
URL: [http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XIX-1](http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XIX-1)

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Mark Bradley’s beautifully written and well-constructed new book examines the decline of American-led efforts regarding human rights after the 1940s, when rising East-West tension and movements for self-determination began to dominate international relations as well as American politics. He then shows how human rights belatedly returned to the United States in the 1970s, after having gained greater salience in Latin America and the Soviet Union (119-21).

*The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* argues that this gap between the 1940s and the 1970s means that when human rights returned to the United States, it did so as a “guest language” (125).

Bradley shows that when human rights was in the wilderness, from the U.S. perspective, it was adopted by a diverse set of actors and had multiple meanings to its expositors and audiences. Within the United States, he identifies evidence of rising emphasis on the individual through innovative measures such as sales figures for *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and *Roots* and argues this “individualist” turn later shaped American reception to human rights, transforming what he calls human rights “amateurs” into activists (159, 6).

Although Bradley addresses periodization, he is less interested in intervening in existing historiographical debates about when attention to human rights arose in the United States, whether among elite legal circles or as a broad-based movement. Instead, and as opposed to other recent, prominent works on human rights in the 1970s, Bradley identifies the forces that drove U.S.-based human rights activity as being external rather than internal. In his telling, high-profile, literary heroes, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, and Václav Havel raised American interest in human rights. Their writings and those of others led Americans to develop a geographically distorted vision of human rights violations that centered on the Soviet bloc and several Latin American countries to the exclusion of almost anywhere else. One of the most innovative elements of Bradley’s book is its emphasis on how Americans both came to care about human rights and express their sympathy through cultural production – such as Chilean textiles or large-scale paintings of torture (186, 193-194). With the exception of Bradley’s earlier publications relating to this broader project, attention to cultural resonance and production is new and is directly connected with his concern for how human rights activity came to be “part of everyday practice” (200, 210-213). Finally, sounding a wistful note that is echoed by some reviewers, Bradley emphasizes that Americans did not utilize the language of human rights to talk about domestic problems but only about the “suffering of strangers” (224).

All four reviewers in this roundtable offered praise for Bradley’s book, for its “ambitious scope,” deep research, and for the contributions it makes to many historical subfields such as political, diplomatic, intellectual, and cultural history as well as the history of human rights and of emotions. Furthermore, Bradley’s book utilizes

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and speaks to a range of disciplines beyond history such as psychology and social theory; as Melani McAlister writes, the book succeeds in “crossing borders and traversing disciplinary boundaries.”

McAlister’s appraisal is the least equivocal; she characterizes the book as a “field-changing study.” In her view, by focusing on affect, Bradley transcends debates among historians of human rights about periodization. McAlister argues that Bradley’s book has successfully staked out a middle ground that acknowledges both the significance of the 1940s and of the 1970s by highlighting the distinctive contributions made in each decade.

Given Bradley’s use of visual imagery to underline how Americans came to care about human rights, Anna Su appropriately characterizes Bradley’s book as “offering a new canvas” on which to examine the “American encounter with human rights.” She applauds his efforts to resurrect racial discrimination cases that have receded from historical discussions, and Udi Greenberg appreciates Bradley’s efforts to locate American attention to human rights in a global context, terming it his “second unique contribution.”

Yet, each reviewer raises questions related to Bradley’s argument, his evidence, and the book’s contribution to the existing historiography on human rights.

Consistent with her laudatory review, rather than taking issue directly with Bradley’s argument, McAlister highlights the ways in which Bradley could have further discussed the intersection between religion and human rights.

Diverging from Greenberg’s appraisal of Bradley’s decentering of the United States as a strength, Su disagrees with Bradley about the location of American actors in the “human rights landscape.” Bradley, in Su’s view, situates them too closely to the wings whereas she sees them as occupying a spot nearer to center stage.

Joe Renouard takes issue with Bradley’s efforts to treat the Cold War as distinct from the human rights movement in the United States; he argues instead that “Cold War-influenced political and ideological perspectives played a central role in the developments of the 1970s.” Greenberg similarly wishes for more on the overlap between human rights and the Cold War.

Most significantly, Greenberg and Renouard wanted more evidence of causation. As Greenberg notes, “Claims about emotions’ indirect impact on politics must remain speculative, and methodologically they invite criticism.” Specifically, Renouard is not convinced by Bradley’s efforts to connect 1930s-era photographs and American attention to human rights in the 1940s. He raises similar questions about the significance of Havel and Sakharov’s writings in the 1970s, and he suggests that Bradley’s work is characterized by an uncomfortable tension between his focus on elites and grass-roots actors.

In Renouard’s assessment, Bradley could have done more to situate his contribution in the existing literature, in particular by explicitly citing existing scholarship with which Bradley disagrees. Finally, Su and Renouard regard The World Reimagined as being perhaps too “rosy” in its evaluation of the place of human rights in the American landscape with Renouard noting “how few of these [legal] challenges met with any success.”

Each of these reviews demonstrates the ways in which Mark Bradley has challenged existing narratives of and methodologies for the history of human rights. His book offers not only a new explanation for why Americans came to care about human rights in the 1970s, but he has also advanced a new way of understanding the relationship between the 1940s and 1970s, the two decades currently of most interest to scholars of human
By the end of Bradley’s account, however, I was left wondering if human rights had indeed come late to the United States or perhaps more significantly, too early.

Participants:

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Anna Su is an assistant professor at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law. She is the author of Exporting Freedom: Religious Liberty and American Power (Harvard University Press, 2016).
In contemporary international politics, few gaps are as striking as the one between the tremendous moral prestige accorded to human rights and their marginal diplomatic impact. The more activists, lawyers, and organizations passionately advocate for the supremacy of moral norms over state sovereignty, and the more their pleas are ratified in manifold courts, conferences, and publications, the less effect human rights discourse seems to have on preventing atrocities, mass murder, and horrifying abuses. Nowhere is this tension reflected more than in the United States’ position within the so-called “global human rights regime.”1 On the one hand, Americans are at the forefront of human rights talk and practice. NGOs such as Amnesty International USA provide crucial organizational apparatus for mobilizing against torture and killings, while the U.S. State Department runs an entire human rights division dedicated to monitoring and reporting on human rights conditions around the globe. On the other hand, this frenetic activism makes an exceedingly small impact on American geopolitics. The United States has never joined an international organization that could seriously limit its national sovereignty, such as the International Criminal Court, and as the media depressingly reports, U.S. functionaries routinely engage in torture, detention, and assassinations.2 Much of the scholarly fascination with human rights stems from this puzzling tension. How to explain the persistence of human rights talk and activism despite their disheartening failure?

