

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

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Phi Alpha Theta's mission is to promote the study of history through the encouragement of research, good teaching, publication and the exchange of learning and ideas among historians. The organization seeks to bring students, teachers and writers of history together for intellectual and social exchanges, which promote and assist historical research and publication by our members in a variety of ways.

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Original cover art "World War II Plane Dropping Ammunition for the Chinese Nationalists" by Brittany Mondragon, medium: acrylic on canvas, Copyright © 2021

History in the Making

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History in the Making

Introduction

Lived experience alters the questions historians ask, foreclosing some research agendas while inspiring new ones. The sensitivity of historians to the lived moment is particularly visible at times of deep and significant historical change such as the world is witnessing now.

– Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*.¹

Welcome to California State University, San Bernardino's annual history journal. As with all of our previous editions, students are responsible for both the contents and editing of the journal. The editorial board believes that the fourteenth edition of *History in the Making* demonstrates the knowledge and abilities of the authors and editors, in addition to the diverse subjects that make history truly complex and pluralistic. During the turbulent times of COVID-19 and large-scale social unrest in the United States, we—as scholars and historians—find new and imperative ways to approach the past. Our hope is that this journal will be both informative and entertaining, and will remind readers of the importance of history.

This year's journal features four full-length articles, six in-memorial pieces, a state of the field section, two history in the making articles, a photographic notes from the archives piece, and a travels through history article, as well as eight reviews or analyses. Topics range from female rulers in dynastic China to the

¹ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 271.

importance of lighthouses in the history of California and the shifting methodology in the field of environmental history.

Many of the articles in the fourteenth edition of *History in the Making* recognize the importance and complexity of history and history writing. From the full-length articles to the book reviews and in-memoriam pieces, the works included within this edition acknowledge the need to incorporate marginalized voices and perspectives when reckoning with the past. Five out of the six in-memoriam pieces explore the influence of historic figures, both from and for marginalized groups, some of which include women, Black people, and Indigenous communities in the United States. On the other hand, the remaining in-memoriam article for Rush Limbaugh reminds us of the disparity between political and social views that continues to divide Americans.

Four of the articles included in this year's edition explore the complexities of World War II and the Holocaust by centering often overlooked and ignored perspectives. Author Jessie Williams' article, "Sexual Violence Against Women During the Holocaust: Inside and Outside the Extermination Camps," challenges the "hierarchy of suffering" present in dominant narratives of the Holocaust that ignores and represses the sexual violence that women experienced under Nazi occupation. The book review for Rana Mitter's *China's Good War: How World War II is Shaping a New Nationalism* challenges the Western-centered history of World War II and the unquestioned narratives of United States international dominance. The authors highlight the ways the government of China has drawn upon the memory of World War II to assert itself in the global international order.

Our cover image this year is a painting by journal editor and author Brittany Mondragon titled, "World War II Plane Dropping Ammunition for the Chinese Nationalists." It was inspired by the photograph, "An American plane drops ammunition for Chinese

troops in October 1944,” from the Bettmann Corbis archives.² The painting intends to disrupt Western-centered perspectives of history, beginning with World War II. As a whole, this year’s journal embraces the multiplicities and complexities of history.

Our first full-length article, “The Weight of Silk: An Exploratory Account into the Developing Relations between Byzantium and China,” discusses the geopolitical impact of the Silk Road in relation to the rise of the Byzantium Empire and the diplomatic interaction between Byzantium and China. Jeanna Lee examines how the commodity chain of silk justified Byzantium’s claim as the continuation of the Roman empire and how the controversial silkworm scandal (mid-500 CE) led to the decline of the commodity chain.

Our second article is Jennifer Duke’s “Troubled Memories: Researching Holocaust Testimony.” Duke analyzes the five types of memory (deep, anguished, humiliated, tainted, and unheroic) expressed by Holocaust survivors. Drawing on the works of Lawrence Langer, Robert Lay Shifton, and Viktor Frankl, it attempts to better understand the psychological and physical implications of the Holocaust beyond that of an impersonal and detached event of the past.

Our third article, is Jessie Williams’ “Sexual Violence Against Women During the Holocaust: Inside and Outside the Extermination Camps.” The fourth and final full-length article, “From Concubine to Ruler of China: The Lives of Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi,” focuses on the only two women rulers of China: Emperor Wu Zetian (r.624–705) and Empress Dowager Cixi (d.1835–1908). Author Hannah Ferla examines how these two women used opportunity and ambition to

² Pankaj Mishra, “Land And Blood: The Origins of the Second World War in Asia,” *The New Yorker* (blog), November 17, 2013, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/11/25/land-and-blood>.

rise from concubine to ruler where they gained full control over all of China. Rather than evaluating how effective they were as rulers, Ferla examines their ability to overcome the obstacles of patriarchal Chinese society.

This year's edition of the journal remembers the lives of six prominent figures who passed within this last year. In addition to the aforementioned in memoriam for Rush Limbaugh by David Swistock, John Neilson, and Devin Gillen, co-authors Celeste Nunez and Jacquelyne Anton reflect on the life, career, and legacy of late United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Next, Sarah Shumate writes in remembrance of Viola Smith, one of American's first professional female drummers whose Swing and Jazz musical career launched during the 1920s. In addition to these prominent female figures, Jennessa Howard remembers the accomplishments and life of Indigenous leader Marshall McKay. In the fourth piece, Jose Castro discusses the accomplishments of Dr. Mario Molina, a Mexican chemist who contributed much to the field and won the 1995 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his research in atmospheric chemistry. Next, Cecelia Smith explores the life of John Lewis, the former United States Congress Representative from Georgia and lifelong civil rights activist.

This year's journal reintroduces a "State of the Field" section that reflects on current methodological and theoretical shifts within historiography. "A Natural Arch in Environmental Historiography" by Joseph Esparza examines the state of environmental history after the late Alfred W. Crosby's pivotal contributions to the interdisciplinary field. Esparza terms the methodological shifts "The Crosby Effect."

The "History in the Making" section consists of two contributions this year. "Barbara Johns: A Lasting Legacy in National Statuary" by Hannah Knight brings to light the story of fourteen-year-old Civil Rights activist Barbara Johns, who led a mass school-walkout in 1951. Knight explores how Barbara John's achievements are

finally being highlighted with the installation of a statue at the National Statuary, which will replace the former statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. In “How Museums Have Adapted to Life During COVID-19,” Erika Kelley provides an overview of the strategies museums are utilizing during the COVID-19 closures and the challenges each museum is confronting. By conducting personal interviews with museum staff, Kelley compares how the Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East, and the British Museum have adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The “Notes from the Archives” section includes a photographic essay of World War II as told through private memory and family photographs. Authors, Brittany Mondragon, Cecelia Smith, Jacquelyne Anton, and Sarah West seek to disrupt unquestioned and supposed universal national narratives of World War II by focusing on personal stories and private memories.

In the “Travels Through History” section, Cecelia Smith provides an exploratory report of the lighthouses dotting the California coastline. Smith gives a brief history of several memorable Californian lighthouses and reflects on their turn from utilitarian beacons to historical monuments. Accompanying her overviews of the lighthouses are a series of photographs, giving the piece a rather welcoming and familiar tone.

In the last section of this year’s edition of *History in the Making*, we have eight reviews consisting of recent film and book releases. Fred De Leon begins the literature review portion with his review of the book *The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost Its Treasures*. Author Brittany Mondragon discusses the history of criminalization and demonization of the Caribbean religion Obeah in her comparative review of *Obeah, Race and Racism: Caribbean Witchcraft in the English Imagination* and *Experiments with Power: Obeah and the Remaking of Religion in Trinidad*.

History in the Making

Alexander Serrano reviews *Vernacular Industrialism in China: Local Innovation and Translated Technologies in the Making of a Cosmetics Empire, 1900–1940*. Josefina Pettit begins the film review section by discussing the 2020 film *Mulan* and its transformation since the original sixth-century poem, “The Ballad of Mulan.” Author Moises Gonzalez provides a review of the film *The Trial of the Chicago 7* (2020) and Erika Kelley returns to this year’s edition of the journal with a review of the film *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb* (2020). The journal ends with a review of the film *Ya no estoy aquí (I’m No Longer Here)* (2020). Author Jose Castro provides a vivid description of cumbia and its importance in Latin America.

Jacquelyne R. Anton and Angel Rivas
Chief Editors

Acknowledgements

We would like to begin by thanking the authors and editors for all of their hard work and dedication. Due to their commitment and passion for the diverse subjects contained within, we are proud to present the largest edition of *History in the Making* thus far. This journal would not be possible if not for the meticulous historical research provided by the authors themselves. We thank those who continue to submit their original research to the journal—without you, such timely and thoughtful editions would not be possible. In addition, the editorial board’s attentive one-on-one work the authors continues to bring the pieces to their greatest potential.

We are especially grateful for the tireless diligence and passion of our faculty advisors, Dr. Jeremy Murray and Dr. Tiffany Jones. Dr. Murray, working closely with the editorial board over the course of fifteen weeks, ensured everyone brought their best work to the table, both author and editor alike. While it is a student-run publication, it would not have been possible without Dr. Murray’s and Dr. Jones’s fantastic depth of knowledge on the editing and publishing process. We also give special thanks to Laura Sickelsteel and her colleagues in CSUSB Printing Services for their continued work with the *History in the Making* series. Moreover, we thank the outstanding faculty members of the Department of History, not only for their dedication to history but also for their guidance and support, especially with the difficulties of this past year.

Lastly, we thank everyone who has supported the faculty, editors, and authors during this process—only through their collective efforts were we able to produce this journal.

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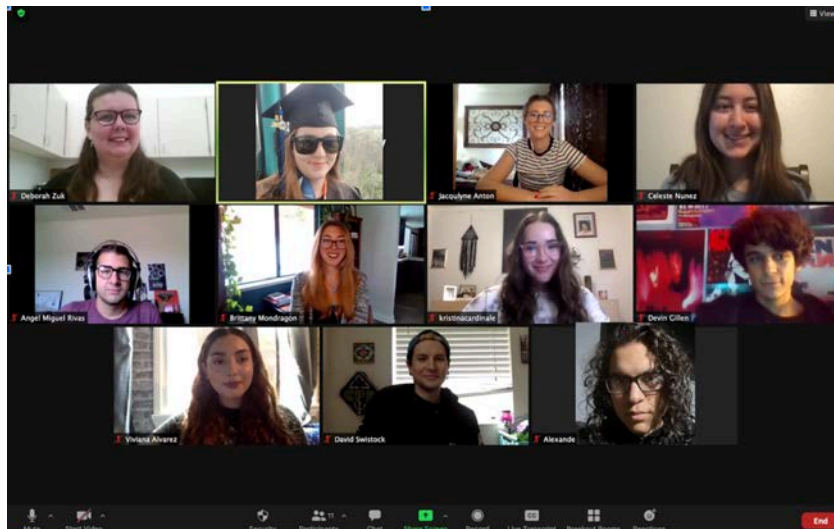
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Top row from left: Deborah Zuk, Megan Kyriss, Jacquelyne R.
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Middle row from left: Angel Rivas, Brittany Mondragon, Kristina
Cardinale, Devin Gillen

Bottom row from left: Viviana Alvarez, David Swistock,
Alexander Serrano

Not pictured: Jean Martinez

History in the Making

Articles

The Weight of Silk: An Exploratory Account into the Developing Relations between Byzantium and China

By Jeanna Lee

Abstract: History has repeatedly proven that the nation, country, or region that controls the most key raw materials will dominate the surrounding global networks, be they economic, diplomatic, or political. When narrowing this focus to ancient Eurasian cultures, there are two obvious global powers: The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) in the West and the Chinese Empire in the East (the Han Dynasty). While the scholarly independent research conducted on these powers is incredibly rich, what is understood about their interactions is limited and constantly evolving. Evidence explained later in this article shows that there was little more than an awareness of one another. Despite this, there are a rich number of parallels between these two powers concerning politics, diplomacy, and the general trajectory of their development. This minimal relationship and how it influenced the modern division of the East and West will be explored using trade goods traveling on the Silk Road (130 BCE–1453 CE), primarily silk and foreign coins used in burial rituals. The Silk Road consists of a vibrant history that eventually culminated in an unprecedented event of international industrial espionage. The often-overlooked affair, referred to as the Byzantine Silk Scandal (mid-sixth century), follows the exposure of the carefully guarded Chinese silk production, which ended their monopoly held for multiple millennia. This article will recount the context needed to

understand the magnitude of this event while exploring and explaining its significance.

Few historical events conjure the breathtaking reverie accompanied by the mere mention of the Silk Road (130 BCE–1453 CE): the sunset set against a blistering desert, a singular line of camels topped with rugs and spices. While the reality is oftentimes far more subtle with its dramatizations, there are occasions when the accepted truth genuinely does a disservice to its subject. In the case of the Silk Road, the complexities of such an intricate and historical network are often neglected in favor of its cinematic and exotic nature. The Silk Road was an ancient trade network formally established by the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) that operated until the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922 CE) invaded Byzantium (395–1453 CE), the Eastern Roman Empire, and severed its connection to the West. However, Europe became accustomed to this mercantile relation where, as historian Will Durant writes, “Italy enjoyed an ‘unfavorable’ balance of trade—cheerfully [buying] more than she sold.”¹ After the world became connected in this way, it could not be undone. The end of this traditional trade route simply led merchants to pursue trade through new means, resulting in the Age of Discovery during the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, which is often credited for the connectivity of the modern world.

The romanticized depiction of the Silk Road, which bears some resemblance of truth, is often revered because of its supposed exoticism and removal from Western culture. Those familiar with Edward Said’s *Orientalism* may be acquainted with the concept of *orientalism*, which identifies and challenges the inherent Western bias towards Eastern cultures. As Said states,

What we must respect and try to grasp is the sheer knitted together strength of Orientalist discourse, its

¹ Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ: The Story of Civilization, Volume III* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 3.

very close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions, and its redoubtable durability. Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many rations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture.²

The modern West's stereotypical, orientalized conception of the Silk Road does not accurately acknowledge its true extent and significance. Not only was this trade route a means of economic and creative exchange, but it also impacted political, religious, technological, ideological, and other fundamental transcontinental dialogues and developments. Historically, there has been a relegation of the East in Western culture and history, despite its remarkable prominence and involvement in the progression of the modern West. The Silk Road itself is a representation and reminder of the connectedness of these two seemingly polarized worlds.

Since there is only one documented encounter of direct interaction between Rome and China, the most significant assets for analysis are the commodities themselves. By tracing specific objects, silk and coins being the most useful, it is possible to recreate the relationship between these two great empires. Rome's acquisition of luxury goods was not unique, but the indispensable symbolism that silk represented made the material a commercial priority. Alternatively, coins have unique properties in funeral assemblies and in private collections, which provides more

² Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 17.

archaeological evidence for interactions between China and Eastern Rome.

The Afro-Eurasian joint venture that is the Silk Road documents the economic, diplomatic, political, and cultural communications between the Romans and the Chinese, which is seen through the commodity chains of silk and coinage. Both societies serve as interesting case studies themselves, but there also exists an opportunity to document the historical evolution of relations between the East and West. In the age of modernity, the social climate shared between the Western and Eastern world is more divided than ever before, which is why there has never been a greater urgency for this line of study. The unification of the East and West through trade continues to be explored as a means to expand prominence, as seen in the contemporary Chinese-led Belt and Road Initiative (2016), also called the New Silk Road.³ These developments strive to replicate the prestige and notability accomplished during the original Silk Road era, displaying the geopolitical importance of this transcontinental collaboration.

The Hou Hanshu and Roman-Chinese Relations: Societal Beginnings to 166 CE

When studying China and Byzantium alongside one another, there is an academic challenge because, while they were not always simultaneous with one another in development, significant chronological events often overlapped.⁴ In China, the Shang Dynasty (c.1600–1046 BCE) was the first ruling dynasty documented in Chinese records, although the Chinese empire was formally unified from five separate states in 221 BCE under the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BCE). Tradition states that the city of

³ United States Congress, “The New Silk Road Strategy: Implications for Economic Development in Central Asia: July 31, 2013, Briefing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe” (Washington: Commission on Security Cooperation in Europe, 2015).

⁴ Raoul McLaughlin, *Rome and the Distant East: Trade Routes to the Ancient Lands of Arabia, India and China*, (London: Continuum, 2010).

Rome was formed in 753 BCE, although this is derived from the myth of Romulus and Remus.⁵ In 330 CE, Emperor Constantine (272–337 CE) founded a “second Rome” in the East, referred to as Byzantium in modernity, which relocated Rome’s capital to what would become Constantinople.⁶

Fairly reputable and extensive documents exist for both empires, but oftentimes historical significance and accepted ideology fluctuate between cultures, influencing what is ultimately recorded. Further, it can be challenging to separate the impossible amount of coincidental similarities, where nearly identical events were happening simultaneously despite their lack of direct contact. China and Rome were of comparable geographic sizes at their height and they each dominated their individual landscapes, at times laying separate claims to the rest of the world. They also relied on agrarian, monetized economies.⁷ Even portions of their eventual downfall shared resemblances, where they both lost half of their empire (the West in Rome and the North in China) to “barbarian” forces.⁸ They both generally relied on centralized governments. Furthermore, there were distinct and powerful classes of elites, and conquest was considered a fundamental element of the empires.

Despite their resemblances, both empires had their own unique challenges. Topography and landscape are crucial elements to recognize when studying society because there is usually some

⁵ Romulus and Remus, two twin brothers, are traditionally credited as the mythological founders of Rome.

⁶ Constantinople was renamed Istanbul after the Ottoman Invasion in 1453 CE.

⁷ John D. Durand, “Population Statistics of China, A.D. 2–1953,” *Population Studies* 13, no. 3 (1960): 216; Walter Scheidel, “A Model of Real Income Growth in Roman Italy,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alta Geschichte* 56, no. 3 (2007): 324. The individual geographic landscapes were referred to as *orbis terrarum* and *tianxia*, respectively. Around 2 CE, the number of people in China is recorded to be 59.5 million compared to the 60–75 million that are estimated for Rome.

