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Letter from the Editor

Michael J. Torcello
In his most famous work, *Ab Urbe Condita*, the Roman historian Livy wrote that “in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings.” As a discipline, history encourages both intellectual engagement and academic debate, allowing its students to exchange ideas and theories. Perhaps even more importantly, however, it offers an opportunity to contextualize the lessons of the past, taking away “examples and warnings” applicable to our own society. In keeping with this tradition, the *Penn History Review* continues to dedicate itself to promoting the work of undergraduate historians at the University of Pennsylvania and schools across the nation. Our Fall 2017 edition includes articles that cover subjects such as religious tolerance, racial inequality, academic freedom, and popular protest—all topics that remain vitally important today. We hope that these works provide an enjoyable read, as well as a chance to reflect.

In our first piece, “The promises they heard He had made”: *The Ghost Dance, Wounded Knee, and Assimilation through Christian Orthodoxy*, Justin Estreicher provides a nuanced account of the relationship between the Ghost Dance movement of 1889–90 and the Wounded Knee Massacre of December 1890. Whereas some historians have emphasized the United States government’s desire to prevent a military insurrection and eradicate native religion, his work argues that these approaches are too simplistic. Instead, he uses speeches from spiritual leaders and reports from federal agents to show that the Ghost Dance was widely understood to be theologically Christian in nature. The paper ultimately suggests that the government relied on fear of insurrection as a pretext to use military force, while its true intent
was to impose orthodox Christian worship onto the Lakota people.

The next article, *A War on Two Fronts: Race, Citizenship, and the Segregation of the Blood Supply during World War II*, was written by Joshua Jordan. The work analyzes the controversy surrounding wartime blood segregation, with particular emphasis on the role of the Red Cross. Jordan examines the evolution of the organization’s institutional policies, and he finds that it tried to defend segregation as a “democratic compromise” that reflected divided public opinion. This approach failed, however, as the Red Cross was met with vehement opposition from the NAACP, religious leaders, and labor groups who condemned the policy. As Jordan’s work observes, blood segregation degraded African Americans and also left them feeling unable to assist in their country’s military efforts. Thus, as World War II saw the United States fighting an enemy abroad that promoted ethnic purity, another battle against prejudicial racial ideology was being waged on the home front.

The third paper is Sarah Samuels’s “*An Outstanding and Unusual Contribution*: The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars.” Using a wide variety of primary source documents, she traces the committee’s efforts to place refugee scholars in academic positions throughout the United States. In publicity materials, the committee painted an idyllic image of life in America for these professors. In reality, however, Samuels demonstrates that bigotry and xenophobia often complicated their transitions. Furthermore, she details the complex relationship between refugee scholars and the historically black colleges where they sometimes received appointments. Through case studies of two professors, Julius Lips and Frederick Lehner, her work concludes that scholars’ experiences varied dramatically as they tried to adjust to unfamiliar circumstances.

Our final piece, *Commerce and Conflict: The Knowles Riot of 1747 and Transatlantic Opposition to Impressment*, was authored by Princeton University student Jonathan Feld. He outlines
the underlying causes of the Boston riot that raged for three days in November 1747. Moreover, he situates the incident within the broader context of opposition to impressment across the British Atlantic. In doing so, his work highlights similarities and differences between the Knowles Riot and other contemporaneous uprisings. The Boston mob featured broad social participation, as it brought together people from every realm of society. At the same time, newspapers and pamphlets from the period reveal that a divided intellectual elite attacked impressment on legal grounds and as a violation of natural rights. Thus, the paper argues that the Knowles Riot was unique in many ways but also had ties to a wider movement against impressment.

The editorial board would like to thank a number of people without whom this edition of the PHR would not have been possible. We are particularly indebted to the Penn History Department, which generously provides funding and institutional support for our publication. We are also extremely grateful to Dr. Siyen Fei, the undergraduate chair of the department, and Dr. Yvonne Fabella, the associate director of undergraduate studies. They have both offered invaluable advice and encouragement throughout the editing and publishing process. In addition, we would like to thank the faculty members at Penn and other universities who promoted our publication, as well as all of the students who submitted excellent papers for consideration. We are especially appreciative of the efforts of our contributing authors, who worked patiently and diligently to refine their articles for publication.

Finally, I would like to thank our editors for their exceptionally hard work on this issue of the Penn History Review. Their dedication and commitment have continued to make the PHR a platform for outstanding historical scholarship. It has been a truly enjoyable experience to work with each of them during my time as editor-in-chief. This semester, we are particularly
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fortunate to have added two new editors, Courtney Carpinello and Eric Eisner, who have already made a positive impact on our journal.

Congratulations again to all of the authors and editors who participated in this publication of the *Penn History Review*!

Michael J. Torcello

*Editor-in-Chief*