

# Selma Moidel Smith Student Essay Winners

The California Supreme Court Historical Society (CSCHS) invites all students (and recent graduates) interested in, or working in California legal history (not just the history of California courts) to compete in its annual nationwide student writing competition. Papers may include elements of digital humanities and may also be coauthored.

Prizes of \$5,000 for 1st place, \$2,500 for 2nd, and \$1,000 for 3rd will be awarded to the best papers addressing California history, broadly considered.

Papers should be at least 7,500 and preferably not more than 12,000 words, including footnotes and other explanatory matter. The competition is open to students and recent graduates in history and/or law, provided that the author(s) did not have full-time academic employment when the paper is written.

Submissions also must not have been published or accepted for publication elsewhere, and the authors are responsible for obtaining permission for any photographs/illustrations, which must be captioned. Winners will likely receive an offer to publish in *California Legal History*, assuming compliance with our publication's editorial and technical standards.<sup>1</sup> The brief descriptions below of the winners' papers are abridged versions of those provided by the administrators of the competition, Professors Laura Kalman (UCSB), Sarah Barringer Gordon (University of Pennsylvania) & Stuart Banner (UCLA).

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction is abbreviated from the [Selma Moidel Smith Student Writing Competition: Call for Papers Addressing California Legal History, 2025](#).

Winners in 2025 are:

- Keaton “Kit” Beyer, B.A., UC Berkeley (2024), a student at the Yale Law School, won first place with an article, “Immigration and Invasion in the California Constitution, 1849–1879.” Beyer examines constitutional discourse in nineteenth-century California to shed light on a question of considerable current importance: When, if ever, can immigration constitute an “invasion?”
- Ilani Nurick, a law student at Yale Law School, won second place with an article, “Unratified: California and the Forgotten Original Understanding of the Fourteenth Amendment.” Nurick’s study of California’s ratification debates in the late 1860s over the Fourteenth Amendment helps explain how California became one of the last states to ratify, in 1859.
- AJ Stone Jonathan, JD 24’, UC Berkeley School of Law, a MLIS student at San Jose State University, won third place with an article, “The Woman Witkin.” This paper enables us to see the historian at work. By turning a gendered lens on legal giant Bernard Witkin, AJ Stone Jonathan reveals the equally formidable force of Alba Blanche Pichetto Kuchman Witkin. Witkin’s wife, and then his widow, ensured the maintenance of his legacy. As a publicist and philanthropist, she proved more effective than her talented but irascible husband.

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