⁸ “Barbarian” refers to South Asian nomadic Steppe tribes and the Ottoman Empire.

reflection of their innermost values of the environment. Cultures often base their beliefs on the specific attributes they interact with regularly and this can vary quite drastically depending on where a culture is physically located.⁹ Unsurprisingly, the environment greatly influenced the development of both regions. While China and Rome shared a relatively temperate climate, their topography required extremely different responses. Rome's position in the bustling Mediterranean fueled communication, migration, and trade. In contrast, although China is not land-locked by any means, this much larger country consists of more isolated valleys and mountain ranges, with the Himalaya mountains in the southwest, the Gobi Desert to the north, and the Central Asian deserts to the west.¹⁰ This geography influenced the development of trade, settlements, and communication, and explains why there was little interaction between both empires. Neither needed to seek materials far outside of their traditional neighbors because of the regular access to variously wealthy trading partners by land and sea. However, this changed after the invention of silk and the creation of the Silk Road, which indirectly connected the two empires for the first time.

Throughout their rise, both Rome and China experienced challenging periods of reform during which cultural transformation, economic development, and conquest all took place. Specifically, these empires relied on military organization and the governmental regulation of resources, which organically implied a need for physical and social expansion.¹¹ Additionally, it is vital to appreciate the enormous distance inhabited by the Parthian (247 BCE–224 CE) and Kushan (c. 100 BCE–375 CE) empires, the powers that served as the intermediaries between the East and West. These regions inhabited the modern-day Middle

⁹ G. F. Hudson, *Europe and China: A Survey of their Relationships from the Earliest Times to 1800* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1931).

¹⁰ Homer H. Dubs, "An Ancient Military Contact Between Romans and Chinese," *The American Journal of Philology* 62, no. 3 (1941): 322.

¹¹ Howard Spodek, *The World's History* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998).

East and possessed a landmass the size of the Roman Empire at its height as seen in Figure 1.¹² The intermediary role of the Middle East stimulated the rise of transcontinental trade and throughout history, decisions made within this region greatly impacted Sino-Platonic relations.¹³

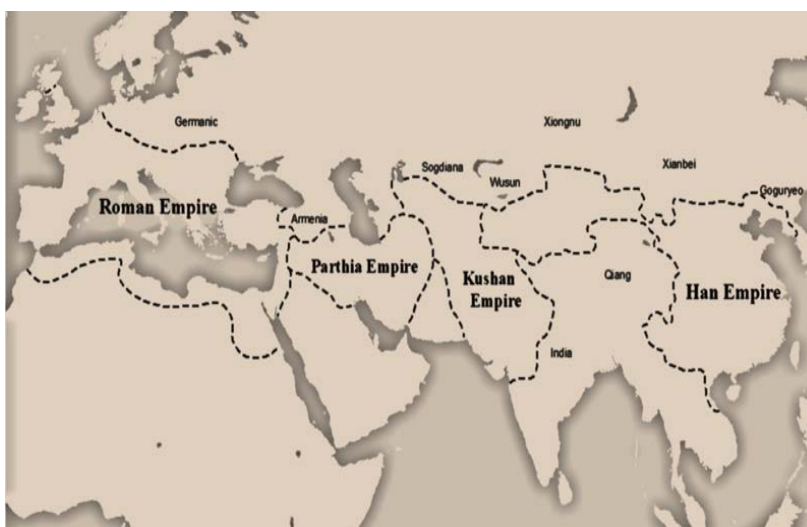


Figure 1: Parthia and Kushan compared to Rome and the Han Empire. The Silk Road connected all four empires in a linear line with routes that branched into each territory. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.¹⁴

Beginning during the period of the Western Han (c. 50 BCE), China was well-aware of Rome's existence in the West.¹⁵

¹² Jake Nabel, "Remembering Intervention: Parthia in Rome's Civil Wars," *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 68, no. 3 (2015): 327–352.

¹³ "Sino-Platonic relations" refers to the relations of Central Asian peoples with external societies.

¹⁴ Free to redistribute under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/). SY, "Map showing the four empires of Eurasia in 2nd Century AD," July 27, 2017, Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eurasia_in_2nd_Century.png.

¹⁵ Ye Fan, "The Western Regions according to the Hou Hanshu: The Xiyu juan, 'Chapter on the Western Regions,'" in *Hou Hanshu*, Second Edition, ed. John E. Hill (University of Washington, 2003).

However, there is no direct interaction between them except for a supposed mission during the reign of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE). The emissaries who requested a meeting with these Chinese ambassadors claimed to be sent by the Roman ruler himself, although this was likely a deception due to the lack of corroborating Roman evidence. This encounter is documented in the *Hou Hanshu*, also called the *Book of the Later Han*, a history book composed by Fan Ye (398–445 CE) and other historians. Although writing multiple centuries after these events, the men compiled documents and accounts to preserve the history of the Han Dynasty. The meeting with the Roman ambassadors is transcribed below:

In the ninth *yanxi* year [166 CE], during the reign of Emperor Huan, the king of Da Qin (the Roman Empire), Andun (Marcus Aurelius), sent envoys from beyond the frontiers through Rinan (Commandery on the central Vietnamese coast), to offer elephant tusks, rhinoceros horn, and turtle shell.¹⁶

There are favorable acknowledgments about the kingdom of “Da Qin,” or the Roman Empire, however, the Chinese seemed unimpressed by the goods presented to them. Many of these items, such as ivory and gems, were already accessible through other trade partners, so this meeting between the two empires seemed unremarkable to the Chinese.¹⁷ Further investigation of this meeting reinforces the theory that this was a deception and not an official Roman interaction. There would likely be some Roman documentation of the exchange at least, if not a full inquiry into

¹⁶ Fan.

¹⁷ Peter F. Bang, “Commanding and Consuming the World: Empire, Tribute, and Trade in Roman and Chinese History,” in *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*, ed. Walter Schneidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 100–120.

this previously unknown civilization, especially one as prominent and powerful as China. Despite the truthfulness of this encounter, Chinese historians believed this interaction to be legitimate which impacted their perception and records regarding Rome. In an analysis about Roman prestige goods presented in China, Armin Selbitschka, a professor from New York University Shanghai, writes this about the encounter and Roman-Sino trade relations as a whole:

The visitor was probably a private merchant masquerading as an official envoy- and the establishment of a few embassies during the seventh century CE, the Roman and Chinese courts remained distant from one another. The majority of exchanges between the Eastern Roman and Chinese cultural spheres were focused on commerce done in stages. It is highly unlikely that large numbers of Byzantine merchants ever set foot on Chinese ground or vice versa.¹⁸

While the *Hou Hanshu* serves as the main documentation for these interactions from the Chinese perspective, following European history in this era is arguably even more difficult. This narrative can be woven together from several sources, including Pliny the Elder (c. 23–79 CE) and Procopius of Caesarea (c. 500–570 CE).¹⁹ Neither of these accounts is particularly favorable due to their reputation for exaggeration, although they each gathered histories based on long-lost documents. Pliny especially took an interest in Eastern relations and describes silk and gems in great detail. In one account, he describes the Chinese people:

¹⁸ Armin Selbitschka, “The Early Silk Road(s),” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 38.

¹⁹ Gaius Pliny, *The Natural History*. online translation via LacusCurtius, <https://bit.ly/PlinyNH>.

[T]he people called the Chinese, who are famous for the woolen substance obtained from their forests... enable the Roman matron to flaunt transparent raiment in public. Though mild in character, [the Chinese] resemble wild animals, in that they also shun the company of the remainder of mankind, and wait for trade to come to them.²⁰

As exists within all historic source material, there is some bias in Pliny's documentation. While the use of these sources can be controversial, this documentation reveals the limited understanding of how silk was produced and how isolated China and Rome were from one another.

Development of the Silk Road (130–70 CE)

In China, a collection of tribes from the northern steppe grasslands called the Xiongnu (Hsiung Nu) were a source of worry and apprehension for the earlier Han Dynasty between 206 BCE and 9 CE.²¹ The first Great Wall was built specifically against these “intruders” a dynasty earlier during the Qin (Ch'in) Dynasty (221–206 BCE).²² The Qin consistently faced these nomadic tribes until Emperor Wudi (157–87 BCE) forced them out of the Ordos region in 119 BCE.²³ However, the constant intermittent warfare left China in a state of near collapse, forcing the empire to split into two sections. Around 60-70 CE, the separate northern province expanded into modern-day Turkestan during a period of political disruption. Chinese commanders took hold of the area, which was

²⁰ Gaius Pliny as reprinted in Xinru Liu, *The Silk Roads: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012), 1314.

²¹ Steppe refers to the South Asian grassland that spans from modern-day Siberia to Europe.

²² Patricia B. Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, Second Edition (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²³ Denis Twitchett, *Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge University Press), 33.

then settled by Chinese traders, beginning the initial roots of the Silk Road.²⁴

Although the exact time China began exporting silk to the West is unknown, there are various suggestions about the Silk Road's development. In 115 BCE, Mithridates II of Parthia (124–91 BCE), modern-day Iran, allied with Emperor Wudi. At this time, China and Parthia engaged in a sort of direct commercial exchange. Into the following century, Roman general and statesman, Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE), supposedly possessed several silk items himself, including a set of silk curtains. From the time of Emperor Augustus (63–14 CE) onward, Rome never again went without silk.²⁵

It is crucial to remember that the Silk Road, despite its name, was not a linear connection but a wide network. The intermediaries between the trade route, Parthia and Kush, later developed into the Islamic Caliphate. India and Pakistan each “facilitated, regulated, and taxed silk-road trade but shaped it through demand for particular goods and cultural contributions.”²⁶ The Persian language was the *lingua franca* of the Silk Road which reinforces their prominence in the region.²⁷ Even those not allied under a confederation, such as nomadic Central Eurasians, regularly interacted with this system. The first silk the Romans ever saw was rumored to be the Parthian banners at the Battle of Carrhae in 53 BCE, although the republic had indirectly interacted with Asian goods far before this.²⁸ Access to horses and even wheel technology came from the Fertile Crescent, which secured Western fascination in the East, although further development of

²⁴ John Block Friedman and Kristen Mossler, eds., *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages* (Routledge, 2013), 307.

²⁵ John Thorley, “The Silk Trade between China and the Roman Empire at Its Height, ‘Circa’ A. D. 90–130,” *Greece and Rome* 18, no. 1 (1971), 71.

²⁶ James A. Millward, *The Silk Road: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press), 7.

²⁷ McLaughlin.

²⁸ Millward, 26.

the ancient Silk Road would not go any further than Parthia.²⁹ By the turn into the modern era, the Silk Road decisively established the vague relationship between Rome and China. However, considering the highly variable and inconsistent histories of Rome and China, ideal conditions could never have lasted very long.

The Fall of the West (113–395 CE) and the Period of Disunity (130–589 CE)

By 130 CE, China lost influence within modern-day Turkestan and soon lost complete control of the area.³⁰ In the West, Roman and Parthian relations worsened, eventually leading to a new series of wars under the Roman emperor Trajan (53–117 CE) in 113 CE. From 541 to 549 CE, an epidemic believed to be smallpox rapidly spread across the Western world.³¹ The Roman Empire, the Chinese, and the Parthians all struggled to maintain their footing because of the epidemic and series of wars. By the third century, both the Parthian royal house and the Han Dynasty collapsed. In 285 CE, Emperor Diocletian (244–311 CE), realizing the unsustainable enormity of the Roman Empire, decided to divide the Empire into western and eastern halves. Silk continued to be exported into Western and Eastern Rome but with greater difficulty and expense than ever before.

During the late fourth century, Western Rome became politically unstable. Internal secular conflict paired with the recurring invasions of Germanic tribes eventually led to the collapse of the West in 476 CE. This period in Rome and the parallel political instability of China in the mid-second through mid-fifth centuries are typically referred to as a “dark age.”³² The Byzantine capital of Constantinople continued to rule in the east

²⁹ Millward, 21.

³⁰ Ebrey.

³¹ Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: Transformation of an Empire*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2016).

³² Millward, 27.

and claimed to be the continuation of the Roman Empire. Similarly, the northern Chinese states were less impacted than their southern counterparts. In these regions, this period intensified traditional ecclesiastical institutions' influences. In Byzantium, Christianity became a defining characteristic. In China, the Northern Wei promoted Buddhism and other aspects of Indian culture, represented by the mountainside Buddha carvings like those in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. These changes introduced the Period of Disunity (220–589 CE) in China, which continued until the establishment of the Sui (581–618 CE) Dynasty. The Sui was then succeeded by the Tang (618–907 CE), which was initially defined by the dynasty's militaristic expansion.³³

After the rise of the Sasanian Empire (224–651 CE) in Persia, Byzantium attempted to circumvent this trade partner to obtain silk due to trade blockades. By the fourth century, Byzantium developed its internal silk industry after the silkworm scandal in the mid-sixth century. However, even after Byzantium began its silk production, various ideas and other commodities followed along the traditional routes. The Silk Road continued until the fall of Byzantium in 1453 CE and the rise of the Ottoman Empire essentially ended Eurasian trans-international trade.³⁴

³³ Ebrey.

³⁴ A. A. Vasil'ev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324-1453* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1958).

Silk in Byzantium and the Silkworm Scandal (Mid-500 CE)



Figure 2: Byzantine silk woven in Egypt, dated between the seventh and ninth centuries. Courtesy of the Met Museum.³⁵

Silk had long served as a diplomatic tool between Byzantium and its neighbors. It was referred to as *seres* by ancient Greek and Romans, which is understood as the romanized version of the Chinese word, *si*.³⁶ The Romans coveted silk but were unable to reproduce the technology to manufacture it. Figure 2 shows early European silk which, although valuable, was not as coveted as Chinese silk. Pliny the Elder wrote that silk was “the wool found in their forests,” showing the lack of understanding about even the origins of the practice.³⁷ Regardless, silk was always prominent on the world stage. Even Egyptian queen Cleopatra (69/70–30 BCE)

³⁵ Met Museum, “Roundel with Amazons and a Cross,” 7th-9th century, 8 3/16 x 8 1/4 in. (20.8 x 20.9 cm), silk, public domain, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466156?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&when=A.D.+500-1000&what=Silk%7cTextiles&ft=silk&offset=0&rpp=20∓pos=17>.

³⁶ Gary K. Young, *Rome’s Eastern Trade: International Commerce and Imperial Policy, 31 BC–AD 305* (London: Routledge, 2001).

³⁷ Liu.

is thought to have worn silks as opposed to linens.³⁸ In 568 CE, Eastern Roman Emperor Justin II (520–578 CE) was offered silk in exchange for an alliance with the Turkic Khaganate. The Tang Dynasty even authorized the use of silk as currency.³⁹ While Byzantine silk production began in the sixth century, its quality was far inferior to the Chinese product.

With the rise of the Sassanid Empire (224–651 CE) and the subsequent Roman-Persian wars (476–627 CE), importing silk into Europe became increasingly difficult and expensive. As a result, Byzantine emperor Justinian I (r. 527–565 CE) attempted to create alternate routes through Sogdiana, Crimea, and Ethiopia. However, all these efforts failed. Typically, raw silk purchased from China traveled through the intermediary Middle East and was made into fine fabrics within Europe. The reign of Justinian I marks a turning point on both the sale and manufacturing of silk, as sumptuary laws blocked purple silk consumption by those outside the royal family.⁴⁰

Purple clothing, which Pliny claims was a tradition begun by the legendary founder of Rome, Romulus, was a long-standing tradition for nobility in Rome.⁴¹ Creating purple cloth began with capturing sea snails to extract the dye, a method that was consistently used as early as 1200 BCE until 1453 CE. This method was initially used to color purple wool, but purple silk eventually became the standard to represent imperial authority. Sumptuary laws first began in fourth-century Rome dictating that only the emperor could wear what was called “Tyrian purple.”⁴² Purple dye, created from the murex shell, became synonymous with the idea of higher office. While only the emperor could be

³⁸ Adrian Goldsworthy, *Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Yale University Press, 2010).

³⁹ Millward, 71.

⁴⁰ David Jacoby, *Commodities, and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Routledge, 1997).

⁴¹ Pliny.

⁴² Jacoby, *Commodities, and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean*, 455.

completely clothed in purple, priests and officials were allowed to wear small pieces of purple, as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3: “Emperor Justinian and Members of His Court.” Photograph from the twentieth century, original mosaic dates to the sixth century. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art photograph collection.⁴³

Although there is not much evidence to show that Western Roman rulers were quite as protective of the color, the Eastern Byzantine empire embraced the practice of equating purple silk with elite ranking. By the age of Diocletian (244–305 CE), the production of Tyrian purple was closely controlled, subsidized, and used only to color imperial silks. The dye process itself is described by Pliny:

The most favourable season for taking these is after the rising of the Dog-star, or else before spring... after it is taken, the vein is extracted to which it is

⁴³ Met Museum, “Emperor Justinian and Members of His Court,” early twentieth century (originally dated the 6th century), 104 x 144 x 5 in, mosaic, public domain, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/466586>.

requisite to add salt to every hundred pounds of juice...about the tenth day, generally, the whole contents of the cauldron are in a liquefied state, upon which a fleece is plunged into it by way of making trial. The tint that inclines to red is looked upon as inferior to that which is of a blackish hue.⁴⁴

Silk was an item precious to Byzantium in general, but purple silk had transcended the role of a mere item. Western Roman tradition believed that the government had a duty to protect its civilians from extravagance and overindulgence. The Roman emperor was allowed a purple cape lined with gold, and senators represented their office with a single purple stripe across their toga.⁴⁵ Official mandates required the court to wear distinctive markers made of silk, and it was used throughout religious iconography, which created a visual distinction between socioeconomic boundaries.⁴⁶

After the Persians began strictly regulating the silk trade, there were “unwelcome changes in costs and availability.”⁴⁷ This resulted in the frantic search for an alternative. As the story goes, two monks, most likely derived from the Nestorian Church, approached Justinian I regarding their recent mission into China. While in China, they had been able to personally witness the secretive and highly complex methods of raising silkworms and producing silk. In exchange for unknown promises, the monks agreed to acquire the silkworms from China. The smuggling expedition itself supposedly took two years.⁴⁸ Procopius of Caesarea (c. 500–570 CE) recounts the event that eventually

⁴⁴ Liu, 1491.

⁴⁵ Charlene D. Elliot, *Colour Codification: Law, Culture and the Hue of Communication* (Ottawa: Carleton University: 2003), 62.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Heleanor B. Feltham, “Justinian and the International Silk Trade,” in *Sino-Platonic Papers* (University of Pennsylvania), 5.

