Law & Social Inquiry (2026), **51**, 608–612
doi:10.1017/lsi.2026.10138

Law& Social Inquiry

BOOK NOTES*

CONSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND HISTORY

De, Rohit, and Ornit Shani. *Assembling India's Constitution: A New Democratic History.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. x + 374. $44.99 cloth. In a departure from dominant approaches that foreground the framing of the Indian Constitution within the Constituent Assembly, Shani and De instead argue that it was shaped by diverse publics across India and beyond. They find multiple, parallel constitution-making processes underway across the subcontinent, highlighting how individuals and groups transformed constitutionalism into a medium of struggle and a tool for transformation. They conclude that the deep sense of ownership the public assumed over the constitution became pivotal to the formation, legitimacy and endurance of India's democracy against arduous challenges and many odds.

Lawrence, Ben. *In the Shadow of the Constitution: The Micropolitis of Constitutional Contestations in Cambodia.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xvi + 271. $140.00 cloth. Drawing on ethnographic insights and case-studies in Cambodia, Lawrence provides a socio-legal account of constitutional practice under authoritarian rule and sheds light on how otherwise overlooked actors engage with constitutional language and assert constitutional agency. The Cambodian constitution is often dismissed as irrelevant, but its promises, principles and specific provisions matter deeply, both to the politically engaged and to ordinary people. This book highlights how many everyday contestations – over politics, religion and culture – take place in the shadow of the Cambodian constitution.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Behnken, Brian D. *Brown and Blue: Mexican Americans, Law Enforcement, and Civil Rights in the Southwest, 1935-2025.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2025. Pp. xviii + 332. $36.95 paper. Looking primarily at Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas, this history of Mexican American interactions with the criminal justice system finds that violent, often racist acts committed by police against Mexican American people sparked protests demanding reform, and criminal justice authorities sometimes responded positively to these protests with measures such as recruiting Mexican Americans into local police forces and altering training procedures at police academies. Behnken concludes that the struggle for police reform played a central

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https://doi.org/10.1017/lsi.2026.10138 Published online by Cambridge University Press

role in the twentieth-century Chicano movement and that its relevance continues to the present.

Burch, Melissa. *The Criminal Record Complex: Risk, Race, and the Struggle for Work in America.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2025. Pp. viii + 231. $32.00 cloth. Chronicling the daily interactions of hiring managers, workforce development professionals, and job-seekers with felony convictions in Southern California, Burch finds that discrimination against applicants with criminal records is shaped by a set of institutions, organizations, and industries that promote the idea that people with criminal records are dangerous to employ. Despite this reach, however, she discovers that small business owners tend to put less value on background checks, trusting their own judgment.

Feldman, Yuval. *Can the Public be Trusted? On the Promise and Perils of Voluntary Compliance.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xxv + 277. $45.00 paper; available as open access on Cambridge Core. Drawing on behavioral science, law, and public policy research, Feldman explores why voluntary compliance, despite often yielding superior and more sustainable outcomes, is not more central to policymaking. Through empirical analysis of policy implementation in COVID-19 response, tax compliance, and environmental regulation, the book seeks a comprehensive framework for understanding how cultural diversity, technological change, and institutional trust shape voluntary cooperation.

Mancina, Peter. *On the Side of ICE: Policing Immigrants in a Sanctuary State.* New York: NYU Press, 2025. Pp. xxviii + 256. $30.00 cloth. While to date, the ethnography of policing has been produced from participant observation with the police in "ride-alongs" during patrol work and in jails and the examination of official documents like police reports, this study of policing in New Jersey uses transcription of police body worn camera (BWC) video footage in an effort to provide immersive, ethnographic thick description narratives of instances of local police officers assisting ICE. He concludes that even police in sanctuary jurisdictions, which explicitly label themselves as immigrant-friendly, are nonetheless still informally multiplying ICE's forces through voluntary cooperation.

Rowen, Jamie. *Worthy of Justice: The Politics of Veterans Treatment Courts in Practice.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2025. Pp. x + 262. $28.00 paper. This study of three 'problem solving' Veterans Treatment Courts (VTCs) across the US finds that the politics of crime and the politics of welfare increasingly intersect and, together, construct classes of Americans who are "worthy" of benefits. VTCs benefit from the availability of extensive free medical and social services through the Department of Veterans Affairs; Rowen argues that these services flow not from what veterans have done but from who they are. She takes this specific form of problem-solving court as lens for examining broader social inequalities in the criminal legal system.

Strange, Carolyn. *Fatal Confession: A Girl's Murder, a Man's Execution, and the Fitton Case.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2025. Pp. xi + 293. $32.95 paper. When the body of thirteen-year-old Linda Lampkin was found, raped and strangled, on Toronto's industrial waterfront in 1956, Robert Fitton was charged with the crime. This book

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is an analysis of that violent encounter and the ensuing legal and political entanglements, which ended in the hanging of Fitton despite the jury's and judge's recommendation of mercy. Weaving politics and culture into legal history and biography, Strange unravels a case that ultimately lent momentum to the death penalty's abolition in Canada and opposition to masculinist legal interpretations of sexual consent.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Xiong, Hao. *The Meditation System of China from an Interdisciplinary Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xiv + 280. £105.00 cloth. Xiong's study of mediation in grassroots China seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of China's mediation practices by blending cultural, social, and legal analyses with detailed case descriptions from fieldwork to produce a richer, more nuanced understanding of Chinese legal culture.

JUDICIAL POWER AND DECISION MAKING

Squatrito, Theresa. *Judging under Constraint: The Politics of Deference by International Courts.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xviii + 357. $140.00 cloth. This book examines deference to state exercise of authority by international courts, arguing that deference is explained by a court's strategic space. Drawing on an empirical analysis of original data from the East African Court of Justice, Caribbean Court of Justice, and African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights, Squatrito finds that robust safeguards to independence and politically fragmented memberships lend legitimacy to courts and make collective state resistance infeasible, combining to minimize deference.