Mark Bradley’s *The World Reimagined* is an ambitious, wide-ranging, and thought-provoking exploration of this question. It focuses on the 1940s and 1970s, the two decades in which human rights became popular in the United States (and which have been the subject of the majority of human rights scholarship). Bradley makes a straightforward claim: to appreciate many Americans’ infatuation with human rights, one should look not at leaders and diplomats, who talked about human rights but rarely acted according to their principles. Instead, one should chart the ways in which diverse groups—from Japanese Americans in California to white middle-class lawyers in New York—embraced the language of rights to convey their own visions of domestic and international politics. While prominent policymakers, such as Presidents Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter, make a few appearances in *The World Reimagined*, the book revolves around what Bradley calls “human rights amateurs” (6), such as artists, lawyers, and minority group activists. In both the 1940s and the 1970s, it was these ordinary people, not decision-makers, who organized petitions, drafted statements on universal rights, and unleashed campaigns against atrocities. This ‘bottom-up’ approach seeks to capture the diverse meanings that Americans invested in human rights. It tracks how the concept became an American ‘vernacular,’ a set of assumptions that regarded Americans as the agents and beneficiaries of universal legal and moral norms. Thus, while many of the stories related in the book are well known to historians, Bradley reframes them in an interesting fashion. Rather than measuring the story of human rights through their success or failure to shape policies, Bradley tracks how they became a “believable” presence “to a variety of American publics” (6).

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Bradley is, of course, not the first to focus on human rights activists who labored outside or alongside state institutions. But his account utilizes a discursive focus to make two bold claims that highlight both the unusual qualities—and a few shortcomings—of his creative book. First, Bradley maintains that the ascendance of human rights owed much to their emotional, rather than their ideological, function. Drawing on Lynn Hunt’s *Inventing Human Rights*, he claims that this concept appealed to many not by virtue of the new and coherent theory of state sovereignty and law it articulated, but because of a new cultural sensibility of empathy and compassion, which enjoyed short renaissances in the 1940s and 1970s. Americans, Bradley claims, developed new “sensibilities,” “moral language,” and “imagination,” and human rights helped capture this *zeitgeist* (3). According to Bradley, nowhere were these new sensibilities more acutely expressed than in the field of visual art. *The World Reimagined* overflows with discussions of magazine photography, movies, and sculptures, which in the 1940s and 1970s depicted the plights of the poor, the persecuted, and the victims of mass murder. The photographs of Margaret Bourke-White from the Nazi concentration camps in Europe and movies such as *Missing*, which explored the victims of Latin American dictatorships, are among dozens that are accorded lengthy and detailed analysis. These evocative works, says Bradley, and their at times “raw emotionality” (193), were just as important as political philosophers’ books in fostering a new commitment to universal solidarity. The human rights regime was not (or not merely) a political phenomenon, but was defined by affect. Bradley’s effort to flesh out the unspoken but, in his opinion, kindhearted motivations underlying the works of these “amateurs” implicitly informs his own approach to them. Even when Bradley criticizes the proponents of human rights for their many failings and blind spots, their compassion toward other humans is always commended as being entirely worthy.

By its nature, of course, claims about emotions’ indirect impact on politics must remain speculative, and methodologically they invite criticism. And at times they raise more questions than they answer. This is especially true of the book’s early sections, in which Bradley locates the genesis of a new spirit of compassion in American Depression-era photographs, such as Dorothy Lang’s classic 1936 *Migrant Mother*. Bradley claims that these provided the template for other famous photographs, like the ones which documented Nazi concentration camps in the spring of 1945, and he further asserts that they helped fuel human rights activism. It may be true that such works, with their massive circulation through magazines, fostered and reflected a widespread emotional predisposition to human rights (although this is not an uncontested claim). Yet, even if one accepts Bradley’s argument, it remains to be explained why this newfound compassion suddenly spread from the United States to the entire world (or at least, the western world). How did emotional solidarity proceed from being confined to other Americans in the 1930s, when almost no one talked of universal rights, to encompass significant portions of the globe over the following decades?

Equally important, it is hard to shake off the feeling that Americans’ new sensibilities were always remarkably selective and rarely truly universal. After all, as Bradley forcefully shows, many of the political theorists, religious leaders, and jurists who crafted rights charters during and after World War II were preoccupied with the rights of Europeans and Asians living under the Nazi and Japanese heel, but knowingly avoided discussing racial, sexual, and other forms of oppression at home. In fact, once Japanese-Americans and Native-Americans began to challenge discrimination by invoking the ideal of universal rights after the war, especially with regards land and private property, most American abandoned the recently deployed language of human rights.

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Empathy, it seems, did not undermine entrenched hierarchies and was often painfully self-serving. It inspired outrage against foreign enemies, but only rarely led to self-critical assessment.

If the focus on visual culture and emotions could have benefited by further elaboration in the book’s first section, Bradley’s methodology is both powerful and refreshing when he turns to the 1970s. During this decade, claims Bradley, the emotional landscape in the United States began to shift. A confluence of global factors—decolonization and new migration patterns, the proliferation of modern media, the expansion of transnational finance and deregulation—put increasing value on the individual, rather than on broader structures and institutions, as the center of thought and politics. Works of art, such as painter Leon Golub’s Interrogation, increasingly located the experiences of unique individuals—be they political prisoners or American soldiers in Vietnam—at their center, often downplaying the social context that produced these individuals’ suffering. In this social ecology, human rights re-emerged as a mobilizing concept. Empathy again gave rise to human rights conferences and publications. This time, though, activists sought to secure rights not so much by crafting charters or building new international institutions, as some had tried to do in the 1940s. Imbued with the era’s individualist spirit, 1970s human rights ‘amateurs’ instead highlighted individual-focused activism and experiences, organizing letter-writing campaigns on behalf of particular political prisoners and publishing individual testimonies of torture victims. This individualist ethos, which sought primarily to spark emotional outrage and shame foreign governments into halting abuse, helps explain the limits and marginal effect of these campaigns. Where American progressive internationalists of the 1940s attempted to establish new economic and legal institutions to prevent violence, their heirs in the 1970s were uninterested in the structural causes of atrocities, only in their immediate victims.

To be sure, other scholars have taken note of these activists’ ideological limitations. Both Barbara Keys and Samuel Moyn have maintained that the Vietnam War, which eviscerated many people’s belief in the state’s capacity to promote common good, diverted left-leaning activists’ attention away from economic and social inequality.4 But Bradley’s account situates this ideological shift in a broader emotional context. The Vietnam War in fact occupies a fairly marginal position in his narrative, alluded to only in off-hand comments. In The World Reimagined, the 1970s work of Amnesty International USA or Human Rights Campaign was not merely part of an ideological effort to “reclaim American virtue” after a devastating war, as Keys phrased it. The appeal of human rights was rooted in a broad emotional and ideological shift unconnected to the war and not unique to Americans. Bradley’s emotional perspective helps explain why activists displayed such astonishing resilience in persevering with their activism long after it was painfully obvious that their approach was doing little to tame international violence. Animated by potent cultural and psychological forces, their actions were defined more by their motivation than their ultimate consequences.

Bradley’s second unique contribution to the study of human rights, which is worthy of sustained attention, is the way in which he frames the relationship between the United States and the world. The first section of The World Reimagined mostly follows a set of familiar stories, in which Americans developed the language of human rights during World War II and then briefly sought to make it a part of global institutions (alongside some failed efforts to do likewise at home). In the book’s second section, however, Bradley reverses the direction, and claims that in the 1970s the language of human rights in fact gained ground first in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and was embraced by Americans only gradually, becoming a “guest language” (182).

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In an impressive tour-de-force, Bradley synthesizes countless works to chart how the language of human rights traveled between countries and constituencies, becoming the battle cry for dozens of local struggles. Key figures among this motley crew who protested their governments’ violent oppression, especially Czech dramatist Vaclav Havel, Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Argentinian journalist Jacobo Timerman, captured the attention of Americans, who came to see the defense of these dissidents as the essence of their own commitment to universal freedom. In this telling, when Jimmy Carter famously announced that his administration would be committed to human rights, he was mostly echoing ideas that had emanated from elsewhere. The United States was still a superpower, though one that was the ideological vehicle for concepts forged abroad.