⁴⁸ Liu, 2638.

disrupted the silk monopoly in China and circumvented trade intervention on the part of Persia:

About the same time (mid-6th century) came from India certain monks; and they had satisfied Justinian Augustus that the Romans no longer should buy silk from the Persians, they promised the emperor in an interview that they would provide the materials for making silk so that never should the Romans seek business of this kind from their enemy the Persians, or from any other people whatsoever... they brought the eggs to Byzantium, the method having been learned... thus began the art of making silk from that time on in the Roman Empire.⁴⁹

This event easily feels like something out of the cinema but was, in fact, the precipice of tensions built over hundreds if not thousands of years. Nobles used silk, particularly in foreign policy, to legitimize Byzantium's claim as the continuation of the Roman Empire in the East.⁵⁰ The significance of silk in Byzantium is not to be dismissed, for silk was used strategically as a diplomatic, economic, and political resource. In particular, purple silk was indicative of the royal family's inherent authority as well as serving "a major role as virtual currency, symbol of status, and arbiter of style."⁵¹

By the early tenth century, Byzantium's silk production operated completely independently from external trade.⁵² Before this, the empire's legislation was partially dependent on the silk

⁴⁹ Procopius, *On the Wars*, Internet Medieval Sourcebook.

⁵⁰ Robert Sabatino Lopez, "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum* 20, no. 1 (1945): 1–42.

⁵¹ Feltham.

⁵² David Jacoby, "Silk Economic and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 198.

trade from China, which the Middle Eastern kingdoms largely intercepted. Although Byzantium produced a type of silk before Justinian I's silk scandal, this version was of infamously inferior quality. As Persia destabilized and Roman relations with them worsened, the desperation to maintain silk's important symbolic gesture increased.

Smuggling the silkworms into Byzantium drastically altered the character of the Silk Road. Although silk pieces were no longer in such high demand after the scandal, Chinese silk thread was still largely favored in the Mediterranean world while Byzantium continued to perfect their version. As shown in Figure 4, other regions like Egypt, modern-day Syria and Iran also began manufacturing their version of the product. China no longer held a monopoly on silk production as the practice spread throughout the Eurasian world.



Figure 4: Made in modern-day Iran, dated to the seventh century. Courtesy of the Yale University Art Gallery.⁵³

⁵³ Yale University Art Gallery, "Two pieces of compound twill," Iran, seventh century, Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial Collection, 20 9/16 × 19 3/8 in, 13 3/4 × 13 3/16 in., silk, public domain, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/46680>.

Byzantine, Sui/Tang (581–907 CE) Coins, and Monetary Exchange

While documentation regarding silk specifically is quite limited, the impact of the Silk Road itself is traceable using many other methods. One of the more interesting commodities to track whenever trade is analyzed is monetary currency. Collectors likely gathered coins and merchants likely used them as they traveled along the Silk Road. This gives historians another outlet to trace the extent of Roman and Chinese relations. As artifacts, coins are an intrinsic asset to the archaeological record, especially when tracking any aspect of material exchange. Coins are particularly revealing in regard to the people who both created and circulated them, offering a wide array of perspectives and uses. Moreover, coins are reputable and attributed to a particular date range, which is why they are so valuable within the archaeological sphere. Coins were also typically created to transfer political messages, religious values, authority, thoughts, and artistic forms.⁵⁴ Although they exist for economic reasons, currency often transcends these barriers to possess more limitless social and cultural connotations.

The abundance of Roman coins recovered from China reveals the rich and complex relationship between the Chinese and Romans through monetary exchange. These coins consisted mostly of imperial Byzantine coinage (*solidi*), as high-value trade generally used Byzantine or Muslim currency. These were considered more reliable and stable than other regional coins.⁵⁵ Although there are examples of these coins in China, they only circulated widely through the Mediterranean and Near East. British archaeologist and academic Colin Haselgrove and professor of ancient numismatics, Stefan Krmnicek, study global economies and discuss how valuable the discoveries of Roman coinage are:

⁵⁴ Colin Haselgrove and Stefan Krmnicek, “The Archaeology of Money,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 235–250.

⁵⁵ Feliu Gaspar, “Money and Currency,” in *Money and Coinage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ramon Gorne (Brill, 2019), 21–40.

The ubiquity and (generalized) uniformity of coins make them well suited to quantification. For the Roman period especially, numerical and statistical methodologies are now integral to the study of archaeological site finds. By making large numbers manageable, these approaches have revealed important patterns that can be criticized for perpetuating our perception of coinage as an inherently familiar medium, which behaves according to known rules, while maintaining the division between coins and the rest of the archaeological record by analyzing them as integrated assemblages effectively divorced from their contexts.⁵⁶

Today, archeologists have uncovered almost fifty Byzantine imperial coins in China like the one seen in Figure 5. Except for a singular piece, archeologists excavated the remaining coins from tombs across Mongolia and several Chinese provinces such as Xinjiang and Gansu.⁵⁷ The coins were either found on the body, indicating use in funerary practices, or functioned as ornamentation. Social classes vary considerably but these individuals all possessed some form of wealth. While thousands of Sasanian coins were discovered in China, there are few examples of *solidi*. The lack of *solidi* found in China reinforces the idea of limited direct interaction between these two powers, as it was likely intermediaries who carried this coinage into China after acquiring it on the Silk Road.

⁵⁶ Haselgrove and Krmnicek, 237.

⁵⁷ Francois Thierry and C. Morrison, "Sur les monnaies byzantines trouvées en Chine," *Revue Numismatique* 36 (1994): 110.



Figure 5: Byzantine coin of Justin I, produced 519-527 CE. Public Domain.⁵⁸

The Decline of Byzantium and the End of the Silk Road (1195–1453 CE)

In 1206 CE, Genghis Khan (1162–1227 CE) gathered the nomadic tribes within the Steppe to conquer northern China and Central Asia.⁵⁹ Arguably, this unified the Eurasian continent like never before, although it did not last past the fifteenth century. Around 1260 CE, the Venetian explorer Marco Polo (1254–1324 CE) traveled to China where he served under Kublai Khan (1215–1294 CE). Here, he observed the extensive routes along the Silk Road.⁶⁰

Although maritime routes linked China to the outside economic trade, it soon became much cheaper to transport the large quantities to meet demand by sea as opposed to land. Moreover, because the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE) had little direct military presence, Central Asia was openly fragmented, and travel became dangerous.⁶¹ Travel continued along the routes into the sixteenth century, but technological advancements and industrialization changed the Eurasian continent as a whole.

⁵⁸ Numismatica Ars Classica, “Solidus Iustinus I,” produced in the sixth century, Wikimedia Commons, coin, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Solidus_Iustinus_I.jpg.

⁵⁹ Millward, 34.

⁶⁰ Marco Polo, Maria Bellonci and Teresa Waugh eds., *The Travels of Marco Polo: A Modern Translation* (New York: Facts on File, 1984).

⁶¹ Millward, 111.

However, to say there was a true end to the Silk Road is somewhat misleading. While state sponsorship ended, merchants continued to travel along their traditional routes, but the number of items likely shifted. Since Europe and Asia had become so used to this cultural exchange, many merchants simply turned to maritime trade or other land routes.

During the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204 CE), Byzantium was significantly weakened. The crusaders from Western Europe made a controversial and unprecedented decision to invade the Christian empire of Byzantium, destroying relations between the Orthodox and Catholic world. During the beginning of the thirteenth century, Baldwin of Flanders (1172–1205 CE) conquered Constantinople and established smaller, independent states. One of these being the Empire of Nicaea (1204–1261 CE), which eventually attempted to reinstate the empire, but it would never reclaim the former glory of Byzantium.⁶²

Michael Palaiologos (1123–1282 CE), the first emperor of this restored empire, proclaimed,

Constantinople, the Acropolis of the universe, the imperial capital of the Romans, which, by the will of God, was under the power of the Latins, has come again under the power of the Romans—this has been granted them by the will of God through us.⁶³

However, the empire was left completely defenseless against the imposing threats to the East. The dying Roman Empire appealed to Pope Nicholas V (1397–1455 CE) but the empire ultimately received no form of aid during the Ottoman siege. Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (1432–1481 CE) entered the city, and Constantinople fell in 1453 CE. This invasion accelerated the complete collapse of

⁶² Vasil'ev, 580.

⁶³ C. Chapman, "De vita sua opusculum," in *Michel Palcologue, restaurateur de l'Empire Byzantin (1261–1282)* (Paris: E. Figuiere, 1926), 172.

Rome and Christendom in the East and substantially aided the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

From 130 BCE when the Han first sponsored trade until the fall of Byzantium in 1453 CE, there were many physical exchanges along the Silk Road. However, the most enduring impact comes from the incredible exchange of culture that accompanied these objects. Every facet of Eurasian civilization crossed these routes, carried among the merchants and people who traveled between these distant worlds. The closure of the Silk Road led many merchants towards the Age of Discovery, which sparked international globalization unlike anything seen throughout human history at that point. The Silk Road helped introduce this idea of reliance on other cultures while broadening the worlds of each person who lived during this age. This encouraged maritime exploration leading to the development of the modern world.

Conclusion

Chinese and Roman commerce and culture continued to impact history far into modernity. This is especially apparent when observing international trade. While silk itself is no longer the economic and political necessity that it was in Byzantium, the material is still considered exotic and is highly sought after today. This is proof of the surviving remnants of the later Roman Empire in current Western society. The legacy of Byzantium, which allowed Greek and Roman culture to survive through the Renaissance, is heavily influenced by its Eastern neighbors. This is not a fact lost on historians, but further nurturing could perhaps help soothe contemporary relations between the East and the West. This division was created over multiple millennia, so it stands to reason that it may take a similar amount of time to resolve these traditional tensions.

Ancient transcontinental trade cannot accurately represent the international connectivity of the present day. Still, this connection between peoples reminds them of their shared humanity, despite cultural differences and physical boundaries.

While Central Eurasia seems unrecognizable in the modern day when compared to the classical and medieval periods of the Silk Road, many of these coveted commodities are still exchanged across the non-literal Silk Road. Politics, fashion, travel, music, video games, and immigration continue to be shared, albeit with some controversy, between the Western and Eastern portions of the world. There is some hope, that between these shared elements, lies the connection that can reunite this cultural divide.

The study of the Silk Road is a moment in human history that highlights the natural inclinations of several aspects of human nature: curiosity, desire for connection, and ambition. This is why the shared story of Rome and China allows for an exchange that promotes greater understanding and exposes the reality that there are no linear paths in history. The Silk Road shows that even cultures geographically and socially divided still influence one another. Diplomacy, politics, and economics all dictate how international foreign policy is conducted within other countries, and no nation is excluded from this concept.

The geopolitical and socio-economic importance of the Silk Road cannot go unrecognized if there is any hope for resolving the remaining agitations that exist on the global stage. Hopefully, in the future, projects like the New Silk Road can bridge the widening gap that endures between these two cultures. Although this project exists in the form of pipelines and highways, it is designed to allow China better access to the international sphere. This will allow China to be more geopolitically assertive within this strategic ancient trade corridor, much to the dismay of many Western politicians. There is a fear that this is simply a guise for expansionism, but others have more optimistic hopes.⁶⁴ Perhaps after this promising project is completed, the East and the West will be able to acknowledge their shared history and come to accept that there are more similarities connecting them than there are differences.

⁶⁴ Peter Frankopan, *The New Silk Roads: The Present and Future of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

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History in the Making

Troubled Memories: Researching Holocaust Testimony

By Jennifer Anne Duke

Abstract: Modernity's largest episode of mass killing occurred between the years 1931 to 1945, throughout which over forty-five million people died. The Holocaust, the Nazi experiment into industrialized mass murder during World War II, was responsible for a significant portion of these deaths, including the deaths of six million Jews, from which the term "genocide" was coined. Experiences documented by hundreds of survivors can be seen in documentaries and films or read about in books. But the psychology behind the testimonies is not so often discussed. This essay will use Harvard-educated professor and Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer's Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory as a framework for investigating examples of the five types of memories recorded in eight books by seven Holocaust survivors. By understanding the five different types of memory (deep, anguished, humiliated, tainted, and unheroic) expressed by Holocaust survivors in their testimony, one can better understand the psychological and physical implications of the Holocaust on a deeper level.

Lawrence Langer is a well-respected scholar who specializes in Holocaust testimonies and how best to understand them. In his first book on Holocaust testimony, *Preempting the Holocaust*, Langer articulates his purpose for the book and the importance of reading survivors' testimonies: "When I speak of preempting the Holocaust, I mean using, and perhaps abusing, its grim details to fortify a prior commitment to an ideal of moral reality, community responsibility, or religious belief that leaves us with space to retain

faith in their pristine value in a post-Holocaust world.”¹ California State University, San Bernardino professor Timothy Pytell further explains Langer’s view of “preempting the Holocaust”: “His focus on Holocaust preemption focuses on attempting to stay honest and truthful in the face of the extreme experience and the cultural rupture that is the Holocaust.”² In Langer’s later book entitled *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, he examines his ideas further and introduces five types of memory that exist in the testimonies included in his book: deep, anguished, humiliated, tainted, and unheroic memories. These types of memories can also be found in other survivors’ testimonies as well, such as Victor Frankl of Austria, Primo Levi of Italy, Gerda Weissman-Klein of Poland, Olga Lengyel of Hungary, Elie Wiesel of Romania, Charlotte Delbo of France, and Felix Weinberg of Czechoslovakia. Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl provides his interpretation of Holocaust testimonies as well, introducing the concept of “the delusion of reprieve,” “emotional death,” and resilience. The voices of Holocaust survivors can be heard by reading and listening to their testimonies which offer not only information but personal insight. Understanding their testimonies is imperative to understanding the immortal implications of one of history’s most notorious acts of genocide.

Before further exploring deep, anguished, humiliated, tainted, and unheroic memories hidden within several different pieces of Holocaust testimony, it is important to understand the differences between oral and written testimonies. While both are useful in investigating and understanding testimony, the latter may be more valuable, especially when examining more painful and troubling memories. With written testimonies, survivors can explain their experiences in a way that the reader will better understand. The literary devices, such as metaphors and idioms, that are prevalent in written testimonies may help the reader

¹ Timothy Pytell, “Revisiting Preempting the Holocaust: Frankl vs. Levi,” *Psychology Today* (December 18, 2017).

² Pytell.

imagine and picture the experience of the survivor, bringing them closer to what the experience was really like. Langer introduces this concept by analyzing the rich literature provided in the written testimony of Holocaust survivor Barbara T: “We are dragged out of cattle cars, vomited into an impenetrable black night...screams knife the air and I cover my ears with my hands. Torches keep licking the sky like rainbows.”³

With oral and recorded testimonies, this is much harder to do. The same woman, Barbara T., also had a recorded video testimony in which the same experience is relayed by saying, “the inmates whipped us out of cattle cars.”⁴ While writing about their experiences, some survivors used literary devices such as the simile used in the above example. Others used different methods to appeal to readers’ emotions. Charlotte Delbo (1913–1985), a non-Jewish French resistance fighter imprisoned in Auschwitz, used poetry in her three books, compiled into the trilogy *Auschwitz and After*. Despite her different writing style, her goal is the same: to paint a vivid picture, not just give a testimony. In the first of these three books, Delbo uses these literary devices to explain her memory of the Auschwitz extermination camp:

My memory is more bloodless than an autumn leaf.
My memory has forgotten the dew.
My memory is drained of its sap. My memory has
bled to death.
This is when the heart ought to stop beating—stop
beating—come to a stop.⁵

Written testimonies can also reveal things that might have otherwise remained undiscussed because there is only one party

³ Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: the Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 18.

⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵ Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 113.

involved and the testimony is not typically subject to outside or third-party influence. One potential problem that can come from a third-party influence is understood by referencing the legal term “leading the witness,” which is often present in oral testimonies, but not present in written testimonies. Langer explains that

former victims are not the only ones threatened by the ordeal of oral testimony. The subtle urging of the interviewer can lead a witness to shift from one form of memory to another, and control and shape the content of each.⁶

Written testimonies might also be easier to share than oral testimonies since they are not told in person to someone living in contemporary society, who may have a very different moral code. Therefore, written testimonies are not subject to judgment by an interviewer, and because of this, more of the experience may be included in the written testimonies. In oral testimonies, interviewers may judge some of the witnesses’ former actions, or perhaps the witness feels that they might, despite the actions having been done out of necessity and the instinct to survive. Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) states that “the lesson of the Holocaust is the facility with which most people, put into a situation that does not contain a good choice...argue themselves away from the issue of moral duty...adopting instead the precepts of self-preservation.”⁷ Survivors may intentionally or unintentionally omit information that they deem not part of their natural character and just something that they had to do in the interests of self-preservation.

Alternatively, they may alter that information, or become upset by the information. One such example is understood through the testimony of a Jesuit priest who was asked by an interviewer “why he did not say something to someone about what he had

⁶ Langer, 9.

⁷ Ibid., 11.

seen. Suddenly before our eyes he is wrestling with the deep memory of his inaction, which common memory clearly disapproves of today.”⁸ Another example can be witnessed in Primo Levi’s (1919–1987) essay “Shame.” When discussing inaction in hindsight, he states that, “this is a judgment that the survivor believes he sees in the eyes of those who listen to his stories and judge with facile hindsight, or who perhaps feel cruelly repelled. Consciously or not, he feels accused and judged, compelled to justify and defend himself.”⁹

Videotaped testimony has its value as well, as it helps to put a face to a story. Just the presence of the survivor on camera can have a moving effect on someone watching who may then be more inclined to identify with the struggles of the survivor and their emotional turmoil. Because of this, oral testimony likely maintains a stronger appeal to the empathy of the person watching than written testimony would. Nevertheless, the best way to observe and understand testimony about the Holocaust is to investigate both written and oral testimony simultaneously.

Part One: Deep Memory and the Diminished Self

“Deep memory” refers to the memory that gets embedded into the subconscious mind, that only resurfaces once triggered. Everyone has these memories, but to survivors of the Holocaust, these memories are often traumatic. Langer calls the memories that reside in the subconscious “deep memory,” which differs greatly from the idea of “common memory,” the type of memory that resides in the conscious mind; this kind of memory is easier to retrieve. Langer quotes Delbo to emphasize this point: “The skin covering the memory of Auschwitz is tough. Sometimes, however, it bursts, and gives back its contents.”¹⁰ Langer explains this

⁸ Langer, 31.

