

# Forward Editor's Note

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GREG ROBINSON

The third issue of JTAS ushers in an expanded Forward section, both in the number and the diversity of selections, reflecting the amazing growth of the field. The excerpts reprinted in the Forward section, like the original articles we present, fall into multiple categories and follow different models. Still, they fall roughly into two groups.

The first part, encompassing the texts produced by Deborah Cohen, Susan K. Harris, Lisa Rose Mar, Jeanne Campbell Reesman, and Sterling Stuckey, underlines in different ways the historical experience of border crossings, and the impact of foreign influences, especially those of racial “others,” on North American life. Deborah Cohen starts with literal border-crossers, as she takes as her subject the “braceros”—Mexican nationals invited into the United States as guest workers between 1942 and 1964. While previous discussion of braceros has focused primarily on the exploitative labor conditions and racial prejudice they experienced, Cohen centers on the experiences of individuals and what they took away from it, as well as looking at cultural exchange over the border. Susan K. Harris provides an important addition—indeed corrective—to traditional accounts of the Spanish-American War and the United States annexation of the Philippines. When historians have looked at international reaction to the war, they have tended to cite Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden,” inciting and justifying the American takeover of the Islands. Harris, exploring viewpoints from a variety of locations in Latin America and the European continent, and published in languages other than English, demonstrates convincingly that international opinion, as expressed in the press, was in fact predominantly hostile to US imperialism. Lisa Mar examines Chinese immigrant communities in turn-of-the-century Canada through the lens of ethnic power brokers—interpreters, labor bosses, and community leaders. She argues persuasively that Asian North Americans, using transnational networks, were able to adjust and flourish despite discrimination, and even were able to conceal much of their true lives and community culture from the prying eyes of white immigration and other legal authorities. Jeanne Campbell Reesman and Sterling Stuckey present new transnational interpretations of iconic American writers. Reesman studies the

photographs of novelist Jack London in the course of the voyage he took on his boat through the South Pacific. She demonstrates how London's rich visual imagery expressed his broad interests and idiosyncratic racial views. Conversely, Stuckey focuses on Herman Melville, whose well-known writings and connections with the South Pacific have obscured his vital connection with Africa. Stuckey reveals how African culture and rituals shaped Melville's consciousness and helped inspire such works as *Benito Cereno* and *Moby-Dick*.

The second section of the Forward is a mini-symposium, the product of a study on the literature of the field in American history in China undertaken by the US-China Education Trust and edited by Priscilla Roberts. These texts form part of an ongoing project undertaken by the USCET on the state of American Studies in China; more work is still being done in the broad area of literature and culture. In addition to Roberts's introduction, we feature contributions on American diplomatic history by Wang Xiaode and on American history generally by Li Jianming. The articles show the many-faceted nature of writing on United States history in China, and how it has evolved both methodologically and intellectually since the Cold War era, when Chinese scholars worked in isolation from US archives and labored under the strict ideological scrutiny of the Communist Party.

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