This element of Bradley’s argument is laudable because it is one thing to say—as too many studies do—that something was born in a transnational context, and quite another to show how this perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of a phenomenon. And while *The World Reimagined* only implicitly states this, its focus on the import of the concept of human rights helps explain a fundamental ambiguity that characterized American 1970s-era international advocacy and activism. Unlike their predecessors of the 1940s, the later generation of human rights activists did not conceive of human rights as a global expansion of the U.S. Bill of Rights. Instead, they viewed human rights as a way to forge global solidarity and channel the voices of others without imposing American political models on them. To be sure, these activists’ visions were never free of American notions of superiority, and they had little doubt that, as Americans, they already knew what was right, healthy, and free. Even if they often lamented their government’s engagement in aggression and torture, they rarely wondered by what authority they were called to expose foreign regimes in the eyes of the American public: it was self-evident that American moral outrage was the proper avenue for global reform. Nevertheless, human rights activists of the 1970s were more ambivalent than earlier generations in their understanding of the United States’ global position. Supporting Russian, Czech, and Argentinian calls for human rights was an (imagined) way to steer clear of American political imposition while sustaining a positive American engagement with the world.

Bradley’s sympathetic reading of this ambiguity does not deter him from judiciously noting these activists’ odd lacunae, such as their fierce advocacy for Soviet dissidents but total silence over the massive Indonesian massacres in East Timor in 1975 (220). Nevertheless, it would have been helpful if Bradley had taken a more systematic look at the relationship between human rights activism and American diplomacy. From their moment of breakthrough in the 1940s, human rights functioned not only as a conceptual bridge between Americans and other nations. For some, they were also a tool used to promote American power, especially against Communism and its disregard for the ‘bourgeois’ notion of rights. For Christian leaders such as John Foster Dulles and secular jurists such as Karl Loewenstein (both of whom helped draft an important wartime statement on human rights), there was no contradiction between human rights promotion and Cold War mobilization. Despite Bradley’s presentation of human rights and Cold War realism as political opposites, they sometimes overlapped. Similarly, though not as straightforwardly, it is not accidental that the attention of activists in the 1970s was often consumed by dissidents in the Soviet bloc. While Amnesty International USA was anything but a stooge of American Cold War mobilization, its sensitivity to Communist abuses (rather than, for example, oppression in Saudi Arabia or Israel) reflected the depth of its immersion in global Cold War politics. Human rights, in short, were not just an inspiring alternative to American power. Often, and in complex ways, they were also its echoes.

Regardless, with *The World Reimagined*, Bradley has produced a rich, nuanced, thoughtful, and powerful account of Americans’ engagement with human rights. It captures the unstable and contested role that the
concept played in how Americans thought about the world. Equally important, it shows how the term could serve simultaneously as a battle cry for critical domestic and foreign reform and a self-serving affirmation of American greatness. And as long as Americans continue to use them for both, human rights are likely to remain one of the paradoxes of American politics and diplomacy.
Mark Bradley has written a field-changing study of the role of affect in shaping the public understanding of human rights in the United States. In examining how and why it was that human rights became “the dominant moral language of our time” (1), *The World Reimagined* offers a broad-sweeping account of the historical forces that converged to create the conditions of possibility for human rights to enter, and profoundly shape, American public life. Bradley’s approach is distinctive, setting itself apart from work that focuses on legal remedies, foreign policy, or organizational histories. Instead, the book explores how activists, photographers, artists, writers, and ordinary church ladies all helped to produce the possibilities that allowed human rights to come to seem obvious to Americans. Overall, the book shows how, in both the 1940s and 1970s, human rights became a powerful moral language for understanding international affairs and, sometimes, domestic politics.

Bradley brings to the study of the U.S. in the World a capacious sense of what matters, and he has produced an extraordinary work, at once rigorous and broad-ranging, deeply researched and freely peripatetic, crossing borders and traversing disciplinary boundaries. *The World Reimagined* is not a global history of human rights; it is a transnational study of the incorporation of human rights language into U.S. politics and culture. That is, Bradley is interested, as his subtitle puts it, in “Americans and human rights in the twentieth century.” But one cannot understand the U.S. story, he argues, without placing it in a global frame. Central as Americans were to producing documents like the UN Declaration of Human Rights or to the growth of organizations like Amnesty International (founded in Britain), they learned what human rights meant by participating in a transnational conversation, one shaped by Holocaust memory, decolonization, and the harsh realities of the cold war in the Soviet bloc and Latin America, and the circulation of literatures and images of suffering.

The focus of the book is thus not on state politics and policy (although these are not absent) so much as the work of those whom Bradley calls “human rights amateurs”: the “photographers, lawyers, filmmakers, doctors, musicians, physicists, statisticians, writers, clergy, grassroots activists, and senior citizens” who made themselves into advocates. Bradley’s analysis draws on literary and cultural theory to make the argument that it was affect, forged in displays at UNESCO headquarters or circulated in movies or photographs, that made the concept of universal and global human rights “believable to a variety of American publics” (6). I found Bradley’s use of the ideas of cultural theorist Lauren Berlant to be particularly compelling. Berlant, whose work has shaped a generation of scholars interested in affect and public life, insists that epistemology is perpetually linked to the politics of feeling, that sense and sensibility are inevitably intertwined. “The present is not an object but a mediated affect,” she writes. The world in which we live, or present-ness, is something “that is sensed and under constant revision” (8). The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci famously argued that “the crisis consists precisely in that the old is dying and the new cannot be born.” Berlant, and Bradley with her, argue that the shape of the new depends on being able to understand, intellectually and affectively, the world which might be forthcoming. The problem, according to Berlant, is that in times of crisis, people begin to recognize that the world is changing “but the rules of habitation and the genres of storytelling about it are unstable.”

Bradley is supremely interested in those frameworks of habitation, the modes of practice and available narratives with which we navigate our social worlds. Bradley builds on this approach, carefully

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showing how the public circulation of narratives and images offered ways of seeing oneself in relation to others, of imagining the politics of affiliation that made human rights into an ‘American vernacular.’

Bradley positions himself as occupying a middle ground in a historiographical debate among human rights scholars about periodization. That debate centers on when and how global human rights politics took hold: was it the 1940s, with the United Nations (UN) Declaration of Human Rights, or was it the 1970s, with the take-off of Amnesty International, the Helsinki Final Act, and human rights activism more broadly? Those who focus on the 1940s argue for the centrality of the UN and its instruments, as well as the importance of the language and sensibility (if not yet the grassroots urgency) that made ‘human rights’ available as a way of articulating claims to justice in the postwar era. Those, like Samuel Moyn, who highlight the 1970s are likely to describe the human rights moment of the 1940s as a “death in birth,” saying that it was not until after Vietnam and civil rights that ‘human rights’ became part of the activist handbook. Bradley argues that both sides are correct, that the launch in the 1940s created the language and affective structures that were mobilized (and changed) in the 1970s. He argues that paying attention to affect helps us to see these connections: the circulation of sensibility, feeling, and language tied together two distinct moments in which human rights quickened.