⁹ Primo Levi, “Shame,” in *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1986), 64.

¹⁰ Langer, 6.

concept more in the introduction he wrote for Delbo's Holocaust memoir, *Auschwitz and After*:

[Delbo] developed a crucial distinction to help us discriminate between two operations of memory, speaking of the 'me' of now, living under control of what I translate as 'common memory', and the 'me' of then, the Auschwitz 'me', living under the dominion of deep memory.¹¹

Delbo explains this further when she states that she lives a double life, and without that split existence she would not be able to survive. Some years after liberation, Delbo traveled back across France to visit the women she was imprisoned with; these women all describe the same feeling. Nothing seemed real to them.¹² It can be understood by reading Delbo's memoir that a part of them still felt like they were back there, still in Auschwitz, and still in danger. In one of her poems, Delbo writes, "I've come back from another world and I know not which one is real, as far as I'm concerned, I'm still there, dying there."¹³

Scholar Robert Jay Lifton, who has studied the Holocaust extensively and wrote several pieces on it, calls this process "doubling," an event that he describes as "an active psychological process, a means of adaptation to extremity."¹⁴ Lifton attributes this act of doubling to perpetrators of the Holocaust rather than victims, stating that it is how they were able to commit such heinous acts. According to Lifton, "The way in which doubling allowed Nazi doctors to avoid guilt was not by the elimination of conscience but by what can be called the transfer of conscience.

¹¹ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, xviii.

¹² Ibid., 337–346.

¹³ Ibid., 224.

¹⁴ Robert Lifton, "The Nazi Doctors," in *Problems in European Civilization: The Holocaust*, ed. Donald Niewyk (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 66.

The requirements of conscience were transferred to the Auschwitz self, thereby freeing the original self from responsibility for actions there.”¹⁵ Proof that many of the worst Nazis “doubled” is seen in the Nuremberg trials, where several war criminals stated that the acts committed were committed in a state of war, and therefore cannot make them guilty of breaking any laws. The common excuse of “I was just following orders” is a clear example that post-war, they no longer identified with the other part of themselves, a part that existed in a state of war but not after.

Although Lifton attributes doubling to the perpetrators, the act of doubling is seen in Holocaust survivors as well as survivors of other kinds of trauma. Instead of having trouble distinguishing between their “war self” and “original self,” however, they have trouble distinguishing between their original self and their post-trauma self. Their post-trauma self can also be referred to as their “diminished self” which will be explored later in the article. Many Holocaust survivors struggled to find a will to live after their experience under their Nazi overlords. One of the ways they did so was by burying the memory associated with their trauma. For example, Delbo explains how she goes about her daily life while retaining these troubling memories: “I’m living without being alive. I do what I must, because I must, because that’s what people do.”¹⁶ These debilitating and traumatizing experiences live in the person’s deep memory where the post-trauma self will eventually reside.

Deep memory is repressed by the mind for self-preservation, but it reappears when the survivor unintentionally calls upon it. In his memoir, *Boy 30529*, Felix Weinberg recalls his deep memory. The pathos, or emotional appeal, that he uses in his writing shows that recalling the memories at the back of his mind pains him but claims that his memoir is written by him solely to honor the memory of his mother who perished in the camps. This type of repressed memory lives on long past liberation, an event

¹⁵ Lifton, 65–66.

¹⁶ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 258.

that was not entirely a relief to him. He states, “Nine days after my seventeenth birthday, my [physical] life was given back to me, [but] the camps changed me permanently.”¹⁷ Deep memory residing in the subconscious mind of Weinberg brought back uncharacteristic feelings and actions that he had to adapt to survive; this is the “skin,” or “other self,” that Delbo refers to. The person writing the memoir or recalling their deep memory is not the same as they were during their imprisonment in the camps. Common memory operates on the surface, as the players in a play, but deep memory is always there in the background, running the lights and sounds backstage.

Part Two: Anguished Memory and the Divided Self

Although similar to deep memory, “anguished memory,” or “the divided self,” focuses more on the confusion about the two different lives—the pre and post-trauma lives of the Holocaust survivors—and how it affects their testimonies. Langer introduces two facets of survivors’ personalities which he calls the “lived event” and “died event” personalities. He describes the “lived event” personality as the one that lives in the present and blends in with the current society and adheres to current societal norms. He calls the “died event” personality the one that clings to the life once lived, the Holocaust experience, and the survivors’ stories of survival.¹⁸

Numerous survivor testimonies explain anguished memory in the same way that Langer explains it. In their testimonies, they state that there are two different realities that they live with daily. One is their contemporary personality, which goes to work every day, raises children, and attends parties, as well as participates in everyday life. The other personality is the one who lived and survived the Holocaust. That personality is never really gone and is a prime example of what Langer would refer to as the “died

¹⁷ Felix Weinberg, *Boy 30529: A Memoir* (London: Verso, 2014), 14.

¹⁸ Langer, 69.

personality.”¹⁹ One survivor included in Langer’s book states in her testimony that in order to live again, she had to die in the camps, if not physically then emotionally and spiritually. Bessie K, whose infant was taken from her and killed by Nazis, remarried after liberation and raised a family. She states: “In order to survive, I think I had to die first. I was born on that train and I died on that train.”²⁰ Delbo’s explanation is very similar to Bessie’s. She wrote, “If I confuse the dead and the living, with whom do I belong? Everything was false, and I was in despair at having lost the faculty of dreaming, of harboring illusions. This is the part of me that died in Auschwitz. This is what turned me into a ghost.”²¹

Another example of a lived and died event in a survivor is seen in the testimony presented by Magda F., who was deported at first to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944. Despite this late departure, she was still sent to five different camps and upon returning to Hungary after liberation, she found out that almost all of her family had died. The only survivors were two of her brother-in-laws. She married one of them and he had a significant amount of trouble separating his two lives, or his lived event and died event. In her testimony, Magda F. recalls,

My daughter told me one day, ‘Mom, I don’t think in dad’s eyes I am Ellen. I am still Eva. And my brother is not Tommy, he is Freddie.’ That was not the truth, but his mind was still back in the same story, and those two children he saw were Fred and Eva.²²

His children from his first marriage, Fred and Eva, had been killed in the gas chambers during the Holocaust, and his split mind had trouble sorting his old life from his new one, where his children’s

¹⁹ Langer, 69.

²⁰ Weinberg, 49

²¹ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 236–239.

²² Langer, 74.

names were Tommy and Ellen. One survivor compared the two realities to a feeling of being on two different planets:

We [survivors] have these double lives. You have one vision of life and I have two. I—you know—I lived on two planets...we were herded onto Hitler's planet of annihilation zones and torture and slaughter areas, and herded back again, while no longer having anything in common with the inhabitants of this planet. And we had to relearn how to live again.²³

Another example of this incredible difference in the two lives that anguished memory represents is seen in the testimony of another unnamed woman who survived the Holocaust. She “saw” two different versions of the same sun. While on the train to one of the camps, the woman looked out of the small, barred window and saw a family at the station dressed in normal clothing and the sun was high in the sky and bright and beautiful. In her testimony, she compared that image to paradise. However, she saw that same sun rise every day while in Auschwitz, and it did not represent the same thing; it is like it was an entirely different sun: “I saw the sun in Auschwitz, I saw the sun come up, because we had to get up at four in the morning. But it was never beautiful to me. I never saw it shine. It was just the beginning of a horrible day.”²⁴ Langer cites an additional comment on the significance of the sun as it pertains to an anguished memory from another survivor's memoir: “I swear to you, the sun was not bright. The sun was red, or it was black to me...the sun was never life to me. It was destruction. It was never beautiful.”²⁵

Based on the content in his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, author and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl (1905–

²³ Langer, 53.

²⁴ Ibid., 55.

²⁵ Ibid., 105.

1997) uses his own experience gathered while in camps such as Auschwitz and Dachau to describe the various psychological stages that prisoners went through from the point of their arrival to the point of their selection for death. These psychological processes often cause anguished memory to appear later, as trauma is stored in the unconscious mind to allow the physiological body to survive.

The first stage, according to Frankl, is made up of a psychological condition called “the delusion of reprieve,” or the psychological state where “the condemned man, immediately before his execution, gets the illusion that he might be reprieved at any moment.”²⁶ Prisoners were hopeful of their treatment and began bargaining with their minds that maybe their situation would not be so bad. For example, Weinberg describes how the Jewish prisoners in the Theresienstadt ghetto, including his parents, repeatedly heard the news of what awaited them in the other camps once they were transported like those who came before them. Most shook it off and said things like, “it couldn’t possibly be much worse than being here!”²⁷ They were sadly mistaken. Once deported to camps, the likelihood of surviving until liberation was very minimal.

Unfortunately, this idea of reprieve made the Nazis’ killing much easier. As author Isaiah Trunk (1905–1981) explains in his essay, “Why the Jewish Councils Cooperated,” “the instinct of self-preservation, which prompts people to resist the thought of imminent destruction and to cling to even a spark of hope played into the hands of the executioners.”²⁸ The Nazis kept the façade up until the last possible second. When trains were boarded, the prisoners were told they would be resettled. Of course, this was a lie. When trains arrived, they were told they would be separated

²⁶ Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2017), 110.

²⁷ Weinberg, 19.

²⁸ Isaiah Trunk, “Why the Jewish Councils Cooperated,” in *Problems in European Civilization: The Holocaust*, edited by Donald Niewyk. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 168.

from their families for only a short while. In the undressing room immediately before the gas chamber, they were told to make sure to keep their clothes and shoes together to find them afterward. In the moving Holocaust documentary film, *Shoah* (1985), directed by Claude Lanzmann (1925–2018), a witness even recalled that SS guards would sometimes ask arriving prisoners their professions, and tell them, “we need you for the war effort,” only to send them to their deaths minutes later.²⁹ Desperate to cling to hope, most prisoners willingly entered the gas chambers. According to Delbo, hope even helped kill some prisoners:

Every day we witnessed death of this one or that, at the end of their tether, who might have lived had they been liberated on that day. They died as a result of the emotion, and the disappointment. Died of having allowed hope to beat in their hearts.³⁰

After Frankl’s “delusion of reprieve” comes the sobering second stage, the “emotional death.”³¹ This stage coincides with Langer’s idea of the “died event”: “the prisoner who had passed onto the second stage of his psychological reactions did not avert his eyes anymore. When the prisoner passed between the first and second phase of relative apathy, he achieved a kind of emotional death.”³² The emotional death is what split the lived and died event, the self from the diminished self. According to Frankl, this split often happened within the prisoners’ first few days at the camp, again, suppressing traumatic memories to enable the physical body to survive.

For Gerda Weissman-Klein (b. 1924), an eighteen-year-old Jewish girl who grew up in Bielitz, Poland, the emotional death

²⁹ *Shoah*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (1985; New York, NY: New Yorker Films, April 1985).

³⁰ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 204.

³¹ Frankl, 110.

³² Langer, 20–21.

happened after she was split from her family. In her memoir entitled *All but My Life*, Weissman-Klein remembers the years before her deportation to the camps. First, she witnessed many of the townspeople in Bielitz shout “Heil Hitler” and wave Nazi flags above their homes, celebrating the Germans as liberators.³³ Things changed quickly for Weissman-Klein and her family. When her father and his business partner lost their fur factory, the Germans confiscated everything in the factory and put a sign on the factory doors that read “No dogs or Jews allowed.”³⁴ Her father’s business partner came to her room one night beaten and bloodied after trying to enter the factory. He eventually went into hiding around the same time that the Germans enforced a new law requiring all Jewish men to register. After registration, her brother, her only sibling, was taken away for “labor” near the Russian border. Soon after, her father was taken away on a train to a destination unknown. Her mother and herself were then separated the following day and put onto two separate trucks. At first, Weissman-Klein feared for the fate of her family members that had been stripped away from her one-by-one, and the tortuous things she feared they would be subjected to. Then finally, she died her emotional death: “Finally, I could suffer no longer. My eyes remained dry. I felt my features turn stony. ‘Now I have to live,’ I said to myself, ‘because I am alone and nothing can hurt me anymore.’”³⁵

A similar feeling is seen in the testimony of Mordechai Podchlebnik (1907–1985), one of the only two survivors of the Chelmno extermination camp. In an interview for *Shoah*, director Claude Lanzmann asked Podchlebnik what had died in a fellow prisoner. Podchlebnik answered, “Everything died. But he’s only human, and he wants to live. So he must forget.”³⁶ The film also includes the testimony of Abraham Bomba, a Jewish barber.

³³ Gerda Weissman-Klein, *All But My Life* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1995), 95.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁶ *Shoah*.

During his interview with Lanzmann, he was asked, “How did that feel?” To which Bomba answered, “I will tell you something. To have a feeling over there was hard to do. It was hard to feel anything at all. You work day and night with dead bodies; you were also dead.”³⁷

Delbo expresses this same void in her book, *None of Us Will Return*, in which she states, “The will to resist was doubtlessly buried in some deep, hidden spring which is now broken, I will never know. I thought of nothing. I felt nothing.”³⁸ Delbo also describes this feeling when she writes about an hours-long roll call in Auschwitz: “Someone says, ‘I think we’re being ordered back.’ But within us, nothing replies. We have lost consciousness and feeling. We had died to ourselves.”³⁹ The emotional death Frankl describes occurs in almost every Holocaust survivor, as their ability to push all needs aside in favor of their instinctual will to stay alive is what makes them resilient when faced with the trauma of living in the camps.

The emotional death, though necessary for survival according to Frankl, is present but not obvious in the memoir written by Weinberg. While many other Holocaust testimonies reveal several instances of self-reflection about the circumstances of camp life, including the moment when the survivor decides that the only thing they have left is to live, Weinberg’s does not. Instead, he chooses to focus on what happened, and not how it affected him. He writes about his work assignments, traveling between the camps, the people he meets, and the news he hears about the war, but writes on very few occasions about his own self-reflection. At the beginning of his memoir, Weinberg discusses how he “saw without seeing, smelled without smelling, and

³⁷ *Shoah*.

³⁸ Charlotte Delbo, *None of us will return* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1968), 64.

³⁹ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 35.

touched without touching.”⁴⁰ This is the closest to an emotional death that he provides the readers with throughout his memoir.

Frankl, believing that the choices man makes are always completely his own, may argue that it was intellectual stability that made Weinberg more resilient to the emotional death and other emotional turmoil suffered during his time in the camps. Frankl does not believe that traumatic events like the Holocaust could alter an individual’s true self. This ideology is in stark contrast to Langer, who believes it is the experiences that shaped the person, not their mind. Based on Frankl’s ideology, Weinberg was more resilient than other survivors because of his intellectual background. But according to Langer’s ideology, Weinberg was just more reluctant to share the less-than-human instances of his time in the camps for fear of their decisions being held to the moral standards consistent with contemporary society.

There is, however, another explanation for some survivors’ reluctance to share self-reflection in regard to their anguished memories. Langer mentions that sometimes survivors have trouble believing their own stories because such a traumatic event is difficult to understand, especially in a time where that horror no longer exists. To survivors of the ordeal, the events of the Holocaust seem like a different reality. Testimonies often reveal survivors actively trying to deal with their own disbelief at their stories while telling them.

In some cases, an interviewer may lose the memory of some of these stories unintentionally, which is the case with the testimony of Hanna F., a Holocaust survivor who lived through Auschwitz twice. During an interview disclosing her experience, the interviewers asked Hanna F. how it was she was able to survive. When she stated that she survived out of stupidity, the interviewers “laughed deprecatingly, overriding her voice with their own ‘explanation,’ as one calls out, ‘you had a lot of guts!’”⁴¹ When she tried to explain herself, the interviewers laughed again

⁴⁰ Weinberg, 67–79.

⁴¹ Langer, 64.

and the interview was cut at this point, robbing the world of information, and robbing the survivor of her testimony. Langer argues that interviewers should be careful of offending or interrupting the survivor. By interjecting where unnecessary, interviewers deprived the historiography of the Holocaust of some vital information that could have been extracted from Hanna F.'s testimony.

Langer also introduces French philosopher Maurice Blanchot's idea of "wounded space." This concept argues that survivors must separate themselves from their current identities to go back to their repressed and haunted personalities, or their "wounded space," to retrieve memories.⁴² This is perhaps a good explanation for the lack of self-reflection in Weinberg's memoir. He did not want to have to revisit the horrors of his wounded space, so he skipped over them altogether, opting instead to mainly focus on the day-to-day details of camp life. Levi did the same in *Survival in Auschwitz*, a book that is lacking in self-reflection but heavy on the psychological observation of others. The majority of the self-reflection found in Levi's own anguished memory can usually be understood by reading his collection of essays, *The Drowned and the Saved*.

Langer adds his idea of "wounded time" to explain Blanchot's "wounded space": "As memory plunges us into the past to rescue the details of the Holocaust experience, it discovers that cessation plays a more prominent role than continuity."⁴³ He then gives two examples of survivors having to come to terms with "wounded time," a world that went on without them while they were trapped in another. Survivors often wondered about their family, whether they were alive or dead, even though some felt it no longer mattered, especially as their time in the camps went on.

Langer finishes his explanation of anguished memory by arguing that interviewers should disregard the concept of time while listening or interviewing survivors because time does not

⁴² Langer, 64.

⁴³ Ibid., 75.

exist in the same way for them. Delbo explains that, “We are in a place where time is abolished.”⁴⁴ Later in her testimony, she reiterates this point; her explanation helps name her third book: “The time you measure is not the measure of our days.”⁴⁵ Most prisoners had little or no concept of time. With no sure-fire way to keep track of time, they lived day-by-day. Levi states in his testimony that “we had not only forgotten our country and our culture, but also our family, our past, the future we had imagined for ourselves, because, like animals, we were confined to the present moment.”⁴⁶ In the words of Blanchot,

The experience of the disaster obliges us to disengage ourselves from time as irreversible. If we are to master the meaning of wounded time, as it afflicts the voices in these testimonies, there appears to be no alternative to immersing ourselves in the shifting currents of its discontinuous flow.⁴⁷

Part Three: Humiliated Memory and the Besieged Self

Langer’s concepts of “humiliated memory” and “the besieged self” refer to the memory of humiliating things a prisoner had to subject themselves to in the ghettos, on the trains, and in the camps.⁴⁸ For example, cattle cars that transported prisoners had no bathroom facilities, so prisoners had to relieve themselves in front of hundreds of others. Humiliated memory violates a survivor’s sense of self. What was humiliating before and after the Holocaust was commonplace during it. As surviving the camps became less likely, morals, laws, and justice ceased to exist. As Levi explains, “We believe that the only conclusion to be drawn is that in the face

⁴⁴ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 32

⁴⁵ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 257.

