anghie

Redressing global inequality was one of the key concerns of the Third World campaign to create a New International Economic Order (NIEO). However, human rights played no role in the NIEO which focused instead on transforming the international investment and trade regimes. This essay argues that the Third World countries were largely correct in their analysis of the limits of human rights. It draws upon insights of the NIEO experience to suggest why, in more recent times, human rights have largely failed to address the problem of global inequality in the face of neo-liberal globalization.

Righting Inequality: Human Rights Responses to Economic Inequality in the United Nations

Julia Dehm

This essay examines how UN human rights bodies engaged with the problem of economic inequality at different historical moments. It considers how the question of economic inequality was taken up in three different periods: in the period of human rights standard setting and implementation (1945-1968); during a period of global contestation and demands for a New International Economic Order (1968-1989); and finally during a period of growing neoliberal hegemony (1990-present). It suggests that considering the ways in which institutional debates within the UN have grappled in different periods with the problem of economic inequality – among countries, within countries and among citizens of the world – often at the instigation of countries of the global South, can enable
critical thinking about possibilities and limits of human rights in our starkly unequal present. Moreover, retrieving these forgotten struggles and alternative conceptions and formulations of rights might provide impetus for reimagining the more redistributive possibilities for human rights in contemporary debates.

Inequality, Debt, and Human Rights: What Can We Learn from the Data?
James Galbraith

What can we learn from the data on economic inequality? First, that comparisons should be made very carefully. That said, inequality connects to human rights in many ways that may elude precise measurement but not common sense. For example, oligarchy is the enemy of the demos, as the Athenians have known since Socrates. An inherent imbalance stems from the fact that wealth is power, which creditors exercise over debtors. In considering how to reduce this power, when it comes to mobilizing people, high theory has uses, but it is much better to offer specific measures that will affect their lives.

Taxation and Equality: The Implications for Redressing Inequality and the Promotion of Human Rights
Dennis M. Davis

This essay examines the relationship between national tax policy and inequality. Tax policy changed dramatically in the last two decades of the 20th century with the rise of neoliberal economic policy insisting on a dramatic reduction of maximum marginal rates of income tax and a lowering of corporate tax rates. The essay deconstructs the justification for these policies, and argues that they have helped to increase levels of inequality. It also addresses the tax problems that have arisen by virtue of the globalization of economic activity and proposes measures to bolster the ability of the nation state to protect and indeed promote its tax base.

"I Don’t Want to Live in a World Where People Die Every Day Simply Because They Are Poor": From the Treatment Action Campaign to Equal Education, from Stories of Human Rights to the Poetics of Inequality
Neville Hoad

This essay explores the rhetorical and genre differences between human rights arguments and inequality arguments, speculating that the former privileges narrative as a dominant mode of representation and that the latter frequently require a poetics—paradoxically the poetics of numbers. Two South African NGOs—the Treatment Action Campaign, whose rationale deployed a health and human rights framework, and Equal Education, an organization deeply invested in arguments about inequalities in education and opportunity—are presented as examples of the defining contrast between the ways that human rights and inequality arguments broach the question of justice.

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