LAW AND EDUCATION

Fountain Jr., Aaron G. *High School Students Unite! Teen Activism, Education Reform, and FBI Surveillance in Postwar America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2025. Pp. xvii + 380. $34.95 paper. Inspired by civil rights and antiwar movements, high school activists in the 1960s and 1970s demanded a voice in their education by organizing sit-ins, walkouts, and strikes, in both major cities such as San Francisco and Chicago and smaller towns such as Jonesboro, Georgia. Through oral histories and FBI records, Fountain finds that these teenagers became powerful agents of change, advocating for constitutional rights and influencing school reform. Ironically, the modernization of school security, including police presence, was partly a response to these student-led movements.

LAW AND HEALTH

Ahmed, Aziza. *Risk and Resistance: How Feminists Transformed the Law and Science of AIDS.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xv + 224. $30.00 paper. In the early years of the AIDS crisis in the US, scientific and public health experts questioned whether women were likely to contract HIV in significant numbers and rolled out a response that effectively excluded women. Ahmed argues that it was the work of

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feminist lawyers and activists who altered the legal and public health response to the epidemic; they and their allies took to the streets, legislatures, administrative agencies, and courts to demand the recognition of women in the HIV response.

Bernstein, Anita. *Making the Best of Semen: Prospects for Law and Regulation.* New York: NYU Press, *2025.* Pp. ii + 258. $39.00 cloth. Bernstein argues that despite extensive religious, medical, sociopolitical, familial, psychological regulation of sexuality, semen is uniquely overlooked. She views semen as the quintessential hazardous substance, a fluid that delivers unique benefit along with unique risk, but one that until now nobody has set out to control. She lays out the problem of unmentionability that shields semen from controls and documents the upheavals for which this substance is responsible.

Gordon, Emily, and Charles Mitchell, and Ian Williams, eds. *Epidemics and the Law from Plague to the Present.* New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025. Pp. vii + 271. $130.00 cloth. Contributors to Gordon, Mitchell, and Williams' collection focus first on regulatory responses such as the quarantine laws and border policies in the eighteenth century, the framing of 'disease' in the Colonial Immigration Acts in the nineteenth century and the ethics of public health in the twentieth century in Great Britain. They then consider developments in broader legal doctrine, including the centralization of labor regulation in the wake of the black death, property disputes about leper houses, pest houses and fever hospitals, and the prosecution of medical professionals for disease transmission in 19th century England.

LAW AND LABOR

Das Acevedo, Deepa. *The War on Tenure.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. viii + 276. $30.00 paper. Das Acevedo challenges the common belief that tenure is only important for the protection of academic freedom. Instead, she argues that the security and autonomy provided by tenure are also essential to the performance of work that students, administrators, parents, politicians, and taxpayers value. She holds that tenure exists on a spectrum of comparable employment contracts, debunks the notion that tenure warps the incentives of professors, and concludes that the job security tenure provides is not nearly as unusual, undesirable, or unwarranted as critics claim.

LAW AND RACE

Adediran, Atinuke O., *Disclosureland: How Corporate Words Constrain Racial Progress.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2026. Pp. xx + 197. $39.99 cloth. After the 2020 murder of George Floyd, many US companies issued public statements to align with racial justice causes and protect their reputations from claims that their practices perpetuate inequality. Adediran argues that this sort of corporate rhetoric – whether omitting past involvement in racial inequality, presenting race-conscious disclosures as evidence of action, or retreating under pressure – limits meaningful racial progress. Even when companies pledged to hire and promote people of color or fund racial equity causes, those pledges often served to narrow the scope of corporate responsibility and preserve corporate financial interests while appearing responsive.

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LAW AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Goodale, Mark, and Olaf Zenker, eds. *Reckoning with Law in Excess: Mobilization, Confrontation, Refusal.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025. Pp. xiv + 303. $44.99 paper; available as Open Access on Cambridge Core. Contributors to Goodale and Zenker's volume examine a wide range of case studies in which social movements pursue justice and social change within, against, and beyond the law, seeking to offer a ground-breaking approach to understanding the relationship between law and social and political transformation. The interdisciplinary research at the heart of the volume examines patterns in the ways in which law and legality are invested with heightened importance during certain historical moments, a process of over-loading that most often gives way to disenchantment with the ultimate limits of law.

RIGHTS/EQUALITY UNDER LAW

Adams, Eric M., and Jordan Stranger-Ross. *Challenging Exile: Japanese Canadians and the Wartime Constitution.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2025. Pp. xix + 360. $34.95 paper. Adams and Stranger-Ross investigates the origins, administration, litigation, and aftermath of a proposed exile of Japanese Canadians. They share the stories of resilience of those who faced it, and they analyze the constitutional framework of the court case in which lawyers and judges grappled with the meaning of citizenship, race, and rights at a time of change in Canadian law and politics.

SOCIOLEGAL THEORY

Motta, Marco. *Life in the Cracks: Law, Violence, and Resistance in Haiti*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2025. Pp. xxiii + 297. $35.00 paper, available from the publisher on an open-access basis. Motta argues that in a contemporary context marked by international interference, global capitalism, and state collapse, Haitians face complex challenges that are largely ignored and misunderstood. By not taking for granted the places where the law appears, he asks legal anthropology to confront questions beyond law-making and law-application, dispute resolution, and social order, as he explores what it means to endure violence partly engendered by the law, and to live up to one's disappointment with the law itself.

Cite this article: (2026). 'BOOK NOTES'. *Law & Social Inquiry* **51**, 608–612. https://doi.org/10.1017/lsi.2026.10138

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