⁴⁶ Levi, “Shame,” 62.

⁴⁷ Langer, 76.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

of driving necessity and physical disabilities many social habits and instincts are reduced to silence.”⁴⁹ Ryan Piccirillo, author and Boston University graduate, supports this idea: “Within the camps, prisoners were not treated like humans and therefore adapted animalistic behavior necessary to survive.”⁵⁰ In other words, the tragedy of the Holocaust launched twentieth-century European society backward, in contrast to the previous century.

The nineteenth century saw the rise in intellectualism and industrialization, bringing forth great minds such as German philosopher Friederich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), and Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1875–1961), men who spoke frequently about the power of the unconquerable human spirit. Frankl, being one of these men, frequently mentions the unconquerable human spirit. He explains throughout the book that ultimately, man is self-determining. He argues that “the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, and not the result of camp influences alone. Fundamentally, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him—mentally and spiritually.”⁵¹ He supplements this claim by stating that while some prisoners behaved “like swine,” others behaved “like saints.”⁵² Based on the chapter “The Drowned and the Saved” in *Survival in Auschwitz*, not to be confused with the essay compilation of the same name, it seems Levi agrees that some prisoners did not let their circumstances corrupt their morality, but that these “saints” were very few: “Survival without renunciation of any part of one’s own moral world was conceded

⁴⁹ Levi, “Shame,” 87.

⁵⁰ Ryan Piccirillo, “Moral Adaptation in Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz*,” *Inquiries* 2, no. 3 (2010).

⁵¹ Frankl, 66.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 134.

only to very few superior individuals, made of the stuff of martyrs and saints.”⁵³

Frankl also explains that to survive, the prisoners had to give themselves a reason to live: “Any attempt to restore a man’s inner strength in the camp had first to succeed in showing him some future goal. Nietzsche’s words, ‘He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*.’”⁵⁴ Levi explains throughout his testimonies that in order to live, prisoners gave themselves a “why” by focusing on living through subsequent small events rather than living till liberation. For example, in the winter, prisoners were focused mainly on surviving the cold. When the camp thawed in the spring, only then did the prisoners notice their hunger. Then hunger, not cold, became their priority.

They also had to hold onto whatever hope they could find, even if it was small. Levi writes, “Strange, how in some way one always has the impression of being fortunate, how some chance happening, perhaps infinitesimal, stops us crossing the threshold of despair and allows us to live.”⁵⁵ He then gives an example: “It is raining, but it is not windy. Or else, it is raining and windy, but you know that this evening it is your turn for the supplement of soup.”⁵⁶ He believes that the strength the prisoners needed to go on was found this way. Similarly, Delbo believes that the strength to go on living was found in giving oneself a purpose. She states in her memoir that during their imprisonment, she and her block mates “spoke even more of the future, and the future acquired definition. We were making many plans. We never stopped making plans.”⁵⁷

Langer’s ideology about this seems to be at odds with Delbo, Frankl, and Levi’s ideologies. He explains that prisoners

⁵³ Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993), 92.

⁵⁴ Frankl, 76.

⁵⁵ Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 131.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁷ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 76.

had nothing to look forward to and that they were incapable of looking forward or hoping for anything because their spirits were shattered beyond repair. For many, there was no light at the end of the tunnel. Survivors' spirits were completely broken; the Nazis had taken everything from them, their family, their health, their morals, their belongings, and sometimes even their faith in God. Even liberation did not provide relief to most prisoners. Instead, they were forced to take on a whole new set of challenges. Langer writes, "the details uncovered by humiliated memory dispute the claim still advanced by many commentators that the invincible human spirit provided an armor invulnerable to Nazi assaults against the self."⁵⁸

The previous century of industrialization made central Europe one of the most advanced societies of the twentieth century but the Holocaust virtually undid everything that the European people had accomplished up until that point. According to Langer, "The quest for pinnacles that infatuated the nineteenth-century mind and left a strong imprint on our own ended in the ashpits of Auschwitz and other death camps, where upward striving could do nothing to allay the human ruin."⁵⁹ Before the Holocaust, people used the lessons of the past to explain the present; the tragedies of the past were understood as a means to an end. They were taught to believe in happy endings. As Nietzsche says, "looking into the past urges them towards the future, it incites them to engage in life, and kindles the hope that things will turn out well and that happiness is to be found behind the mountain toward which they are striding."⁶⁰ According to Langer, this is why the Holocaust is so difficult for many interviewers, and the population in general, to understand. There was no happy ending. No good came from the near extermination of the Jews and others deemed "undesirable" by the Nazis. The tragedy of the Holocaust goes against human nature and the human spirit which needs to believe in happy endings to

⁵⁸ Langer, 77.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 80.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 78.

survive: “humiliated memory runs contrary to the hopes and expectations of the audience and of its own other self...consciousness is always longing for happy endings.”⁶¹

The testimonies of survivors are repressed by humiliated memory because it requires the survivor to reveal things about themselves that were less-than-human or unhuman-like by current societal standards but that, during wartime, were required for survival. The Holocaust deprived human beings of the very things that make them human not just the physiological things such as sleeping and eating, but psychological things as well, such as their ideas of morality and right and wrong. The physical scars would eventually heal, but the emotional scars would remain far past liberation. As Langer explains, “it is clear from the struggle of many witnesses, from their expressions as well as their words, that they inhabit two worlds simultaneously: the one of ‘choiceless choice’ *then*; the other of moral evaluation *now*.”⁶²

Frankl’s experience did not seem to affect his sense of self the way it affected the others, but during his time in the camps, he carefully observed the mental states of his fellow prisoners and saw many examples of humiliated memory and the diminished self:

Under the influence of a world which no longer recognized the value of human life and human dignity, which had robbed man of his will—under this influence the personal value suffered a loss of values...he lost the feeling of being an individual, a being with a mind; he thought of himself then as only a part of an enormous mass of people, his existence descended to the level of animal life. And we, the sheep, thought of two things only—how to evade the bad dogs and how to get a little food.⁶³

⁶¹ Langer, 110.

⁶² Ibid., 83.

⁶³ Frankl, 50.

But food was scarce in the camps. Prisoners were given tiny fragments of bread with a thin spread of margarine only on certain days. The soup they were served was about as nutritious as hot water. Because of the scarcity of food, many prisoners had to resort to stealing to keep themselves alive. Stealing in the camps was often referred to as other things. Levi refers to stealing as “inheriting.”⁶⁴ In her book, *Five Chimneys*, Holocaust survivor Olga Lengyel (1908–2001) prefers to use the term “organizing” rather than stealing.⁶⁵

The prisoner, as a result of stealing, would begin to bargain with his diminished self about the acts he was committing that did not adhere to the conscience of the person he was before the camps. Levi discusses “inheriting” in Buna, a subcamp of Auschwitz:

Everything that can be stolen is stolen as soon as attention is relaxed. To avoid this, we had to learn the art of sleeping with our head on a bundle made up of our jacket and containing all our belongings...they had to be carried along always and everywhere...if I find a spoon lying around, a piece of string, a button which I can acquire without danger of punishment, I pocket them and consider them mine by full right.⁶⁶

Frankl explains that he had acquired some mittens by means of “inheriting” them from a patient who had recently died of typhus. Langer gives plenty of examples where a survivor describes how they would often, at least in some way, hope for sick patients to die so that they could get warmer clothes, better-fitting shoes, or that person’s food ration.

⁶⁴ Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 33.

⁶⁵ Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys* (Chicago, IL: Chicago, 1995), 56.

⁶⁶ Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 33–37

In another example, Lengyel writes that in the camps, stealing was often referred to as “organization.”⁶⁷ Words such as “theft” and “steal” were typically avoided, as they had, up until this point, always been used to describe a selfish act and thus went against prisoners’ ideas of morality. Stealing in the camps was different, as it was an act that was committed only to stay alive. According to Lengyel,

The washroom would have made a fine field for a moralist’s observations. Sometimes an internee was able to clean up. If she did, her clothing would have been stolen. In the camp, thievery became a science and an art. Women who had been mothers of honest families, who formerly would not have taken a hairpin, became utterly hardened thieves and never suffered the slightest feeling of remorse.⁶⁸

Clothes were rare commodities with many prisoners wearing worn mismatched shoes that were for the same foot. Many inmates would steal clothes to keep themselves alive, especially in the winter months. There was also a black market operating in the camps in which the inmates could sell clothes that were “organized” for vital necessities like bread or margarine.⁶⁹

Lengyel herself, while exhibiting several episodes of morality such as refusing to perform sexual favors for food, occasionally committed acts of “organization” to ensure her own livelihood. One of these humiliated memories took place during a barter in a camp. A woman promised Lengyel a rare food item known as a “plazki” in exchange for aspirin tablets for an earache.⁷⁰ Being a worker in the infirmary, Lengyel often carried aspirin with her. However, supplies for patients in the infirmary

⁶⁷ Lengyel, 109.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁰ Plazki is a type of potato pancake common in Poland.

were very scarce and by giving this woman aspirin, a patient who needed it more would not be able to receive any. In her testimony, Lengyel wrestles with this memory that haunted her: "I had abused my standing in the camp for personal welfare. In normal circumstances I would not have stooped so low. But I was at Auschwitz, and I was starved."⁷¹

Lengyel, and others in her position, cannot be blamed for their selfish acts. Levi states that "the ordinary moral world ceases to exist; the meanings and applications of words like 'good,' 'evil,' 'just,' and 'unjust' begin to fuse and the differences between these polar opposites become unclear."⁷² When faced with the choice between life-saving calories or to help ease the pain of another prisoner, the line between right and wrong becomes indiscernible and this moral conflict becomes a major part of humiliated memory.

Prisoners also had to constantly be on guard against "organization" and "inheritance." Weissman-Klein miraculously survived the death march that four thousand women were forced to go on when the Allies were closing in on Germany all because of the ski boots that her father had insisted she wear months prior. However, it was due to great personal sacrifice that Weissman-Klein survived. Women who previously never stole anything apathetically stole shoes off their fellow prisoners while they slept and often Weissman-Klein had to go without sleep or give up pieces of her rations to keep her boots. Weinberg was not lucky enough to have ski boots. Instead, he "inherited" socks and boots when his old ones wore out by taking them off decaying corpses he found on the death march.⁷³ In addition to valuable, life-saving articles of clothing, prisoners had to steal food as well if they wanted to stay alive. Food rations varied based on the prisoner's job but the vast majority of prisoners were not given near enough

⁷¹ Lengyel, 112.

⁷² Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 86.

⁷³ Weinberg, 102–103.

food to stay alive. Hunger and malnourishment killed slower than exposure to the elements did but they were far more brutal.

When hunger reaches the point of starvation, humans regress as their learned traditions, morals, and values give way to their pure, raw, natural survival instincts. One survivor recalls being so hungry during his imprisonment in the camps that he ate from trash cans; another survivor ate human flesh from a hand blown off in a bombing.⁷⁴ Lengyel and her bunkmates smeared toothpaste on their bread rations. Weinberg survived solely off of the sugar and chicory mixture left at the bottom of the barrels of “coffee” that they served: “the taste was revolting but it was full of calories, I doubt I would have survived without it.”⁷⁵ Prisoners became informants to the Germans or worked extremely traumatizing jobs, such as serving in the Sonderkommando, for extra portions of food, or they would secretly hope for a fellow prisoner to die or become sick so that they could eat that person’s ration of bread.⁷⁶

However, the violation of the self during the Holocaust involved so much more than just the things prisoners had to resort to in order to acquire sufficient food and clothing. Prisoners were often kept in close quarters with dozens or hundreds of others without any source of light and with nowhere to relieve themselves. An example of this is seen in the testimony of Malka D., a munitions worker in Radom, Poland. Langer quotes, “Because of some irregularity, the SS took thirty Jews and locked them in a dark cellar without windows. Malka D. was most troubled by the lack of toilet facilities. She tells the interviewer that the men tied strings around themselves so that urine wouldn’t come out.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Langer, 117.

⁷⁵ Weinberg, 76.

⁷⁶ Sonderkommando refers to Jews in charge of getting new prisoners into gas chambers, then burning their corpses in crematoriums.

⁷⁷ Langer, 113.

Jewish people had lived in Europe for hundreds of years and had established their own culture, traditions, businesses, and lifestyles. They were artists, teachers, scientists, and philosophers. Malka D. says in her testimony that they were civilized and thus horrified at being reduced to relieving themselves in front of others. Survivor Pierre T.'s testimony says the same thing: "they have made us lose our civilized ways. Gradually you become a different person. And you do things that you would *never* think you'd do."⁷⁸ Piccirillo rephrases a passage declaring that "in order to survive one must forego the notion that it is a basic human right that a person should not have to endure humiliating uncleanliness."⁷⁹

Weissman-Klein explains how she and several hundred others had contracted an intestinal disease or parasite during a march. They were given a wooden barrel and told that overfilling it would result in rampant beatings: "We had to run all night, stand in line, and plead for our turn. When the SS women came in the morning, they beat us, calling us every filthy word in their vocabulary."⁸⁰ Delbo mentions that they were unable to bathe or change their clothes for months on end. They would be shaved to ward off diseases like typhus but being allowed to bathe would have been much more effective at reducing infection rates of typhus and other diseases.⁸¹ By shaving their prisoners instead of allowing them to bathe, the Germans robbed their prisoners of their dignity.

Auschwitz survivor Jean Amery (1912–1978) describes in detail the violation and theft of dignity in the camps. During one incident, a Kapo tried to hit him and he ducked. He held onto that one piece of rebellion against his captors, stating, "I didn't stand firm like a cliff, but ducked. And still, I tried to initiate proceedings to restore my dignity, and beyond physical survival

⁷⁸ Langer, 86.

⁷⁹ Piccirillo.

⁸⁰ Weissman-Klein, 195.

⁸¹ Delbo, *None of Us Will Return*, 149–151.

that provided me with just the slightest chance to survive the nightmare morally also...the deprivation of dignity was nothing other than the potential deprivation of life.”⁸² Amery eventually committed suicide. His ability to live his life was taken from him, as well as his personal dignity which he held sacred. The right to grieve for his loss was also taken from him the same as it was taken from many Holocaust survivors, such as Edith P., who, according to Langer, “was exiled first from normal living or normal dying, and now from normal grieving.”⁸³ Edith P. also tells her interviewer of the devastation that humiliated memory wrecks on survivors: “Physical pain you can stand, but how can you bear emotional pain? My body healed, but my soul never healed. I had been humiliated. I want to share it with someone who knows me *really*. There isn’t even a grave to go and cry to. It’s not easy to live this way.”⁸⁴

It is critical that interviewers and writers not tread lightly when it comes to the concept of humiliated memory and the less-than-human aspects of Holocaust survival. Every experience must be investigated in its natural state, not censored for audiences. Langer explains that “we lack terms of discourse for such human situations, preferring to call them inhuman and thus banish them from civilized consciousness,” instead of talking about them.⁸⁵ But when it comes to trying to understand the Holocaust on a deeper level, every topic must be approached, without caution or censoring.

The human spirit needs and strives for happy endings, even when they do not exist. Many of the testimonies reviewed express the desire of the interviewer (representative of the modern population) to skip over the rough parts and instead speak chronologically about survivors’ experiences, ending with

⁸² Langer, 90. Kapo is a prisoner put in charge of other prisoners, usually in exchange for special treatment.

⁸³ Ibid., 108.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 102.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 119.

liberation. Langer states that history often gets written without these kinds of episodes of human struggle:

They remain exiled from concepts like human destiny, clinging to the stories that constitute their Holocaust reality until some way is found to regard such stories as an expression rather than a violation of contemporary history.⁸⁶

Interviewers, intellectuals, and historians have to be careful not to disregard certain uncomfortable parts of human history that do not fit in with current societal standards if they want to maintain as much accuracy as possible when documenting historical events such as the Holocaust.

Part Four: Tainted Memory and the Impromptu Self

Langer describes tainted memory as “a narrative stained by the disapproval of the survivor’s own present moral sensibility...it is a form of self-justification, a painful validation of necessary if not always admirable conduct.”⁸⁷ This kind of memory is very similar to humiliated memory in that current societal morals, values, or standards tend to condemn, even if only subconsciously, victims’ actions that were necessary to survive in the camps. However, humiliated memory dealt more with actions that violated the victims’ sense of self, such as having been forced to relieve themselves in front of others or eat trash or rotting food to survive. In contrast, tainted memory deals more with the ethical and moral choices victims made against others to either survive the camps or avoid them entirely. These choices, though necessary at the time of their occurrence, would be looked down upon now. Therefore, some survivors have trouble talking about them in interviews.

⁸⁶ Langer, 120.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 122.

To make these kinds of choices necessary for survival, two things had to happen. The first is that the victims had to become self-ish, in other words, victims had to focus on nothing but themselves if they wanted to survive. Langer explains the difference between “self-ish” and “selfish”:

The selfish act ignores the needs of others through choice when the agent is in a position to help without injuring one’s self. It is motivated by greed, malice, and indifference. The former victim who describes self-ish acts is aware of the needs of others but because of the nature of the situation is unable to choose freely the generous impulse that a compassionate nature yearns to express.⁸⁸

This is where tainted memory and humiliated memory sometimes overlap. When discussing tainted memory, Langer includes plenty of examples where survivors felt ashamed for doing nothing when witnessing atrocities committed against another person. However, their inaction would not be considered a “selfish” one since it is not motivated by greed or malice. It instead is motivated by the person’s instinctual desire to live. Doing something in some situations might have meant death for the intervener. In the context of tainted memory, refusal to act would be deemed a “self-ish” act instead.

One example of a “self-ish” act is seen in the testimony of Myra L. who describes a male neighbor whose sister-in-law came to visit him one night in the Lodz ghetto. The woman begged the man for a slice of bread for his older brother who was dying of starvation. The neighbor cried, but ultimately refused his sister-in-law stating, “I have no food myself, how can I give him my last slice of bread?”⁸⁹ This act is a self-ish one. The neighbor did not deny his brother the life-saving bread out of greed or malice, but

⁸⁸ Langer, 124.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 124.

out of the need for his own survival. Myra L. expresses later that “the survival will was so big that nobody was sacrificing himself for anybody else.”⁹⁰ This tainted memory, without a doubt, permanently scarred the younger brother, who survived, and whose older brother did not.