In the first half of the book, which focuses on the 1930s and 1940s, Bradley uses photographs particularly well. His close reading of photographer Dorothea Lange’s ‘Migrant Mother’ argues that documentary images from the 1930s created “new ways of seeing the world that narrowed the distance between artist, subject, and audience.” Photographers of the period did not use the concept of human rights explicitly, but they worked to create a sense of affective connection between audience and subject, “to make the suffering of strangers as visible and deeply felt as one’s own” (24). This, Bradley argued, was a moral and political intervention, and a successful one, in that it laid the ground for thinking about global, emancipatory visions of ‘rights’ as something that was inherent in the ‘human.’

As powerful as I find these arguments, I am most taken by the material in the second half of the book, on the 1970s. Bradley’s story locates the development of human rights activism and thinking in this period in the context of large-scale changes in the social order: the rise of neoliberalism, the fractures in the Cold War edifice, increased flows of migrants and immigrants across national borders, and the increasing role of non-governmental organizations. This deft contextualization, however, is only part of the story, and Bradley’s innovation is to connect those changes with more subtle transformations in ways of being, particularly in the rise of testimony and witness as privileged forms of knowing. Both were shaped by the individualism of the moment, where the authority of experience came to full force: “A growing belief in the authenticity of the interior world of individual suffering, rather than the external structures that produced it, was at the heart of this new politics. Individual consciousness, lived experience, moral witness, and a testimonial turn became the keywords for activists of this era and began to reshape the contours of global politics and morality” (137).

Bradley did not invent this understanding of the 1970s as a decade of witness. He draws upon a flowering of scholarship in the history of humanitarianism, a field that has been transformed and energized by work by Didier Fassin on humanitarian logic, Michael Barnett on ‘alchemical humanitarianism,’ and Peter Redfield’s

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study of the politics of witness and ‘motivated truth’ in Médecins san Frontières (Doctors without Borders). Indeed, it one of the strengths of the book that it shows how deeply human rights logics were imbricated with humanitarianism, anti-imperialism, and social justice sensibilities more broadly. The lay-leftist critique of human rights has often been that it is evacuated of history and politics, emptying deeply complex struggles of their contentious content and presenting only a basic moral requirement about ‘no torture’ or ‘no extrajudicial execution.’ In other words, human rights is often accused of being a politics without much politics. But Bradley’s approach shows something different—a world of affective solidarities of which human rights was just one manifestation, albeit a particularly powerful one.

Importantly, this stance was not forged first in the United States. Indeed, Bradley argues, Americans often arrived last, importing human rights as a ‘guest language’ that had been forged in struggles elsewhere. Bradley offers two case studies of the circulation and mobilization of human rights language globally in the 1970s: the literature emanating from the Soviet bloc (including a fine reading of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago), and the discourse about torture and imprisonment coming out of Latin America. I found the latter discussion particularly compelling, as Bradley showed the intersection of different forms of testimony from the region, from Jacobo Timerman’s global bestseller Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number to the evocative handicrafts circulated by the Madres del Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) in Argentina. The analysis of Timerman’s book is particularly rich, as Bradley links the reception of Timerman’s account of his imprisonment and the anti-Semitism of his captors to the emergence of Holocaust memory in the United States, showing how memory and testimony became intertwined.

Bradley then explores how these concerns about torture and disappearances were taken up in the United States. One example is the 1982 film Missing by the Greek-French director Costa-Gavras. This director is not an American, but—as Bradley alludes to but does not fully explore—what constitutes ‘American’ culture in times of human and cultural border-crossing is often unclear. What is clear is that this Greek man who lived in France and worked largely in French chose to make a Hollywood film starring Sissy Spacek and Jack Lemmon, one that told the story of a young American who was killed in Chile in the aftermath of the coup that overthrew Chilean president Salvador Allende. The film is a classic of human rights testimony, told from the point of view of an American father who learns, painfully, that the world’s troubles are also his own.

Perhaps the best and strangest part of Bradley’s analysis of the politics of witness in U.S. culture is his discussion of the primitive and oddly affecting paintings by Leon Golub. The New York Times once described

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5 Jacobo Timerman, Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number, sixth printing (New York: Knopf, 1981).
Golub as producing “raw, awkward figurative works” with “blunt, brute shapes.” The four-part *Interrogation* series is hard to view, with bright reds and blues, and torturers in oddly rigid poses standing idly around peeled and suffering bodies. Bradley makes a compelling argument that these images were accessible to U.S. audiences because they spoke the language in which Americans were becoming fluent—of witness, suffering, and the human body as archive.

*The World Reimagined* is expansive and generous as it traces the complex ways that suffering was represented and made legible to people inside and outside the U.S. Is it odd, then, that Bradley has so little to say about religion as a category. There are religious people in the book, certainly: American Protestants, Catholics, and Jews were active on behalf of the Universal Declaration in the 1940s, and there is a relatively brief but evocative discussion of how Catholics mobilized the language of human rights to protest abuses in Brazil as well as other parts of Latin America. But religion, like human rights, is a language for understanding our own suffering and the suffering of others, and religious teachings very often mobilize the power of witness. Religion matters to human rights, not only because, as Bradley notes, at least one quarter of U.S. human rights groups had a religious basis (203), but because human rights and religious sensibility inhabit overlapping terrain. Some observers have argued that human rights have effectively replaced religion as a moral framework for secular people; others (religious themselves) argued that ‘human rights needs God’; still others, that human rights were articulated and shaped by an exclusivist Christian lens. The fundamental tie between religion and human rights, however, happens on the terrain of affect, of coming to terms with suffering and our response to it, with unveiling or creating what Berlant described as the “rules of habitation and the genres of storytelling about it.” Religion and human rights have a shared project. Whether human rights are best understood as secular or religious (or, of course, both) is less important than a recognition of the cultural work that human rights and religion each do, and do in relationship to each other. That said, Bradley offers us a framework for understanding even topics that he does not address in depth. Religious worlds and their narratives of self and suffering were part of the ‘conditions of possibility’ that Bradley traces, and they have been transformed in turn by the humanistic and individualistic affective solidarities that human rights helped to make. There is room here for scholars of religion to construct a rich theoretical and empirical account of the intersections of religion and rights talk.

There has been a great deal of work on human rights in the last two decades, combining the study of NGOs, activists, and state politics. Bradley’s outstanding contribution to this field is transnational, committed to provincializing the U.S. role while also telling an American story. And it is interdisciplinary, effortlessly

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bringing together cultural history with literary theory, philosophy, and legal history. The book’s coda is also offers a fascinating and rather demoralizing survey of the failure of human rights imagination in the United States, from the horrors of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq to the desolation and violence faced by people of color in U.S. cities. Still, Bradley argues, human rights remains a deeply shared moral currency, one that we cannot ignore if we want to understand either the twentieth or the twenty-first centuries. This remarkable book is exciting for those of us who work in human rights, U.S. in the World, or adjacent fields, but it is also eminently teachable, offering to our graduate and undergraduate students a model of how rigorous, worldly, and creatively conceived scholarship can help us hone our own moral imaginations.
Mark Philip Bradley's new book is an important addition to an already robust historical literature on human rights. Human rights scholarship was long the domain of political scientists, legal scholars, activists, and philosophers, but in recent years historians have been among the most productive and thoughtful contributors to the field. Their work has taken many forms, including broad perspectives on international human rights in the twentieth century, explorations of human rights in American diplomacy and politics in the 1940s and the long 1970s, examinations of human rights and American domestic developments, and conceptual works about the origins of the modern movement. The World Reimagined represents an ambitious attempt to bridge the gap between all of these historiographical streams.

