

# LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

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This edition of the Earlham Historical Journal features papers addressing a wide array of subjects. While they confront topics as diverse as the outcome of the First Opium War, anti-imperialist solidarity in Mexico, an anarchist analysis of graffiti, and the intersection of workplace activism, gender, and sexuality, these works are united in considering identity, conflict, and resistance.

The Journal is arranged chronologically by subject matter. The first article, “The Qing and the First Opium War,” by Noah Scherf, offers an examination of factors that led to the Qing Dynasty’s defeat in that conflict. Scherf argues that internal factors—including administrative decay, financial fragilities, and myriad military and social issues—culminated in a situation where the Empire was weakened from the inside, causing it to topple when challenged by the British.

The next work is Asa Kramer-Dickie’s “‘Every North American Shall be Put to Death,’ and Other Visions for a More Just Society: Racial Geographies of the 1915 Plan of San Diego.” In this piece, Kramer-Dickie explores the racial and spatial implications of the Plan of San Diego, as well as its practical and symbolic significance. He argues that the Plan—which called for the occupation and liberation of five states in the U.S. Southwest—contested the borderland’s racial logic, disrupted the system of private property, and emerged as a response to technological advances in the borderlands.

In “Subverting Ownership: Graffiti as a Reclamation of Collective Property,” Daniel Oni situates graffiti within the broader artistic context of hip hop and offers a political argument. Looking particularly closely at New York City in the 1970s and engaging with political theorists ranging from Plato to Wendy Brown, Oni posits that graffiti operates as a method of democratizing public space, thereby subverting neoliberal conceptions of private property.

The final paper, Opal Harbour’s “A Leap in the Dark: Marginalized Workers, Title VII, and the Long Wait for Federal Protection,” sheds light on federal failures to address discrimination against LGBT+ people in the workplace. Examining an extensive range of legal

sources and news articles, Harbour argues that Title VII's failure to outlaw discrimination against LGBT+ workers has been extremely damaging, and that federal action is often too slow, leaving large populations vulnerable. Importantly, Harbour suggests, "policy cannot supersede organizing and collective bargaining as the focus of the LGBT workers' movement."

The Earlham Historical Journal has been published in print since 2008. This semester is unusual in that our editors and authors were separated by the campus closure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This current, distinctive historical moment aside, the Journal continues to promote outstanding scholarship from undergraduate students. We hope our continued effort can facilitate critical thinking and engagement with history, challenging us to think critically about our past as we look toward the future. In recognition of the importance of this work, we offer this digital edition in place of our traditional printed Journal.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,  
Hannah Lewis and Victoria Maras  
Convening Editors, Spring 2020