Another psychological insight of the diminished self apparent in Frankl’s written testimony is how the camps brought out the apathy in its inhabitants. Frankl believes this apathy was partially a defense mechanism, a self-ish act by the mind that convinced the prisoner that apathy was necessary for his own survival. In a concentration camp, the prisoner could not afford to worry about anyone else. His primary, and often only focus, was keeping his own body healthy enough to avoid the next inevitable selection. Another part of it though is

hunger, lack of sleep, and the general irritability which was another characteristic of the prisoner’s mental state. The fact that we had neither nicotine nor caffeine [commodities that prior to internment, prisoners had had for the majority of their lives] also contributed to the state of apathy and irritability.⁹¹

There are several examples of tainted memory in *Night*, a testimony written by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel (1928–2016) that describes his experiences with his father in the Auschwitz-Buchenwald camp. As a healthy fifteen-year-old at the time of his deportation to Auschwitz, the camp life was not as hard on him as it was for his fifty-year-old father. He lived in the same camp as his father and often did most of the same jobs. When his father was repeatedly beaten by Kapos for not working fast enough or marching correctly during many different job assignments, Wiesel was forced to watch in silence. However, he was not forced to

⁹⁰ Langer, 126.

⁹¹ Frankl, 62.

remain silent by the Germans, but rather by his preservation of self.

In Wiesel's first few days at Auschwitz, his father was struck so hard he fell to the ground. Wiesel recalls, "I stood petrified. My father had been struck and I had not even blinked. I watched and kept silent. Only yesterday, I would have dug my nails into this criminal's flesh. Had I changed that much? So fast?"⁹² Later, in 1944, Wiesel and his father were sent to Buna, a subcamp of Auschwitz. His father's health had already begun to decline and Wiesel was forced, yet again, to watch his father be beaten. This time, however, instead of just remaining silent, Wiesel thought about trying to leave to avoid the blows himself. The terror and heartbreak of watching his father be beaten no longer mattered to him: "I had watched it all happening without moving. I kept silent. I thought of stealing away in order not to suffer the blows myself. That was what life in a concentration camp had made of me."⁹³ Recalling when his ailing father was taken to the crematorium, Wiesel remembers: "It pained me that I could not weep, but I was out of tears. And deep inside me, if I could have searched the recesses of my feeble conscious, I might have found something like: Free at Last!"⁹⁴ Wiesel of course loved his father, but when faced with the choice between helping his father and his own personal survival, he often chose the latter. What consumes Wiesel throughout his experience in Auschwitz is what Langer calls the "impromptu self."⁹⁵

The "impromptu self," the second part of tainted memory, is the version of the self that develops spontaneously when the larger self is exposed to significant amounts of trauma. This impromptu self takes over in times where the victim has to make choices in what Langer calls "crucial moments—situations requiring a split-second response that often made the difference

⁹² Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1969), 65.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁵ Langer, 140.

between life and death.”⁹⁶ The impromptu self makes choices that a victim otherwise would probably not make. For example, one survivor named Mira B. describes her attempt to save her brother by convincing him to put on one of her dresses after being rounded up for “labor.” The brother did not believe he was going to be put to death. Instead, he believed he was merely going to be working.⁹⁷ The brother’s impromptu self never emerged because he did not believe that he was in any danger. Langer believes that “the illusion that he was still in control of part of his destiny inactivated the impromptu-self—and sealed his doom.”⁹⁸

There are plenty of other examples that show how the impromptu self sometimes saved the victim. For instance, in a testimony by Leon S., Leon printed up fake papers for himself and his Jewish wife once the Nazis arrived in Poland. The Poles discovered he was a Jew after confirming that he was circumcised and threatened to hand him over to the Germans. Leon’s impromptu self then came up with a speech delivered so well it convinced the Pole not to hand him over.⁹⁹ In another example, Irving F. hid with his wife and child, amongst other family members in a hidden cellar. When their hideout is discovered, Irving hid in a grain oven in which he is never found, while the rest of his family was taken away. He sacrificed his family to save himself: “What saved him was not a plan, but a desperate movement that preserved only him in a roomful of relatives.”¹⁰⁰

In a discussion of her job as a worker at the camp’s infirmary and the things she had to do that went against her moral compass, Lengyel recalls, “We five whose responsibility it was to bring infants into the world [while in camp] felt the burden of this monstrous conclusion which defied all human and moral law.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Langer, 151.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 154–155.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 155.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 152.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 150.

¹⁰¹ Lengyel, 113.

The Nazis did not want the prisoner's newborn infants to survive. Lengyel states that pregnant women who arrived at the camp were always sent to the left which meant certain death. Women that were very early in their pregnancy and thus sent to the right would give birth in camp. When the baby was born, both the newborn and mother were sent to the crematory, where the still-alive newborn was tossed into the crematory first as "kindling," with the mother soon to follow. However, women whose babies were stillborn or miscarried were permitted to stay in camp.¹⁰² Lengyel and the five other inmates with healthcare experience who worked in the infirmary were forced to kill newborn infants and present them as stillborn to the Germans. This way, they bargained, at least they saved the mother's life. What is viewed today as a disgusting and immoral action was necessary at Auschwitz. Lengyel painfully writes,

The Germans succeeded in making murderers of us. Our own children had perished in the gas chambers and we dispatched the lives of others before their first voices had left their tiny lungs. I try in vain to make my conscience acquit me. I marvel to what depths these Germans made us descend!¹⁰³

The impromptu self seems to work as a way to rid the victim of guilt, much like Lifton's idea of doubling. Langer explains, "once the impulse to stay alive [the impromptu-self] begins to operate, the luxury of moral constraint temporarily disappears."¹⁰⁴ The mind suppresses everything other than the urge to stay alive when exposed to significant amounts of trauma. The victims may lose all moral control and they are free from guilt while fighting to stay alive, but once the moment has passed and they are safe, the guilt returns. Perhaps this is why the liberation

¹⁰² Lengyel, 113–116.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 114.

¹⁰⁴ Langer, 150.

stories that interviewers so desperately crave never seem to satisfy. The victim, after the ordeal is over, has to live with the choices they made against people they loved to save themselves because “personal survival lives in the permanent shadow of family loss.”¹⁰⁵ Alex H., for example, expresses his desire for there to be meetings where survivors can “speak out and be reassured that [they aren’t] some kind of beast or animal.”¹⁰⁶ Another survivor, Leo G., states,

I envy people that can get out of themselves for one minute sometimes. They can laugh, enjoy themselves. Anybody in my situation cannot. How can you? How can you *enjoy* yourself? It’s almost a crime against the people you lost that you can live your life and enjoy yourself.¹⁰⁷

Delbo feels differently about this. In one of her poems called “Prayer to the Living to Forgive Them for Being Alive,” she writes about trivial things that most people are worried about, such as money, and begs people to do something meaningful with their lives so that the ones who died did not die for nothing: “I beg you, do something, learn a dance step, something to justify your existence because it would be too senseless after all for so many to have died while you live doing nothing with your life.”¹⁰⁸ Levi explains his thoughts about guilt or shame after liberation:

In the majority of cases, the hour of liberation was neither joyful nor lighthearted. For most it occurred against a tragic background of destruction, slaughter, and suffering. Just as they felt they were again becoming men, that is, responsible, the

¹⁰⁵ Langer, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 145.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 146.

¹⁰⁸ Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, 230.

sorrows of men returned: the sorrow of the dispersed or lost family; the universal suffering all around; their own exhaustion...the problems of a life to begin all over again amid the rubble, and often alone.¹⁰⁹

The dormant emotional trauma that had no place in the camps often returned at the point of liberation. To many survivors, enjoying what was left of their lives after liberation felt like a crime against the people they loved and lost.

Despite all the good qualities that oral testimonies provide, the ones dealing with tainted memory are a struggle. Langer contends that,

Oddly enough, [survivors] say little of their Nazi oppressors, they wrestle instead with the dilemma of their own identity and the impossibility of functioning as a normal self. They struggle with the incompatibility between the impromptu-self that endured atrocity and the self that sought reintegration into society after liberation.¹¹⁰

Weinberg discusses this same dilemma after his liberation by American GIs at Buchenwald. He explains, "While day-to-day survival had been my main concern, I had not done much thinking, so liberation called for a reappraisal of my life."¹¹¹ On Liberation Day, as Weissman-Klein viewed a white flag waving over a Czech church steeple, she realized she should be happy. She even hides another one of their friends' death from a mutual friend because Liberation Day is supposed to be happy. But after the trauma she had endured over the past four years, she felt anything but happy:

¹⁰⁹ Levi, "Shame," 57.

¹¹⁰ Langer, 148.

¹¹¹ Weinberg, 115.

As I look back now, trying to recall my feelings during those first hours, I actually think that there were none. My mind was so dull, my nerves so worn from waiting, that only an emotionless vacuum remained. Like many of the other girls I just sat and waited for whatever would happen next.¹¹²

Many survivors had no family, no home, and no money once liberated; they had nothing left to return to. They just had to live day-by-day, similar to what they were doing before liberation.

Part Five: Unheroic Memory and the Diminished Self

Finally, this last hidden memory explores the diminished self as it deals with Langer's term "unheroic memory."¹¹³ Langer critiques several Holocaust scholars whose works include several accounts of martyrdom, self-sacrifice, or heroism. Langer believes that most commentators, Holocaust historians, and authors

cling to a grammar of heroism and martyrdom to protect the idea that the Nazi assault on the body and spirit of its victims did no fundamental damage to our cherished belief that, even in the most adverse circumstances, character is instinctively allied to the good.¹¹⁴

Langer compares these commentators to Dante and Virgil walking through the inferno with flowers sprung about. While the setting is nice, they are still in the inferno.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Weissman-Klein, 213.

¹¹³ Langer, 169.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 162.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 165.

One testimony tells of a young Jewish teen named Matilda who chose not to run away from the Nazis with her friends but instead chose to go home and be with her family. Most commentators see her actions as heroic. But Matilda did not have any idea what would happen to her if she chose to stay with her family, so she did not make this kind of a decision while knowing the consequences. Therefore, “[h]er decision is, of course, admirable, though made at a time when the *certainty* of dying had not yet been absolutely established.”¹¹⁶ Langer then argues that commentators and interviewers are, by elevating Matilda to heroism, essentially condemning her friends who chose to flee. Matilda, having had all the information, might have chosen another path. She may have lived through years of torture only to be “liberated” and discover that her entire life she knew, including all her family members, was gone. *That* is unheroic memory.

More examples can be found in Weissman-Klein’s memoir. Her brother Arthur, mentioned earlier, registered himself for German labor despite his family protesting against it after hearing what happens to those who willingly go. His actions can be seen by his family, friends, and neighbors as heroic during the time, but he did not believe the stories of what would happen to him for having gone, or he might have chosen otherwise. His impromptu self never activated since he was not fearful for his life. After having been told by her father not to leave her mother, young Weissman-Klein jumped out of a truck that was meant to carry her to a different camp than her mother:

Just then Merin [a high-ranking Jewish leader from Sosnowitz who cooperates with the Germans in rounding up the Jews; Weissman-Klein calls him the King of the Jews] passed. He looked at me, and with strength unexpected in that little man, he picked me up and threw me back onto the truck. ‘You are too young to die.’ Strange that the man

¹¹⁶ Langer, 166.

who sent my mother to death had pushed me into the arms of life.¹¹⁷

Weissman-Klein's actions could be seen as heroic, but at this point, she had not yet seen a concentration camp so she was not fearful of what would have happened to her if she had not been pushed back onto the truck. She just wanted to go with her mother.

Lengyel lived in Hungary in 1944 with her parents, her husband, and her two sons. In her testimony, she gives two major accounts of unheroic memory, choices she made that unknowingly led to her family's demise. The first happened while they were still in Hungary. Her husband was arrested and was to be deported to "Germany" right away to work as a doctor. She insisted that the Germans allow his family to go with him, but she unknowingly led them to Auschwitz with her husband.¹¹⁸ The second occurred while deboarding the train that carried them there. Her youngest son was sent to the left, or to "the children's and old persons camp" as the Germans called it. Her oldest son was younger than twelve but large for his age. The German asked her if he was able to work, stating that he looked at least twelve.¹¹⁹ Had Lengyel said he was old enough, he would have been sent to work and had a chance to survive. However, she states that: "I wanted to spare him from labors that might prove too arduous for him...How could I have known? I had spared them from hard work, but I had condemned my son and my mother to death in the gas chambers."¹²⁰ By trying to save her family, she had condemned them to death, albeit unintentionally.

From the immediate post-war period and well into the twenty-first century, the Jewish Councils that ran the ghettos under Nazi supervision were hit with heavy criticism. They were accused of "complying" or "coordinating" with the Germans by allowing

¹¹⁷ Weissman-Klein, 91.

¹¹⁸ Lengyel, 14.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 24.

them to transport the more vulnerable citizens of the ghettos for “resettlement.” The Councils knew, though, that “it was impossible to save the entire ghetto community...since not all Jews could be saved, it was better to deliver to the Nazi Moloch those ghetto dwellers with little or no chance of survival in order to save others.”¹²¹ The Councils were put into an impossible situation, one where morals could not reside. Logic had to overrule morality if they were to have any hope at all of saving any Jews from deportation. Because they made this decision based on logic and not morality, they cannot be held accountable for a decision that led to death. The decision to give up some to save others can be looked at heroically, while in contrast, the decision not to stage resistance may be looked at by some as unheroic. The reality is that the situation (and most situations during the Holocaust) does not allow for judgment of either kind.

Langer states that “unheroic memory is disheartened by the subversive realities that it recovers.”¹²² As understanding as it is to hope for episodes of heroism and defiance in Holocaust testimonies, it is an unrealistic and nearly impossible expectation. The experiences victims suffered took away their humanity and diminished their spirit and sense of self to the point where all actions taken were those necessary for survival. Once physiological survival became near-certain, usually, at the point of liberation, unheroic memory came back to haunt the survivors of the camps in the form of both actions and inactions. Their minds began to bargain with themselves, asking things such as “why didn’t I resist?”

Levi recalls a man who had resisted and was then hung just days before the Soviet soldiers liberated the camp. His last words sought to assure his fellow prisoners, “Don’t worry, I’m the last one.”¹²³ Levi then reflects upon this, stating that he did not think much of the man’s last words until after liberation: “This is a

¹²¹ Trunk, 169.

¹²² Langer, 169.

¹²³ Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 149.

thought that then just barely grazed us, but that returned ‘afterward’: you could have, you certainly should have.”¹²⁴ Future regret over inaction is a common example of unheroic memory.

Chaim E., a survivor who was part of a small detail of workers at Sobibor, was one of ten men who tried to escape while on a work assignment by killing their Ukrainian guards and running into the forest. While some may see this action as heroic or defiant, Chaim E. did not: “We were not human beings, we were just robots who happened to eat and happened to do things...so all the logic doesn’t apply there.”¹²⁵ He believed that heroism could not exist in the kind of circumstances the victims were in. He recalls, “urgent immediate needs crippled such ideas.”¹²⁶ Heroism cannot exist in a situation where the hero has no choice, as Chaim E. claimed. Later in his testimony he also explained that “idealistic things didn’t have any place there; only survival for your skin, that’s what counted.”¹²⁷ Surviving mattered; little else did.

Langer argues that the integrity of Holocaust testimonies will only be protected by the interviewers’ ability to accept that their ideas of heroism and defiance are different than the way that survivors see them. Everything the survivors did came down to the human instinct for survival. Ideals such as heroism had no place in such a traumatic event. It seems Weinberg agrees with Langer on this point when he proclaims, “I am thankful, but never proud, to have survived the camps. In my view we, the survivors, are all somewhat compromised. We did not sacrifice our lives so that others might perhaps stand a slightly better chance at living.”¹²⁸ He then explains what it is that makes a survivor:

As it is, survival feels less like a heroic act than like
having won a lottery against truly astronomical

¹²⁴ Levi, “Shame,” 64.

¹²⁵ Langer, 178.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹²⁸ Weinberg, 108.

odds. It is easy to fantasize that there must have been some underlying reason for one's survival, but in the end it was probably just a combination of chance and an aptitude for self-preservation.¹²⁹

He is not alone in this theory. Levi believes some qualities were apparent in people who happened to survive, usually qualities that are seen as negative outside of the context of the Holocaust. He says several times that thieves, swindlers, and the like tended to survive while all the morally just prisoners died.¹³⁰ However, he also believes that in the end, survival came down to luck, and he admits that luck, or chance, was probably the biggest factor.

Ideals such as heroism were also illogical. Hypothetically, even if the will to survive was taken out of the equation and acts committed by survivors were purely heroic in nature and not out of instinct for survival, many survivors still would not have acted out of heroism because one defiant action usually led to reprisals. During the death march that Weissman Klein was in, fourteen women were lined up in front of the others and shot by the SS for their attempt to escape.¹³¹ In the days leading up to this, she had been planning her own escape with four of her friends. Her close friend, Ilse, finally told Weissman-Klein that she was afraid:

Until then I had not been afraid; excitement had buried my fear. Only when Ilse showed her fear did my doubts come to the surface. What if our plan did not go well? The decision [to escape] was not mine alone: Ilse's life was as dear to me as my own. At that moment I vowed that I would never try to escape, never take our lives into my own hands.¹³²

¹²⁹ Weinberg, 106.

¹³⁰ Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 97.

¹³¹ Weissman-Klein, 189.

¹³² Ibid., 191.

Weissman-Klein could hear the artillery fire of the Russian army so close behind them. If they escaped, they would have just had to hide and wait for nightfall to be liberated and, had the decision affected her alone, she may have done so. But she could not stand the reprisals for her actions affecting her friends or other innocent women who had chosen to stay with the formation.¹³³

Another example of repressed heroism can be read in Chaim E.'s testimony. After his work detail tried to escape, they witnessed reprisals. Survivor Luna K. reminds us that anyone “‘who felt that he wanted to perform an act of resistance was an individual who had to make a conscious choice right then and there, that he will not only commit the rebellious act, but he along with himself will take with him scores of people.’”¹³⁴ A defiant act might not only get the perpetrator shot, but it might get innocent victims shot along with him. The Nazis also might have chosen to leave the perpetrator alive so that he can see the deaths that his “heroic” action brought upon his fellow innocents. Many of the survivors Langer writes about describe acts of defiance or heroism as “foolish,” knowing that any action done by them could kill dozens of innocent people. Acts such as these were likened to murder by survivors.