The book cannot be categorized as straight political or diplomatic history. It is, rather—to borrow a line from the public relations guru Edward L. Bernays—the biography of an idea. In Bradley's words, the book explores “the entanglements of the United States” in the rise of “the twentieth-century global human rights imagination.” It asks “how and why human rights went from an exotic aspirational language to an everyday vernacular” (3). Bradley draws on an eclectic set of sources, from traditional documentary materials (legal cases, draft human rights conventions) to cultural texts (photographs, films, dissident essays, and works of art). Particularly innovative is his extended foray into the psychological realm and his emphasis on the importance of feeling, or affect. "Historians seemingly more easily articulate the imagined physicality of

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geopolitics than structures of feeling,” he writes, “and yet the historical present is often understood affectively before it is perceived in other ways” (8).

The book’s unusual, bifurcated structure highlights two foundational periods: the 1940s and the 1970s. While there is some disagreement as to when the modern movement emerged, Bradley concludes that the forties were a critical moment. He lays the groundwork for this era by assessing the practitioners of documentary-style photographic reportage in the 1930s. Works in this milieu included Dorothea Lange’s celebrated Great Depression photographs, Margaret Bourke-White’s pioneering shots of industry and poverty, and Tina Modotti’s photos of Mexico (25-34). These images were not groundbreaking in and of themselves; after all, muckrakers were documenting urban ills years earlier. But the rise of photo magazines and illustrated periodical supplements allowed them to reach a much broader audience.

Bradley then examines wartime human rights discussions, which he calls the “first sustained international effort to identify rights of individuals that transcended the nation-state” (43). In showcasing the debate over the parameters of the UN declaration and the proposed international bill of rights, he shows that human rights advocates generally agreed on the inclusion of civil liberties, while sharp debates arose over statelessness, minority rights, and economic and social rights (52-53, 59-62). Perhaps the most salient question concerned the limits of sovereignty: Was the state or the individual the subject of international law (65-68)? The international legal scholar Hersch Lauterpacht looms large in this telling.

The revelations of the Holocaust further fueled the human rights conversation in the immediate postwar years. Bradley does a fine job of sampling the vast literature on proposals for a postwar order during this “extremely fluid political moment” (94). He concludes Part I by examining how Japanese Americans, African Americans, and American Indians used the UN Charter to challenge racial housing covenants and states’ alien land laws (99-108). Although it seems that the plaintiffs rarely won these cases (the few exceptions were land laws in Oregon and California), these were the first attempts to apply international human rights provisions to American domestic laws.

The book’s second half discusses the 1970s. There is near-universal agreement that a global human rights convergence took place in the seventies, but there are also many open questions about the nature of this convergence, why it happened, and what role Americans played in it. In contrast to Bradley’s exploration of the 1940s, he takes a ‘bottom-up’ approach in this section. Eschewing the more conventional study of elite actors and high politics, he aims to “recover the complex interplay of the global and local in shaping efforts by American publics to craft their own often partial and uneven human rights vernacular” (126).

He begins by describing the era’s instabilities and cultural ruptures—the early stages of what we now call globalization—yet he is less interested in charting structural transformations than he is in exploring the “new global affect toward power and territoriality” which “came to almost entirely reshape the kinds of political claims made by nonstate actors in the 1970s” (137). He does this by delving into human psychology and highlighting the new cultural importance of “individual consciousness,” “lived experiences,” and the “primacy of the self.” The collective national projects of the 1950s and 60s gave way to an “age of fracture” (lampooned

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7 See Moyn, *The Last Utopia.*
by the writer Tom Wolfe as the ‘me decade’) in which psychotherapy, self-help books, Gestalt therapy, and consciousness-raising became common tools in the search for the ‘authentic self.’

Bradley links these broader trends to the human rights story by highlighting the importance of experience, witness, and testimony in the 1970s human rights imagination (the “testimonial turn,” which is introduced on 137-155). He also addresses the impact of the dissidents Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov, and Vaclav Havel, and he explores the testimonial turn in Latin America. With respect to the latter subject, he draws on an engaging set of sources, including not only Jacobo Timerman’s oft-studied prison memoir, but also Chilean *arpilleras*, Victor Jara’s music, and the works of the realist painter Leon Golub.

The final chapter provides a snapshot description of 1970s activism. Much of this story has been documented elsewhere, though Bradley does bring some fresh perspectives. Among the key developments of this era was the elevation of corporal integrity. “The singularity of the person and the body was always at the center of 1970s American human rights practice,” he writes (200). Bringing the reader up to the present, he notes that although human rights have become codified and institutionalized, the U.S. role in the global human rights imagination is an ambiguous one (228). While still a part of the American cultural landscape, “human rights has never come home again as a fully believable language at the grassroots level to address domestic rights issues” (230-234).

There is much to like about this excellent book. Bradley deserves high praise for forcing scholars, students, and lay readers alike to reconsider what we think we know about the origins and evolution of the modern human rights movement. The book’s chief strength, I think, is its ambitious scope. Bradley has marshaled an impressive array of primary sources, and he is on top of an equally striking survey of secondary literature. Reflecting the variegated origins and elusive nature of its subject, the book is appropriately transnational and interdisciplinary. Bradley’s forays into psychology are especially innovative (e.g., 158-161), as are his explorations of literary scholarship. Among his most compelling sources are the unmediated ones, such as contemporary viewers’ responses to photography exhibits (38-39; 79-80) and the wartime discussions of human rights and international law (48-51). The four major drafts of an international bill of rights offer fascinating insights into wartime rights talk (Chapter 2).

Bradley is also very honest about the shortcomings of the human rights imagination. Activists in both periods established boundaries even while they were embracing the vernacular of universality, and the movement was consistently limited by internal contradictions, ambiguities, and myopia (200). In the American imagination, Bradley points out, human rights applied to other places. “It was the suffering of strangers, rather than one’s neighbors, that animated the movement,” he writes (224).

It is only natural that such an ambitious book will have a few limitations and the occasional oversight. What follows are not major criticisms, but rather thoughts and questions that are intended to further the conversation about global human rights, transnational activism, American history, and our reference frames for writing human rights history.

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9 For example, see Cmiel, “The Emergence of Human Rights Politics;” and Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue.*
First, a few brief comments on how Bradley positions his contribution vis-à-vis diplomatic and human rights scholarship. He writes that “some U.S. historians have suggested” that “American actors . . . [brought] human rights to the world,” and that “much of the existing history of human rights often feels closed in on itself” (9). These claims are worth at least a citation. Readers may want to know who has authored these deficient works. “In more conventional accounts of U.S. foreign relations,” he continues, “the preponderance of American power in the second half of the twentieth century invariably puts the United States at the center of the world” (10). Yet the scholars he cites have simply pointed out that the U.S., more than any other nation, was responsible for championing the open and rule-based, postwar liberal international order.

