

*Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century: Strategies from Latin America*. Katherine Hite and Mark Ungar, eds. Washington, D.C. : Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press / Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978142141012

Katherine Hite and Mark Ungar’s 2013 *Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century: Strategies from Latin America* presents historians with a collection of essays considering the developments in human rights in the Latin American past and present. Organized into three parts, the edited volume reviews the historical context of human rights in Latin American nations, and the changing definitions of and challenges to human rights from the Cold War to the twenty-first century. Part I, “The Human Rights Idea” surveys human rights in three chapters that define concepts used throughout the rest of the book. Part II, “Institutional and Legal Frameworks and the Question of Accountability,” draws out the first of two trajectories laid out by Hite and Ungar in the first chapter, which argues that a shift occurred over time from politically-driven, often anti-authoritarian movements to accountability-centered human rights campaigns. Part III, “Citizens’ Movements and Conceptions of Citizenship,” tackles what Hite and Ungar refer to as the second trajectory of human rights in Latin America: the redefinition of citizenship over time, and the changing relationship between citizens and governments.

This book takes care to define and contextualize the lessons of human rights movements in Latin America in the past and present. Indeed, it is relevant because – rather than in spite – of its broad analytical framework. Drawing from an array of specialties and interests, it explores the intersection of national and international interest groups, international diplomacy, and non-governmental organizations to create a constantly evolving definition of human rights. This approach makes the work of interest to those interested in the fields of international relations, political science, human rights law, and subaltern studies. By taking into account such a

multifaceted perspective, the authors in each chapter underscore the friction created in defining

human rights by economic, social, environmental, and political standards (to name a few broad categories), thus highlighting the conflict, rather than cohesion, that often arose - and continues to arise - among competing interests.

Hite and Ungar's collection captures such variety of perspectives that its material should pique the interest of scholars across fields. For historians in particular, the authors have produced a new lens to examine movements in the context of changing legal norms, power structures, and conceptions of citizenship, that can to a certain degree transcend chronology and geography. This work demonstrates the value of using this lens to contextualize particular moments of political upheaval or international movements, especially against former oppressive, violent regimes.

As previously noted, those interested in a wide range of fields can easily find value in this volume, but world history teachers should especially take note. The students in history classrooms share increasingly less in the collective memory of their professors. Therefore, educators must expand their definition of history to encompass the ever-growing recent past. Freshmen in college today have no memory of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, or September 11, 2001, for that matter. *Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century* demonstrates its enduring utility as a bridge connecting the past and present. The authors place their work in the context of the present as much as the past in chapters on memory-making and via contemporary asides throughout. The book prompts historians and their students to link the past to recent events, which will inevitably constitute historical events for the next generation of students.

*Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century* does not attempt to provide solutions or predictions, but the authors give historians and their students a new means of

understanding human rights in contexts outside the traditional post-World War II Euro-American political landscape. Margaret E. Crahan's epilogue reinforces placement of Latin American human rights into a global context, bringing her commentary into a contemporary analysis. Rather than isolating the Latin American trajectories, Crahan's chapter definitively returns Latin America to a global narrative in which Latin American human rights movements possessed unique attributes, but existed in context of global connections and relationships, the effects of which continue to shape the present. Scholars and students of history should find excellent new material to spark discussion of human rights in the realm of both national and international operations. Moreover, *Sustaining Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century* gives historians a rare opportunity to extend discussions of Latin American Cold War history into present debates about politics, memory, and global encounters. As author Elizabeth Lira points out, "the past is still present," after all.

*Victoria Skelton, Ph.D. student, Auburn University*