The Jewish Councils (mentioned previously) were also repressed from heroic acts because of, amongst many things, the fear of reprisals. In the Vilna ghetto on July 22, 1943, members of the Jewish United Partisan Organization escaped. When they were caught, the Gestapo chief ordered the escapees’ families to be delivered to him, as well as the families of the leaders of their labor units. If the escapee had no family, then his neighbors, and in some cases his entire building, would be rounded up and shot. One witness wrote down the following:

The responsibility for these deaths falls onto those
who betrayed our ghetto community and all its

¹³³ Weissman-Klein, 210.

¹³⁴ Langer, 181.

serious tasks in the full knowledge that they were endangering the existence of our entire ghetto and the lives of their loved ones in the first place. They are responsible for the spilt blood.¹³⁵

Langer analyzes a study done by Charles Taylor, named *Sources of the Self: The Making of a Modern Identity*, in which Taylor speaks about what he calls “the good life,” or, in other words, the life that existed for the survivors before the Holocaust. When imprisoned in the camps, “the ‘good life’ and the ‘right thing to do’ lost their relevance because particular situations did not allow the luxury of their expression.”¹³⁶ The “goods that command our awe” is what Taylor uses to describe things like family unity, parental devotion, and sibling loyalty, all of which are things that are lost in the Holocaust. Langer concludes that,

[W]hen the ‘goods that command our awe’ suddenly collapse on the ramp at Auschwitz, then identity groped for alternative moorings—and somewhere in our philosophical investigations, we must find room for the diminished self that resulted, the one whose voice echoes sadly but frankly from the recollections of unheroic memory.¹³⁷

Conclusion

Langer’s work, the information and analysis provided in the additional testimonies, and Viktor Frankl’s psychological insight help put the study of Holocaust testimonies into an entirely new perspective that allows readers to understand the tragedy on an even deeper level. It would be naive to believe that the Holocaust ended at the point of liberation because the ramifications of the

¹³⁵ Trunk, 183.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 199.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 200.

Holocaust are everywhere, not only living in the memories of the survivors but in the absence of the ones who did not survive. To honor their memory, survivors share their stories, and it is the duty of contemporary society to listen. To understand Holocaust testimony, it is imperative to understand these types of memories—deep, anguished, humiliated, tainted, and unheroic—in the context of the situation in which they were experienced. Attempting to understand these testimonies using contemporary standards runs the risk of misinterpreting or not absorbing the information, ultimately changing the historiography of the Holocaust.

With deep memory, survivors can unconsciously omit emotional information and focus only on concrete facts to protect their minds from going “back there.” With anguished memory as well, survivors may sometimes be hesitant to give information: what happened to them during the Holocaust and the life they live now are two completely different worlds. Some may have a hard time believing their own memories because their experience was so unprecedented; it happened in what was supposed to be one of the most advanced, modernized civilizations of the world. In some cases, shame may prevent survivors from revealing events that violated their dignity, as in the case of humiliated memory. Similarly, the guilt of the tainted memory may prevent them from revealing events that forced them to violate their ideas of morality. Finally, many survivors do not see their actions as heroic; they were forced into situations that gave them no opportunity to act heroically. With unheroic memory, survivors often recall that the most heroic thing one could do was usually nothing at all.

Understanding these types of memory by listening to both oral and written testimonies is crucial to understanding the whole picture of the Holocaust, not just the general frame. It is the responsibility of the coming generations of humanity to acknowledge and understand the testimonies provided by the survivors, to fight against the denial of the Holocaust, and to prevent the history of this genocide from repeating itself. But there are many stories that will forever go unheard and many questions

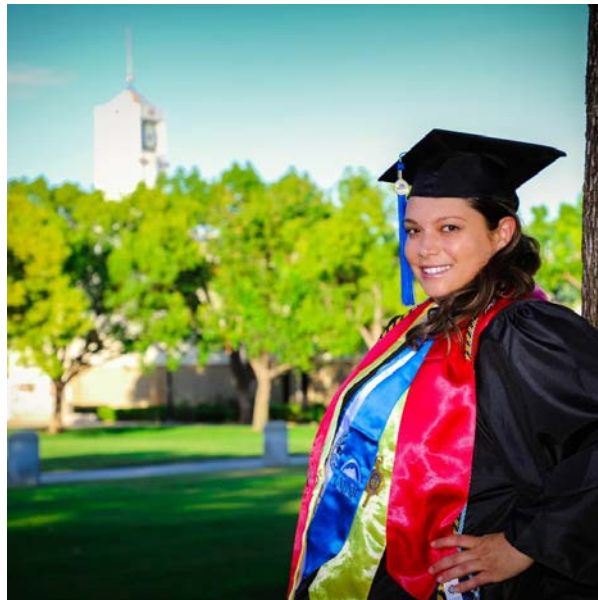
that will forever go unanswered. The answer to those questions can only be found in the ashes, bones, and blood buried beneath the soil of Eastern Europe, or in the mass graves deep beneath the Nazi killing fields. Traces will forever be found in the memories of those who lived through it and were brave enough to share their painful stories in order to honor the loved ones who never came home.

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Author Bio

Jennifer Ann Duke graduated Magna Cum Laude with her Bachelor of Arts in History in 2020 as a member of both Phi Kappa Phi and Phi Alpha Theta national honor societies. Her main areas of focus during her studies were twentieth century European History, World War II, and the Holocaust. After graduation, she continued her work at the county hospital throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, but she hopes to soon go back to school to earn her teaching credential. She then hopes to teach World History at a local high school and coach their softball team. She would like to thank Dr. Timothy Pytell for inspiring her for this research project and for developing her interest in European History throughout her time at CSUSB.



History in the Making

Sexual Violence Against Women during the Holocaust: Inside and Outside of Extermination Camps

By Jessie Williams

Abstract: The article will explore women's sexual experiences during the Holocaust, specifically the experience of those who were targeted by the Nazi regime for being "inferior" to the Aryan race. During this period, Jewish women, women categorized as "asocial" despite their German citizenship, women who identified as Romani, and Soviet or Ukrainian women were targets of sexual violence mostly at the hands of members of the Nazi Party.¹ However, these women were also assaulted by the partisans who helped hide them, liberating soldiers, and male prisoners because of the vulnerable situations many women found themselves in. This article focuses first on the importance of the female experience during the Holocaust, the dangers of the "hierarchy of suffering," and the various forms of sexual violence women faced regardless of if they were in ghettos, extermination camps, or in hiding. This article also touches on the debate about whether consensual sex existed under Nazi occupation and introduces the concept of "limited choice," a concept that expresses women's reduced choices and emphasizes that the reduction of choices forced them to choose options they would not have chosen normally when laws and morality applied. Women during the Holocaust had to make difficult choices to survive, and when faced with sexual assault or death, many women chose sexual assault; however, that does not make the sex consensual.

¹ Asocial in this context refers to women deemed to have disabilities, both mental and physical, in addition to the homeless, prostitutes, alcoholics, pacifists, and nonconformists.

In the seventy-five years that have passed since the end of World War II, scholars have been able to document and expand on a variety of topics regarding the war, but it is only recently that women's sexual experiences during the Holocaust are being discussed. Initially, when this topic was brought up by feminist scholars in the 1970s, there were concerns that discussing women's experiences would take away from the overall atrocities that made up the Holocaust. However, to understand a historical topic, it is important to understand the experiences of all groups involved, which is why the purposeful avoidance of the female sexual and reproductive experience during the Holocaust cannot continue. Part of the avoidance of this topic stems from the murky waters surrounding consent and if women could give consent due to the power imbalance that existed. Introducing the concept of "limited choice" and how that influenced survival is essential to our modern discussions about the Holocaust because understanding the sexual violence that the female victims went through will deepen the understanding of the female experience as a whole.

Before diving into the women's experiences, it is important to address the lack of exploration in this field of study. The field of women's experiences during the Holocaust by itself is a relatively new field and discussions about sexual abuse are even newer. Sonja Hedgepeth, professor of German at Middle Tennessee State University, and Jewish-American writer and researcher Rochelle Saidel are two women who have led the charge to open talks about sexual violence during the Holocaust. Even then, however, it was only in 2007 that they held a conference to specifically discuss the sexual violation of women during the Holocaust.² Part of the reason for this lack of representation is a general taboo that exists around the topic of rape and sexual abuse during the Holocaust. Victims themselves faced stigma and possible ostracism if they came forward with their experiences, which was too big of a risk

² Rochelle G. Saidel and Sonja M. Hedgepeth, eds., *Sexual Violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 1–8.

for many who just wanted to rebuild their lives.³ When those fears are combined with a sense of guilt for surviving, regardless of if they used their sexuality to do so, a wave of silence washes over the victims that prevents them from talking about their experiences.⁴ Another factor is that, in telling the story of their family, some scholars or survivors may not want to admit that their relatives were sexually violated.⁵ The factor that contributes the most to the lack of testimony or documentation surrounding this topic is that many of the victims were murdered either right after their assault or at a later point during the Holocaust.

With or without testimony, however, the topic is largely ignored because there is a concern over a “hierarchy of suffering.” The whole concept of the hierarchy of suffering revolves around pushing “testimony and stories that perpetuated the narratives of those who survived the camps to the forefront of Holocaust memory, thus making it difficult for individuals with alternative narratives to speak and be heard.”⁶ Some women survivors do not think that the rape of one woman is particularly important when depicted in the background of a massive genocide. And shockingly, there were and are historians who do not wish to trivialize the suffering brought about by the Holocaust by focusing

³ Esther Dror and Ruth Linn, “The Shame is Always There,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010) 275–289.

⁴ Saidel and Hedgepeth, 1–8.

⁵ Helene J. Sinnreich, “The Rape of Jewish Women during the Holocaust,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 108–118.

⁶ Zahava Moerdler, “Genocide Memory and Commemoration: Remembering the Holocaust and the Effects of the ‘Hierarchy of Suffering’ 70 Years Later (Part 1 of 2),” Rights Wire, Word Press, February 17, 2015. <https://rightswireblog.org/2015/02/17/genocide-memory-and-commemoration-remembering-the-holocaust-and-the-effects-of-the-hierarchy-of-suffering-70-years-later-part-1-of-2>.

on the suffering of women specifically.⁷ In the academic sphere there is a fear that “this kind of research would diminish understanding of the magnitude of the suffering during the Holocaust in general, and that of daily life in particular, under the Nazi regime.”⁸

Talking about the hierarchy of suffering and its effect on the narrative of the Holocaust is important because, if this hierarchy exists, a complete history cannot be compiled. This starts a trend that prevents people from speaking out because they see that others like them are not heard or do not see a place in the narrative for their own experiences. For example, in Zoe Waxman’s book, *Women in the Holocaust*, a survivor by the name of “Pauline” recounts being molested as a child and explains never telling her story until that interview because “in respect of what happened, [what we] suffered and saw—the humiliation in the ghetto, seeing people jumping out and burned—is this molestation important?”⁹ By only focusing on experiences that fit within an expected narrative, personal experiences are devalued, and the memory of the Holocaust is changed.

In addition to outright ignoring survivor accounts that do not fit the collective memory of the Holocaust, there is also a tendency to speak only about accounts that promote a select set of values. By choosing to only remember experiences or stories with a moral message, certain experiences are concealed, or worse, survivors feel compelled to write something that fits within the already widely accepted Holocaust narrative. On the topic of women attempting to retain their dignity by changing their Holocaust narratives to reflect moral, noble, or heroic behavior, Waxman points out:

⁷ Saidel and Hedgepeth, 1–8.

⁸ Nomi, Levenkron, “Death and the Maidens: ‘Prostitution,’ Rape, and Sexual Slavery during World War II,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 13–25.

⁹ Zoe Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

The problem with this approach is not only that it is likely that the majority of women were solely intent on trying to save themselves from an increasingly frightening fate, but also that survivors may feel pressure to present their experiences of hiding through the lens of heroism. Ironically, then, even some attempts to recapture experiences of women in hiding have tended to silence those who were raped.¹⁰

By overlooking narratives that talk about sexual violence or rape, the victims of these experiences are being written out of history and their suffering prolonged as narratives that condemned them were published.

Part of the problem when it comes to cementing discussions of rape during the Holocaust is a debate within the field of Holocaust Studies. As discussed, there is a general narrative in place that already makes it difficult to discover how often certain acts of sexual violence, such as rape, took place because the collective memory has, in some cases, purposefully excluded it. An additional problem revolves around the idea of consent during the Nazi occupation. Did consensual sex exist during the Holocaust for the women under the control of their Nazi captors? Given the general oppression and power imbalance, many feminist scholars argue that acts of consensual sex were not possible, while a counterargument can be made that rendering women incapable of making choices in extreme situations transforms these women into faceless victims.¹¹

This article operates from the point of view of a limited or reduced choice, using Lawrence Langer's concept of reduced

¹⁰ Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History*.

¹¹ Ibid.

“choiceless choices” as a guideline.¹² Langer defines a “choiceless choice” as situations “where critical decisions did not reflect options between life and death, but between one form of ‘abnormal’ response and another, both imposed by a situation that was in no way of the victim’s own choosing.”¹³ Langer expresses that none of the choices presented to the victims of the Holocaust were sensible choices by modern standards. So, while they were technically presented with choices, the choices were abnormal enough to negate the concept of choice. With the conditions that the Nazi regime imposed on their captives, standard concepts of morality had to be put aside for survival, so women were forced to make impossible decisions. While choice existed, the choices available were often matters of life and death and based on a traditional sense of morality that meant nothing to the Nazis during their war effort.

A fear of death and a determination to survive put men and women into situations where they made decisions that they would not have chosen under normal circumstances which is why this article argues for the concept of limited or reduced choice. During this period, women were trying to navigate life or death situations where their options were limited and went against what was considered “normal.” To survive, these women made decisions they would not have made if prior senses of morality and law were applicable. To further illustrate the limited choices women had and the situations that women went through that continue to be ignored in the conventional collective memory of the Holocaust, it is time to examine women’s experiences under Nazi occupation.

¹² Lawrence L. Langer, “The Dilemma of Choice in the Deathcamps,” in *Echoes From The Holocaust: Philosophical Reflections on a Dark Time*, ed. Alan Rosenberg and Gerald E. Myers (Temple University Press, 1988).

¹³ Ibid.

Forms of Sexual Violence

The key defining features of the female experience during the Holocaust are the various forms of sexual violence women underwent. While there were many nonsexual forms of violence during the Holocaust, sexual violence is important to note on its own because it includes attacks on the femininity of the women themselves and forms of violence with sexual connotations that are otherwise ignored. Discussing the impact of gender roles and the upbringing of many of the women, Jewish or otherwise, extends the forms of sexual abuse they faced both physically and emotionally. This is a crucial contribution to World War II history.¹⁴

Forced Sterilization

While it is well documented that the Nazis were fighting a war against people they considered inferior, the Jewish population being the most well-known, the Nazis were determined to destroy any people that they believed were holding back the Aryan race. This meant that German citizens who carried traits believed to be undesirable were subject to laws governing birth and offspring. In 1933, the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring was enacted. Under this law, German citizens who were identified as having congenital disabilities were forcibly sterilized.¹⁵ This law was followed in 1935 by the Lebensborn program which was meant to strengthen the Aryan race with a

¹⁴ Brigitte Halbmayr, "Sexualized Violence against Women during Nazi 'Racial' Persecution," in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish women during the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 29–40.

¹⁵ Ellen Ben-Sefer, "Forced Sterilization and Abortion as Sexual Abuse," in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 156–170.

focus on pureblood couplings between German people.¹⁶ These purity laws soon spilled over to affect couples where one partner was Jewish because of the Nazi desire to deal with “The Jewish Problem” that they believed was contaminating Aryan blood.¹⁷ If it was discovered that the woman in these mixed couplings was pregnant, then their fetus was aborted, and the woman forcibly sterilized after.¹⁸ Other groups that found themselves victims of the Nazi’s racial policies include the Romani and mixed-race Germans, in particular, the Afro-Germans, who were singled out, and roughly 385 to 500 of their children were forcibly sterilized simply because of their racial background.¹⁹

Once inside the camps, women’s forced sterilization did not end and often veered into the realm of pseudo-science. Auschwitz and its infamous Block 10, for example, is well known for the experiments on women’s reproductive organs and forced sterilization that took place via radiation, injections, and surgery.²⁰ These sterilizations and experiments related to sterilization took place because of the Nazi’s interest in quicker and easier mass sterilizations that would allow them to continue to make use of slave labor. According to Viktor Brack (1904–1948), a defendant in the Nuremberg trials and the organizer of the Nazis’ euthanasia program, approximately three million Jewish men and women that were fit to work could “only be suitable [slave] workers if they were rendered incapable of reproduction.”²¹ The experiments conducted were poorly performed and often injured or killed the victims involved who were rarely if ever told why they were experimented on.

¹⁶ Ben-Sefer, 156–170.

¹⁷ The “Jewish Problem” was a belief endorsed by Hitler that Jewish people were a disease that needed to be stopped, and these were the first steps taken towards his goal of extermination.

¹⁸ Ben-Sefer, 156–170.

¹⁹ Ibid., 156–170. The Romani are a group of Indo-Aryan nomadic people who have been subjects of persecution over the course of history.

²⁰ Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History*.

²¹ Ben-Sefer, 156–170.

Forced Abortion

Given how much the Nazis wanted to control the birth of undesirable offspring from races they viewed as inferior, it is no surprise that abortion became so common during the Nazi regime. Originally, abortion was illegal in Germany but many Jewish women in Germany saw the coming change and sought out illegal abortions to avoid bringing children into a world where they would be seen as an enemy of the Nazi state.²² By 1938, abortion for Jewish women was made legal, and by 1941, in many Ghettos, Jewish couples had been forbidden to marry or have children, so women pregnant up to three months had to have abortions.²³ Wards in hospitals were converted for the express purpose of aborting the fetuses of these women, however, secret operations were performed by underground doctors as well. Due to their subversive nature, it is hard to gauge the exact number of women who got abortions this way.²⁴ Regardless of whether the mother was compelled by others to give birth or if she made the decision herself given the fact that pregnancy was punishable by death, this meant that her abortion was still forced given the situation and limited choices these women had on hand.²⁵

Moving onto forced abortions in the camps during this period of extreme instability, abortions can be divided into two categories: forced abortions ordered by Nazis and abortions performed by in-camp doctors or fellow inmates to save the life of the mother, sometimes against the mother's wishes. Birth within most labor camps was forbidden and abortions were forced.²⁶ In death camps, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, if a woman was discovered to be pregnant, she was automatically sent to the gas chambers. Even if the pregnancy was not discovered, it was still a

²² Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: a Feminist History*.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ben-Sefer, 156–170.