Later, Bradley asserts that “most American diplomatic historians are certain” that President Jimmy Carter and Congress were “the motors that drove the turn to human rights” in the 1970s. “In this view,” he writes, “human rights were largely a top-down affair firmly rooted in Washington politics” (124-125). These are strong claims, yet most of his sources here are political biographies of Carter (which naturally give the man a prominent role in events), and many are rather dated (271, n8).

These assertions highlight a divide between top-down diplomatic explorations of human rights and bottom-up cultural or activist-centered studies. Those who see diplomatic history as, above all else, the study of power in interstate affairs (and thus a discipline aligned with international relations and such IR preoccupations as world-systems analysis, hegemonic stability theory, and the like) stand in sharp contrast to those who take a “U.S. in the world” approach to subject matter that is transnational but not altogether ‘diplomatic.’ The former are likely to see human rights as a minor irritant in the ruthless world of Great Power relations, while the latter are likely to conclude that diplomatic studies are incapable of adequately explaining a multicausal phenomenon like the rise of human rights. I would argue that both perspectives have their merits because each is asking fundamentally different questions.

While it is perfectly appropriate for Bradley to reject Americentrism and elite-centered models of human rights development, his creative effort to decouple the human rights story from politics and ideology is not entirely convincing. “Like the broader global human rights imagination of the era,” he writes in reference to the process that constructed and gave meaning to human rights, “the Cold War was often left to the side” (196). Yet Cold War-influenced political and ideological perspectives played a central role in the developments of the 1970s. Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) took up many more cases in the right-wing dictatorships of Latin America than in the left-wing autocracies of Asia and Eastern Europe. And considering the rogues’ gallery of regimes that were guilty of atrocities in this decade, one could argue that international activists gave an inordinate amount of attention to Augusto Pinochet’s Chile.10 The revealing comments of AIUSA members in the book’s final chapter would seem to support these general conclusions (222). Bradley alludes to activists’ selectivity (148-150), but he does not interrogate their ideological biases.

As for the use of photographs as source material, Bradley follows in the footsteps of Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes in exploring how ordinary people regard the pain of others (Chapter 1). “In seeking to make the suffering of strangers as visible and deeply felt as one’s own,” he writes, “photographers like Lange were simultaneously engaged in imaginative, moral, and political interventions” (24). Yet although photos may

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give us some insights into contemporary life, the connection between 1930s photo reportage and the 1940s human rights drive seems tenuous. He argues that such works offer “visual flashpoints to understand a growing American concern with and consciousness of what in wartime came to be called human rights” (24-25). But poverty was hardly a new blight on humanity in the 1930s and 40s; totalitarianism and total war were. Bradley might have given less attention to photo essays of poor people and instead sampled the voluminous photographic record of the rise of Nazism and fascism, the terrible wars wracking China and Spain in the 1930s, and the dreadful civilian toll of the wider wars in Asia and Europe.

Indeed, it is notoriously difficult to establish causation using cultural objects and texts. Did photos really alter ordinary Americans’ perceptions of the suffering of their fellow human beings? I would like to agree with Bradley that they did, but I am also inclined to think that the unique threat of totalitarian ideologies and the indescribable violence against civilians in the war did more than anything to spur human rights advocacy in the 1940s. Bradley hints at this with the prescient quotes on pages 49-50, as well as in his description of the “nature of the enemy” exhibition (46-50) and his treatment of Holocaust imagery. A fuller photographic treatment of the war seems appropriate here, as does mention of the widely-viewed film series *Why We Fight*.

Later in Part I, Bradley is correct in asserting that there were many legal challenges to racial discrimination before the 1954 *Brown* decision. He should also be commended for uncovering so many fascinating cases. But his claim that “human rights became believable in the United States . . . as a powerful weapon to advance domestic campaigns for racial justice at home” seems an overstatement considering how few of these challenges met with any success (7). The story of John Rice, a Native American soldier who was denied burial in a segregated Iowa cemetery, is a case in point. The plaintiffs’ attorneys may have used human rights arguments, but the case’s non-resolution makes the tale seem like more of a curiosity than anything else (120-121; 269, n73). (Bradley does note the paradox that the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s borrowed so little from the human rights language of the 1940s (113)). Moreover, after the extended discussions of Chapter 3, the transition to lynching seems incongruous (87-88). Clearly these are powerful, disquieting images, but their significance to the narrative is not altogether clear. If Bradley’s point is that American racial discrimination was an undeniable (and embarrassing) counterpoint to universalist human rights language and to Americans’ overly sanguine self-image, then this position is worth an extended discussion.

Bradley could also more clearly explain the ultimate dissolution of the 1940s “rights imagination.” In doing so, he might give more consideration to whether the human rights push of the 1940s was, at its core, a rather undemocratic initiative. Early in the book, he argues that a focus on the human rights norm-making of the UN “can obscure an understudied but perhaps even more prevalent constellation of everyday on-the-ground efforts to harness the fluidities of the immediate postwar moment for the making of a new global human rights politics” (17). This is a sound claim. But it is possible nevertheless to read the human rights drive of the 1940s as an overwhelmingly elite-level enterprise. Not only were the human rights statements and conventions crafted by diplomats and lawyers behind closed doors, but it is hard to identify a popular groundswell of support for international human rights agreements. (This is in marked contrast to the 1970s, when grass-roots human rights efforts vastly outdistanced the work of most governments.)

In fairness to Bradley, the seeds of this dissolution are peppered throughout Part I. The section on economic rights, especially the American Law Institute documents, strikes me as particularly instructive (53-58), as are the comments of Austrian jurist Hans Kelsen regarding the UN Charter (86). These do much to explain the inherent difficulties of enforcing human rights standards while also respecting national governments’ “domestic jurisdiction.” But the transition between the 1940s and 1970s feels a bit truncated.
I would suggest that the early-1950s backlash against the human rights covenants was, in large measure, a reaction to this very elitism. Many Americans naturally felt anxious about the new global realities (the U.S. was now a superpower with a laundry list of potentially dangerous obligations) and the as-yet-undefined enforcement powers of the new multilateral organizations and conventions. As Bradley demonstrates in a well-written narrative, legal decisions ultimately spurred opposition to the Genocide Convention and the draft human rights convention. (Bradley highlights the 1952 *Fujii* decision, which overturned California’s Alien Land Act. The 1920 *Missouri v. Holland* decision, which confirmed the federal treaty power and later became a target for opponents of human rights treaties, is also worth a mention.) Nevertheless, considering his attention to non-state actors, he could do more to go beyond Frank Holman of the American Bar Association and Senator John Bricker of Ohio and parse out the people and organizations that opposed these internationalist trends (110-113).

As for the extended discussion of dissidents (164-179), I agree that their writings are potent reflections on the nature of power and oppression. I have used them in my own classes for this very reason. Bradley makes a convincing case that Solzhenitsyn was especially important not only because he was widely read in the West, but also because “he made an exceptionally compelling claim that human rights ought to matter” (167). Still, I do wonder if Sakharov and Havel warrant a ten-page treatment here. How many Americans read or saw Havel’s work? Since most Americans already agreed that Eastern Bloc communism was lousy, I assume that very few of them needed confirmation from the Czech playwright. With apologies in advance for my generalizations here, my qualified conclusion is that he was too esoteric for Middle American conservatives, too anti-socialist for *The Nation*, too countercultural for the *National Review*, and too far from Latin America to capture the interest of most American human rights activists.

