

Contingent Magazine: History Is For Everyone

Posted on November 16, 2021 by Marc Reyes

As an editor for *Contingent Magazine*, I love receiving a great pitch and thinking, “I want this.” Or when the editorial team—Erin Bartram, Bill Black, and myself—greenlights a batch of pitches, and we get to tell folks they will be writing for us. Maybe most of all, I love paying our writers for their labor. Knowing the hard work it takes to produce one essay has reinforced that writing is a job and the effort must be compensated. It is especially important to pay our writers because they are all outside the tenure-track professoriate. They work as adjunct instructors, independent scholars, archivists, and museum and national park staff, often without funds for their research and writing.

For those unfamiliar *Contingent Magazine*, it debuted in January 2019. It is [a non-profit history magazine](#) geared to everyone interested in history. Whether your work involves interpreting the past or you enjoy history, *Contingent* is for you. The magazine operates on three principles: (1) history is for everyone; (2) every way of doing history is worthwhile; (3) historians should be paid for their work. We don’t “pay” our writers in exposure; we pay them in money. Landlords and banks typically don’t care if your piece went viral or has been cited by other scholars. We believe that history publications should and must move to a payment model and compensate writers for their work. *Lady Science*, *Hazine*, and *Insurrect!* all pay their contributors. Even the American Historical Association announced that its print magazine, *Perspectives on History*, would start paying writers in fall 2021. The more publications that pay, the better for all historians, especially scholars in contingent positions.

If you are a LAWCHA member and already read us, thank you for your support. If you haven’t checked out *Contingent* yet, we have articles of interest to historians of labor and the working class. In March 2021, we published Josh Carmony’s “[Ground Operations](#),” which tells the story of a student coming to understand the precarious employment of his favorite professor. The student realizes that one under-enrolled course could mean the difference between his professor having income or not. The experience hits home for Carmony, a ground operations worker for a major airline who has seen low-paid airline contract workers with few or no benefits, or any opportunity to turn part-time work into more reliable, full-time work. Rebecca Brenner Graham’s feature, “[No Refuge](#),” discusses

how Frances Perkins pushed the U.S. Labor Department to craft a welcoming refugee policy in the 1930s. And in "[An Interrupted Journey](#)," Ruth Almy examines South Asian migrants, particularly Punjabi Sikhs, who settled in Canada's western coasts and became pivotal to the area's sawmill industry. In addition to pieces like these, *Contingent* publishes research regarding unionization in the academy. Alex Parry's "[Organize or Perish](#)" illuminates the graduate student union drive at Johns Hopkins University and its effort to secure financial resources and safer conditions in the COVID-19 pandemic.

We look forward to publishing more articles by LAWCHA members who are not on the tenure track. *Contingent* also publishes book reviews, and we strive to publish reviews written by contingent scholars, who are reviewing works by contingent scholars. Scholars who don't have the university resources of tenured faculty or the option to take book leave continue to produce incredible historical scholarship. They write manuscripts while juggling heavy teaching loads and student advising, along with their daily lives and households. If you have a pitch about labor or working-class history, please send it our way (contingentinc@gmail.com). As someone who checks the *Contingent* inbox every day, rest assured that we will give it serious consideration.

Erin, Bill, and I are proud of *Contingent* and what it means to our readers and supporters. We believe in the possibilities for this publishing model—one that centers payment to writers for their work. After two and a half years, we have only scratched the surface. There is more we want to do, such as experimenting with forms of historical storytelling. Everything we have been able to do, and will continue to do, is because of our readers and donors. I encourage LAWCHA members to read *Contingent* and please become a donor. A recurring donation as little as \$3/month unlocks all the bonus content we produce, but more importantly, keeps *Contingent* running and doing something we love: paying historians for their labor.

Marc Reyes is an editor for *Contingent* and the organization's treasurer. He is also a History Ph.D. candidate at the University of Connecticut, where he studies 20th-century foreign relations, with a focus on the United States and India, development, and technology. A Fulbright-Nehru alum, Marc is finishing his dissertation, a political and cultural study of India's atomic energy and nuclear weapons programs.

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