

“Human Rights, Social Change, and History”

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Abstract presented at the 2009 Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, Columbia University, New York, December 10-11, 2009 for Roundtable 3: “What Works? What types of social change efforts show promise in reducing violent conflict and humiliation while upholding the dignity of all people.”

Jean Quataert brings to this discussion insights from the new global history and activist scholarship. Over the last fifteen years, historians increasingly (and Quataert by original training is a 19th century German women’s historian) have moved away from national- and territorial-centered history and focus on new methods and questions to explore the nature of human interconnections. Global history starts by positing the fundamental interconnectedness of human history in the past. It tests various methodologies, including transnational, gender, interregional ties and spatial connections between local and global units that lie at the heart of this new analytical framework. From her own recent book into the historical unfolding of the Human Rights system in the long twentieth century (*Advocating Dignity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), she shows what historians might offer to the discussion of both the possibilities for as well as the impediments to equitable social change. She looks forward to extending the historical perspective to these interdisciplinary dialogues.