A final, minor suggestion about sources: although the book is extremely well researched, Bradley might have borrowed more from the social sciences. Particularly appropriate would be the work of Ronald Inglehart et al. on postmaterialist values and generational change. These studies would fit well with the discussion of ‘self-actualization’ in the 1970s, and they would help explain how changing values in a time of relative abundance contributed to the growing interest in such ‘postmaterial’ pursuits as environmental protection and human rights.11

But these are hardly major concerns. Mark Philip Bradley has done us a tremendous service by rendering such a broad and disparate set of sources into a coherent, convincing, readable narrative. *The World Reimagined* is a stellar achievement and a marvelous contribution to our understanding of modern human rights claims, the human rights imagination, and America’s role in the world. No doubt it will stand as a vital work in the field for many years to come.

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During a memorable public discussion on the relevance of foreign law for American constitutional interpretation in 2005, the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia offered these remarks: “…you are talking about using foreign law to determine the content of American constitutional law—to be sure that we’re on the right track, that we have the same moral and legal framework as the rest of the world. But we don’t have the same moral and legal framework as the rest of the world, and never have. If you told the framers of the Constitution that we’re to be just like Europe, they would have been appalled.”

Justice Scalia was not entirely mistaken. For one, he belonged to the originalist school of constitutional interpretation which places a premium on what the people meant at the time the Constitution was adopted. More importantly, his views on the distinctiveness of American law are far from unique. But this was not always the case. There was once a brief window of time when human rights—the ‘moral and legal framework of the rest of the world,’ in Justice Scalia’s words—was salient in American law and politics. It has since disappeared. Today, most Americans understand human rights as applying only to those living beyond U.S. borders, who are not fit for local consumption. How did human rights get excised from the American domestic legal imaginary?

The variegated story of how human rights was experienced in America throughout the twentieth century is the subject of Mark Philip Bradley’s rich and fascinating new book *The World Reimagined*. Despite the already crowded scholarly literature on the history of human rights, the book succeeds in offering a new canvas with which to look at and interpret the erstwhile familiar American encounter with human rights in its epochal moments. Like other historians of the subject, Bradley describes the 1940s as a propitious moment for the emergence of human rights as an unfamiliar and yet promising transnational terrain of a new and salvific politics beyond the nation-state. Unlike other works, the book is not concerned with the high-level work of diplomats and government officials, but casts its focus on the activities of private actors on the ground that made human rights socially and culturally intelligible for their fellow Americans. Photojournalism, especially that of atrocity photographs, significantly contributed to the spread of transnational affect reminiscent of Lynn Hunt’s argument that the epistolary novels of the eighteenth century contributed to the rise of empathy thus rendering human rights conceivable.

In Bradley’s telling, human rights in the 1940s provided a cross-cutting, if initially tentative, language with which to debate and discuss the postwar peace. The United States was a particularly engaged participant during this period, playing a key role in the drafting of major instruments that established the architecture of a new international order such as the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But the tension embodied in the UN Charter which was envisioned to promote human rights while likewise created to safeguard state sovereignty became clear to African Americans and Japanese Americans once they began to articulate its language before U.S. domestic courts. In now-forgotten racial discrimination cases such as *Oyama v. California* and *Namba v. McCourt*, both of which involved legal challenges against state alien land...

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laws barring property ownership by aliens ineligible for citizenship, lawyers began to test the possibilities of international human rights language at home. In these cases, Americans grappled at human rights as a mediator of their domestic constitutional claims, and, one after another, they faltered. Another case challenging the alien land law, *Sei Fujii v. California*, augured the future direction of American constitutional law. Sei Fujii, a Japanese immigrant who attended the law school of the University of Southern California, argued that the law had been invalidated by the U.N. Charter and that it violated the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. The district court of appeal handed down what was the first decision to use the UN Charter to invalidate a law of a state. Although not noted in the book, this was later reversed by the California Supreme Court which held that the U.N. Charter was a non-self-executing treaty though the law indeed violated the Constitution. The judicial bifurcation between foreign and domestic law on the one hand, and the popular backlash at the initial decision spurring a number of proposed constitutional amendments intended to insulate American law from foreign influences, paved the way for the excision of human rights language from American law as, in Bradley’s term, “a performance of sovereignty.”

When human rights reappeared in America in the 1970s, they came in borrowed form. Enmeshed in the therapeutic individualism of the period, the human rights of distant strangers became the object of American political imagination. However, it was a human rights imagination that was shaped elsewhere—by Soviet oppression as well as Latin American authoritarianism. American nongovernmental organizations devoted to human rights flourished during this period, employing practices of moral witness and individual testimony that would eventually form part of quintessential international human rights advocacy work. The signing of the Helsinki accords in 1975 as well as the election of President Jimmy Carter in 1976 that put human rights at the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda institutionalized awareness campaigns and the regular issuance of country reports. A major development of this period was the rise of legal human rights advocacy groups, the incorporation of human rights in the American law-school curriculum as well as the opening of American courts for human rights claims.

The World Reimagined does not discuss the recovery of the Alien Tort Statute or the groundbreaking appellate court opinion of *Filartiga v. Pena-Irala* in great detail, but not only did the opinion open the doors of U.S. federal courts for adjudications of rights already recognized under international law, it also launched an era of transnational human rights litigation that would last well until our present time. If the 1940s foreclosed any possibility that the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the U.N. Charter would find application on American shores, the 1970s at least preserved that promise on behalf of distant strangers seeking justice before American courts. For the next two decades up until 2013, the statute functioned as a necessary sieve through which international human rights law would be rendered comprehensible to the American legal system but in doing so, it also ensured that human rights would remain an alien language to the American domestic experience.

Bradley introduces the book with the twin goals of decentering the U.S. in the history of human rights and questioning assertions of American unilateral exercises of power. And yet, as Stephen Hopgood diagnosed in *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, the spread of human rights and its eventual linkage with democratization and liberalization efforts remain inextricable from the projection of American power.³ The International Criminal Court itself counts on the support of the United States even though the latter is not a party to the Rome Statute which established the court. Thus while it is useful to correct the outsized role with which the United

States is often portrayed in human rights scholarly literature, it is also not quite accurate to depict Americans lingering on the periphery of the human rights landscape. Indeed, even though they were at the receiving end of a discourse initially fashioned elsewhere in the 1970s, it was the American approach during that period which became dominant and professionalized throughout the world.

If there are losses to be lamented from these recovered episodes, a glaring one is certainly the way that atrocity photography has lost its historical capacity to shock or move people to action. Today, photographs of hollowed out hospitals or dead toddlers washed along a beach spark momentary outrage but nothing more. Simply put, visceral does not work anymore. That is partly a result of the dissociation between atrocities abroad and a once encompassing human rights vernacular at home. Over time, that language has eroded and has been replaced entirely with civil and constitutional rights talk. But a discourse centered around civil rights and constitutional rights alone cannot fully address the reality of a nation fully engaged in the world. That is not a knock on civil and constitutional rights talk which is itself forged through more than a century of people’s struggles against discrimination and oppression, but like human rights, its structural premises leave many falling through its cracks such as aliens, refugees and stateless persons, and leave untouched issues that do not have a perfect constitutional analog such as economic inequality or indigenous rights. Consider the struggle and arguable failure of Black Lives Matter and Native Americans to frame their claims as human rights claims both inside and outside the United States.

