



CSLS SPEAKER SERIES

Monday, February 11, 2019

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Under the Starry Flag: How a Band of Irish Americans Joined the Fenian Revolt and Sparked a Crisis over Citizenship

(Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, Oct. 2018)

In 1867 forty Irish American freedom fighters, outfitted with guns and ammunition, sailed to Ireland to join the effort to end British rule. Yet they never got a chance to fight. British authorities arrested them for treason as soon as they landed, sparking an international conflict that dragged the United States and Britain to the brink of war. *Under the Starry Flag* recounts this gripping legal saga, a prelude to today's immigration battles.

The Fenians, as the freedom fighters were called, claimed American citizenship. British authorities disagreed, insisting that naturalized Irish Americans remained British subjects. Following in the wake of the Civil War, the Fenian crisis dramatized anew the idea of citizenship as an inalienable right, as natural as freedom of speech and religion. The captivating trial of these men illustrated the stakes of extending those rights to arrivals from far-flung lands. The case of the Fenians led to landmark treaties and laws acknowledging the right of exit. The U.S. Congress passed the Expatriation Act of 1868, which guarantees the right to renounce one's citizenship, in the same month it granted citizenship to former American slaves.

The small ruckus created by these impassioned Irish Americans provoked a human rights revolution that is not, even now, fully realized. Placing Reconstruction-era debates over citizenship within a global context, *Under the Starry Flag* raises important questions about citizenship and immigration.

Excerpts from *Under the Starry Flag* are available in hard copy at the Center.

PLACE Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Avenue
TIME **12:45 – 2:00pm**. Coffee and water provided. Bag lunches welcome.
INFO <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/>
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