As *The World Reimagined* almost ruefully notes, after a brief window of opportunity in the late 1940s and early 1950s, human rights never came home to America again - in more ways than one. American law was reshaped –best captured by the emergence of a distinct field of law called foreign relations law – in a manner that made it a mirror of American identity. As a result, human rights eventually became seen as a cosmopolitan usurper and thus at the very least a stranger to be stopped at the gates and assiduously searched before being let in. Contrary to the book’s somewhat rosy picture of human rights language nonetheless permeating all levels of the American cultural landscape, it is largely an emaciated version. Yes, it is now a perennial feature of U.S. law school curricula, a dedicated bureau to human rights is part of the State Department, and the biggest transnational human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have offices in the United States. Most of these efforts are meant for export, however. For as long as the content of international human rights is tested and lived elsewhere, it can never offer the same promise in America. Thus its biggest American critics could say that human rights law does not work, that it does not achieve its objectives or that on the whole, it has not improved the well-being of people even though it connotes something more meaningful in the rest of the world.

To see how human rights played out in the American imagination in these two contrapuntal moments, as *The World Reimagined* does, is to note that human rights shone best when there was a convergence between what was lived and preached at home and what was exported abroad.

Finally, this is not to praise and elevate human rights without an extremely skeptical eye in view of its striking limitations. As Samuel Moyn has written elsewhere, many of the most pressing global issues in the world today are caught in the interstices of the existing human rights framework and certainly in many cases, rights talk in general tends to monopolize political space to the detriment of other possibilities. But until we can

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come up with a new language without the attendant baggage with which to conduct our global and domestic moral politics, then Bradley’s book should be a helpful and provocative guide on the intertwined fate of global human rights and American power.
I want to thank the reviewers for their thoughtful and generous readings of The World Reimagined. In my own scholarship and teaching, I have learned so much from Melani McAlister’s forthcoming work on the global vision of American evangelicals, Udi Greenberg’s transnational analysis of the intellectual construction of the early Cold War world, Joe Renouard’s expansive examination of the high politics of late twentieth century American interest in human rights and Anna Su’s insightful account of religious liberty and American diplomacy.1 It is a great honor to have them engaged with my book, and to learn from their varied disciplinary, geographic, and conceptual perspectives and critiques.

I would like to pick up on three broader concerns that emerge across their reviews. One revolves around causation and the use of forms of cultural production to make historical claims about the formation of belief and sensibilities. Greenberg worries whether iconic images like Dorothea Lange’s Migrant Mother, a photograph that forms the centerpiece of one of my chapters, can really do political work, or at least if historians can credibly claim they do so. It is, as Renouard suggests, “notoriously difficult to establish causation using cultural objects and texts.” I agree, but my own efforts to think about the connections between belief, affect, and culture in World Reimagined largely moved away from causation. In my work on this project I found that it simply is not possible to think about these kinds of structures of meanings in more traditional causal terms. There is, for instance, no bright line that connects Migrant Mother, an atrocity photograph of Nazi death camps, or Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago to new sensibilities about human rights. Instead, I found it more productive to think with the idea of relationality. For example, the intersection between the ways in which truth claims were being re-made in the 1970s and the narrative voice of Gulag did together inform the making of American human rights vernaculars in that era. In those relational terms we can begin to historically uncover the larger webs of signification through which a variety of cultural forms obliquely but critically helped give human rights emotive meaning, shape and form.

A second concern is the need to situate the history of human rights in the larger histories of the twentieth century. The first generation of human right history was often rightly preoccupied with making visible what had essentially become a lost history. In World Reimagined, I wanted to think more carefully about the wider fields of meaning through which human rights operated at scales both larger and smaller than the nation. McAlister worries, however, that the relationship between religion and human rights does not get the attention it deserves in my narrative. Greenberg and Renouard think the Cold War casts a wider shadow in the 1970s than I acknowledge. And Su wonders how central the transnational is for U.S. human rights history if in fact it is American non-state forms of human rights practice that condition global forms of advocacy today. Though I gesture to religious actors in my discussion of human rights practice, McAlister is quite right that the place of religion in the making of an American human rights imagination deserves more extended treatment. Bringing the Cold War back into the story is more fraught. Without question, the Cold War still hovered over the 1970s, and still in part influenced what human rights were about in that decade. But to suggest, as Greenberg and Renouard, do that human rights politics were simply ‘echoes’ of the Cold War too

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quickly reifies a more traditional narrative of late twentieth century international history. It ignores the transformations in structure and affect that began to fundamentally transform global politics in the 1970s, and created the conditions of possibility that allowed particular forms of human rights ideas and practices to emerge. I am also not as convinced as Su is that contemporary human rights advocacy is simply a reflection of American best practice. If the 1970s were a critical moment in the formation of today’s human rights practices, and I argue they were, then what might pass as ‘American’ practice today was in fact co-produced through transnational circuits between Europe, Latin America, and the United States. Amnesty International in Europe established the country report as a classic human rights genre. Dissidents from the Soviet East and a variety of Latin American actors pioneered the use of individual testimony and witness that formed the affectual basis of much of today’s human rights advocacy. But if the reviewers and I sometimes place differing emphasis on the interplay between the domestic and the international and the broader forces conditioning human rights politics, I think we share a common sensibility that the next generation of human rights history needs to be written with even more attention to the wider conceptual terrains through which human rights emerged in discourse and practice.

Finally, how do we think about the American human rights present in light of these past histories? These are dark days for human rights in the United States. When I finished writing World Reimagined more than a year ago, few observers included myself anticipated that we would now be living in the era of Donald Trump. The President believes in torture, the forced deportation of immigrants, and a Muslim ban. The new administration boycotted hearings before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that is critical of its policies, the first time the American state has refused to participate in hearings held by the Commission. President Trump invited President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt to visit the White House, lavishing praise on an autocratic leader who gunned down hundreds of protestors in Cairo, fills his prisons with political opponents, and seeks to muzzle a free press. The administration has lifted human rights conditions on sales of fighter jets to Bahrain. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson was noticeably absent from the release of the State Department’s annual human rights report. The nation’s airports became temporary sites of detention. And all this in the first hundred days of the Trump administration.

One could see this as yet another instantiation of a long standing reluctance by the American state to make human rights a central part of its foreign policy. Both Greenberg and Su note the substantial and sustained gap between the rhetoric and practice of American diplomats around questions of human rights, a view I endorse in the coda to World Reimagined. But the question remains whether the intensity of the Trump Administration’s assault on human rights is a difference in degree or kind with the practices of past administrations. I tend to think it is the latter, but either way the push-back Trump policies have already engendered within the American judiciary and in civil society is quite remarkable. Su is understandably skeptical about how likely what she terms today’s “emaciated version” of human rights can structure this kind of resistance in the present moment. And yet I remain optimistic that human rights will come home again, given the work of the human rights amateurs I trace in my book to make human rights believable to a variety of American publics over the last 70 years. When the American embrace of human rights has been simultaneously a domestic and international project, it offered a powerful political and moral vocabulary for transformative change. It may well do so again today.