²⁶ Ibid.

death sentence for the baby and mother when they were found out.²⁷ Secret abortions were conducted in all camps to save at least the mother's life since the discovery of pregnancy or birth was a death sentence. A gynecologist imprisoned in Auschwitz named Gisella Perl describes carrying out abortions in the camp in her own words:

On dark nights when everyone else was sleeping in dark corners of the camp, in the toilet, on the floor, without a drop of water, I delivered their babies. First I took the nine-month pregnancies, I accelerated the birth by the rupture of membranes, and usually within one or two days spontaneous birth took place without further intervention. Or I produced dilation with my fingers, inverted the embryo and thus brought it to life. In the dark, always hurried, in the midst of filth and dirt. After the child had been delivered, I quickly bandaged the mother's abdomen and sent her back to work... I delivered women pregnant in the eighth, seventh, sixth, fifth month, always in a hurry, always with my five fingers, in the dark, under terrible conditions.²⁸

An inmate physician, also from Auschwitz, named Lucie Adelsberger, admits to performing secret abortions on inmates in the camp when she writes, "the child had to die so that the life of the mother could be saved."²⁹ A perfect example of limited choice during this time was one of Adelsberger's patients who came to her for a secret abortion because she was a mother of three children who were in hiding and she "wished to do anything possible that

²⁷ Ben-Sefer, 156-170.

²⁸ Ibid., 156-170.

²⁹ Ibid., 156-170.

would enable her to survive and be reunited with her children.”³⁰ Adelsberger’s patient had the limited choice of doing anything possible to ensure her survival or adhering to the moral mindset of pre-war Germany where abortion was uncommon and a person faced serious stigma if discovered. Abortions were mostly done only if a mother’s life was in danger, and in this case, it was.

Humiliation

A key concept to understand when it comes to the topic of humiliation is what historian Brigitte Halbmayer defines as sexualized violence: “the term sexualized violence makes it clear that male violence against females is not about sexuality but is a show of power on the part of the perpetrator and includes many forms of violence with sexual connotations such as humiliation.”³¹ The point of sexualized violence is that there are forms of violence or actions committed via sexuality against the most intimate parts of a person. Humiliation was a tactic used often and that could be applied to most women regardless of religious background simply because of gender norms at the time. An example of this would be the shaving of body hair that all prisoners in the camps were forced to undergo for supposedly “hygienic reasons,” such as the prevention of lice. For many women, however, the shaving of their hair counted as a form of humiliation, in part because the procedure of shearing head, armpit, and public hair was often done either by men or in the presence of men, but also because of the stigma the Nazis were purposely inflicting on them. The Nazis intended to make the women feel weak and therefore easier to control.³² The act of shaving the women’s hair resulted in many women seeing themselves as “sub-human” because they lost a key identifying trait of their gender and femininity, which was very

³⁰ Ben-Sefer, 156–170.

³¹ Halbmayer, 29–40.

³² Ibid., 29–40.

demoralizing.³³ Halbmayer points out that, “Shaving heads was regarded as a violation of the body’s integrity and a negation of individual and gender specific identity.”³⁴

With this in mind, the act of shaving the women’s hair was more than just humiliating; it was a form of sexualized violence. In addition to the shaving of their hair, women were forced to strip naked in front of men to be decontaminated when they entered camps and to have their bodies searched for valuables.³⁵ For many women, a key defining trait of their femininity is their hair and without it, they could not outwardly express themselves as individuals, unlike men whose gender role did not place a lot of significance on the length of their hair. When discussing how the women in the shower rooms would cover their shorn heads instead of their naked bodies when SS guards walked in, a Czech survivor named Libuse Nachtmanova explains that shorn women were “more ashamed of the loss of their hair than their nudity.”³⁶ Particularly embarrassing for women was the fact that they had to relieve themselves in the presence of SS guards and the male prisoners.³⁷ Women who could still menstruate had to walk around with their menstruation dripping down their legs without sanitary napkins or anything of the sort. However, it was the loss of the ability to menstruate altogether that humiliated women who worried that it would cause them to become infertile.³⁸

³³ Monika J. Flaschka, “‘Only Pretty Women Were Raped’: The Effect of Sexual Violence on Gender Identities in the Concentration Camps,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 77–89.

³⁴ Halbmayer, 29–40.

³⁵ Ibid., 29–40.

³⁶ Ibid., 29–40.

³⁷ Ibid., 29–40.

³⁸ Ibid., 29–40.

Rape

There is a long history of victims of sexual abuse staying silent because they fear being blamed for what happened to them and as discussed in the above sections, it is difficult for anyone with a unique narrative to talk about their experiences without getting shut down by others. One problem that Holocaust victims who suffered sexual abuse faced is that for a period there was a belief that German men or members of the SS rarely raped Jewish women because of the concept of *Rassenschande*. This anti-miscegenation concept in Nazi German racial policy barred sexual relations between Aryans and non-Aryans.³⁹ However, Nazi policies were not always strictly followed depending on the region and the general timing of the policy. In addition, many victims of sexual abuse at the hands of Germans or regional soldiers working with the Germans were killed after they were sexually assaulted so they were not able to report their experience. If there is no living victim, then *Rassenschande* does not matter. Women who could not pass as Aryan or were part of groups considered inferior by the Germans were at risk of sexual assault regardless of the location or their circumstances during the Holocaust. Women who spent time in ghettos, labor camps, and hiding have recorded testimonies about rape during the Holocaust. Even the liberation of women from the control of the Germans brought with it the risk of rape.

During the Holocaust, women were raped throughout Nazi-occupied Germany by various people who held some type of power over them. The offenders ranged from Nazi soldiers to local peoples assisting the Nazis, to fellow Jewish people, and the partisans that assisted many women in hiding. Within the Ghettos, despite the order preventing Nazis from looting Jewish houses and the *Rassenschande*, rape still occurred. A Warsaw doctor spoke of it saying, “One continually hears of the raping of Jewish girls in

³⁹ Eva Fodelman, “Sexual Abuse of Jewish Woman during and after the Holocaust: a Psychological Perspective,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 255–272.

Warsaw. The Germans suddenly enter a house and rape fifteen or sixteen year-old girls in the presence of their parents and relatives.”⁴⁰ The rapes became so commonplace that people rarely batted an eye. Within concentration and labor camps, rape was still something women had to fear from SS soldiers or fellow inmates if they were in a mixed-gender camp. A survivor named Paula N. recalls a pregnant woman being gang-raped by four German guards for trying to avoid deportation to Stutthof.⁴¹ For women, it is clear that the risk of rape and other acts of sexual violence did not disappear once out of the ghettos.

Women who attempted to avoid capture by hiding were still vulnerable during this time both because they were often hiding on their own and because of the risks associated with being found which promoted their silence. These women were “surviving on the margins of society, and this made them extremely vulnerable.”⁴² Women in hiding could be “attacked by the people who sheltered them and exploited their absolute dependency...sometimes women were attacked by other Jews hiding with them.”⁴³ A male survivor going by the name of Reuven gave testimony to authors Esther Dror and Turh Linn about the Russian Partisans who accepted himself, his mother, and his younger brother into their group but the price for their protection was the sexual abuse and rape his mother as they did to all the women they accepted.⁴⁴ In response to their question of “What did the partisans do, the Russians?”⁴⁵ he replied: “Drink, right? And when they drink what do they want? What do they want, to ‘screw.’ Whom? They had women.”⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Sinnreich, 108–118.

⁴¹ Ibid., 108–118.

⁴² Waxman, “Rape and Sexual Abuse in Hiding,” 124–133.

⁴³ Levenkron, 13–25.

⁴⁴ Dror and Linn, 275–289.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 275–289.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 275–289.

Reuven went on to say that “in war everything is allowed...it was the norm.”⁴⁷ This brings up the concept of limited choice once again. Reuven’s mother expresses that, from her perspective, what she had to do to ensure their survival was shameful: “I was ashamed, but I knew it was part of life. If you want to live, because, otherwise, he could have put a bullet through your head, and it would be all over.”⁴⁸ However, her choices were limited. His mother was a single woman trying to ensure the survival of her family and the Russian Partisans promised protection and resources that in the end did play a role in their survival. Once survival was no longer the utmost concern and choices were no longer limited, many women were able to look back on their past actions and feel shame because the reduction of choices forced them to choose options they would not have chosen normally if the laws and morality they were raised with still applied.

Even liberation did not spare women from the possibility of rape because liberators often raped women under the mindset that the women should be grateful that they were being saved. So grateful that they should repay them with sex. Many women have shared their fear of Russian liberators because they were known for raping the women they liberated in addition to raping German women if captured.⁴⁹ A Jewish woman named Ellen Getz was found and raped in a basement by Russian soldiers after the capture of Germany.⁵⁰ When it was explained that Ellen was Jewish and someone the Nazis had focused their aggression on, the Russian soldiers replied, “A woman is a woman,” showing no regard for the plight of Ellen and other women who lived under the Nazi regime.⁵¹ With the prospect of freedom being both unsure and carrying its own risk of sexual assault, women continued to suffer

⁴⁷ Dror and Linn, 275–289.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 275–289.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 275–289.

⁵⁰ Levenkron, 13–25.

⁵¹ Ibid., 13–25.

even once it was safe to leave hiding or they were liberated from camps.

Brothels

A debated part of the topic of brothels is whether Jewish women were forced to serve as sexual outlets in the brothels. Some testimonies talk about Jewish women working in the brothels but officially there is little proof that Jewish women were purposefully sought out for this work because of the racial purity laws that existed. However, as talked about before, the laws did not protect Jewish women. If anything, these laws just guaranteed that if a Jewish woman was assaulted by an Aryan man, it was done in secret or they were killed after. Historian Helene Sinnreich argues that,

According to German regulations, Jewish women were not supposed to work in official brothels servicing Germans...this was reiterated in another order in March of 1942. This reissuing of the regulation is an indication that it was probably not being followed.⁵²

In addition to the reissuing of regulations for the brothels, given the fact it is well documented that Jewish women were sexually assaulted by SS members, it is doubtful that camp brothels would have strictly followed orders, especially since some camps had sexual assault and sexual violation built into the camp culture. Since there is evidence of Jewish women being sexually abused or raped by SS guards in extermination camps such as Treblinka, it is possible that Jewish women were not reported as Jewish but still

⁵² Sinnreich, 108–118.

put in the brothels.⁵³ Regardless of whether Jewish women were in the brothels, women were still being exploited which makes this an important historical topic that needs to be explored and talked about.

While evidence of Jewish women being knowingly put into brothels is scarce, there is testimony that proves that Jewish women were forced to work in brothels and service privileged prisoners. One Jewish woman, choosing to identify as Fela F., testified that two of her friends were “made from them a mess” after being taken to the prostitution block.⁵⁴ The fact that brothels existed within concentration camps shines a light on a new form of the Nazi’s depravity. It shows that Nazis were willing to exploit women and put them through repetitive bouts of sexual assault to motivate male prisoners as well as turn male victims into perpetrators.

In traditional Holocaust history, the notion of brothels existing was generally ignored by historians but, like other topics related to the female experience during the Holocaust, this one also eventually got the attention it deserved. The main purpose for the creation of brothels was to motivate prisoners, who the Nazis used as forced labor, to help supply the war with the creation of goods, like shoes, or raw materials like stone. For example, in 1941 Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) visited the Mauthausen concentration camp. Following that visit, he ordered the establishment of two brothel barracks in those camps to increase production using the brothels as an incentive for male prisoners.⁵⁵ Prisoner labor was the driving force for many Nazi projects, but their efficiency was low compared to civilian labor forces because of inhumane conditions in the camps, low food rations, poor hygiene, and daily violence. In addition, high productivity went

⁵³ Robert Sommer, “Sexual Exploitation of Women in Nazi Concentration Camp Brothels,” in *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 45–55.

⁵⁴ Sinnreich, 108–118.

⁵⁵ Sommer, 45–55.

against many of the prisoner's survival strategies since they feared both using too much of their limited energy and being killed if they were no longer needed because they finished projects too quickly.⁵⁶ So, many male prisoners were turned into perpetrators of sexual violence against female inmates when "[w]omen were forced to serve as sex laborers as an incentive and privilege for some male prisoners."⁵⁷

A survival strategy that some of the women used in the brothels, ghettos, and in camps where male and female prisoners could meet, were "rational relationships," a term coined by historian Anna Hajkova.⁵⁸ In these rational relationships,

men would provide women with food and protection and receive sexual services in exchange. In the case of the camp brothels...in addition to giving their chosen women extra food rations and protection, men would seek to spare them by bribing other men not to have sex with them.⁵⁹

A situation such as this is a good example of the limited or reduced choices that women had during the Holocaust. As stated above, some women tried to resist working in the brothels but knew they did not have a choice. In the end, it was "work in the brothels or be killed." Under these unique circumstances, the women chose an option that, while not something they would have done under normal circumstances, secured their survival using what was available, which in this case was their sexuality. However, even if this did work to their advantage, it does not negate the fact that these women were presented with limited options. Even strict

⁵⁶ Sommer, 45–55.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 45–55.

⁵⁸ Anna Hajkova, "The structures of female behavior in Theresienstadt," in *Genocide and Gender: Jewish Women in the National Socialist Camp System*, ed. Gisela Bock (Frankfurt, 2005).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

definitions of words like “prostitution” do not properly define the situations many women found themselves in. Not when arrangements that traded sex for valuable resources could change everything. For many of these women, the options were sexual assault or death, and the decision to pick sexual assault does not change the fact that rape is rape.

Conclusion

For decades after the Holocaust, the topic of focus was on the atrocities committed as a whole and any attempt to focus on the plight of a specific group of people was ignored because there was a general patriarchal narrative that no one wanted to disrupt with a taboo of speaking about sexualized violence. Women were in a vulnerable position during the Holocaust and numerous factors, such as shame and the concept of a hierarchy of suffering, kept many women from speaking out about their experiences. Women were vulnerable to sexual assault, sexual abuse, rape, humiliation, forced abortion, and forced sterilization, in addition to the traditionally understood risks associated with the Holocaust. There is no hierarchy of suffering and that very concept keeps the atrocities of the Holocaust from being fully understood. It is important to emphasize once again that during this time women were in an impossible position where choices, while they existed, were limited and rarely anything a woman would have chosen before the outbreak of the war. During this period women made decisions they would not have made under normal circumstances to survive because any undesirable option is often better than death.

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From Concubine to Ruler: The Lives of Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager

By Hannah Ferla

Abstract: Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi were the only two women to hold full control over China. They lived during different periods in Chinese history, but they accomplished the same goal. This paper will begin with the history of these two remarkable women, and it will give some background information on the respective dynasties that they lived under, the Tang (618-907) and Qing (1644-1900).¹ Then, the reader will learn about their journeys from the concubines of emperors to the most powerful people in China. Next, this article will cover the interesting information about Empress Dowager Cixi that Princess Der Ling and Sara Pike Conger wrote about in their books. Both authors had a personal relationship with Empress Dowager Cixi. Finally, the article will address some similarities and differences between Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi. The purpose of this article is to convey, not how effective Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi were as rulers of China, but the abilities of these women to rise above their circumstances and become the rulers of a great empire.

Emperor Wu Zetian (r. 624–705) and Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) were remarkable women from Chinese history who began their time at the palace, located in Chang'an for Emperor Wu Zetian's rule and in Beijing for Empress Dowager Cixi's rule,

¹ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History: China*, Second Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 108, 220

as concubines to the emperor.² To become a concubine, the Empress Dowager typically selected a girl from a long list of women based on astrology.³ Then, the empress dowager and the emperor picked the future concubine from a group of about twenty women following an audience.⁴ Despite the luxury of the palace, life as a concubine was not easy for many reasons, some of which include never returning home and “spend[ing] the rest of her life in strict seclusion in the [palace].”⁵ Being a concubine was often believed to be a lonely station because they could only interact with a select few people. During the Tang Dynasty (618–907) when the emperor died, the concubines that gave him children stayed in the palace, while those that had not went to live in nunneries.⁶ To avoid becoming a nun, a concubine had to have the emperor’s child, but there was no guarantee that the emperor would help them with that goal.⁷ In short, becoming a concubine meant that you could never see your family again. Concubines were isolated from anyone that was not the emperor, the empress, or a eunuch, so social interactions were very limited. They also had to compete with one another for the emperor’s attention, in hopes that he would allow them to give him a child. As a result, it was difficult to make friends with the other concubines. Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi entered the palace in a difficult position, but they did not let that stop them from accomplishing their goals.

² Ebrey, 108, 223; N. Harry Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 1; X. L. Woo, *Empress Dowager Cixi: China’s Last Dynasty and the Long Reign of a Formidable Concubine* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2002), 5.

³ Charlotte Haldane, *The Last Great Empress of China* (London: Heron Books, 1968), 21.

⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁶ Ebrey, 180; X. L. Woo, *Empress Wu the Great: Tang Dynasty China*, 37.

⁷ Becoming a nun meant that the former concubine could not have a relationship with another man, which kept her forever tied to the emperor that she served.

Background and Historiography

Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi became concubines in different ways. Emperor Wu Zetian was the daughter of the emperor's favorite courtier, and at the age of thirteen, Emperor Taizong (r. 626–649) ordered that she become his concubine after hearing of her beauty.⁸ Her journey to the throne began with a unique set of circumstances that demonstrate how unlikely it was for her to take the throne. Empress Dowager Cixi became a concubine when she was sixteen through the normal process of becoming a concubine as discussed above.⁹ Despite it being difficult to be chosen as a concubine, Empress Dowager Cixi won her position over many other women, and it was a precursor to her ability to succeed over others during her climb to power. Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi were concubines that used their ambition to better their situations and gain control over their own lives. They were both able to change their status as the emperor's concubine to the absolute ruler of China. Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi started to increase their power and influence within the court by gaining the emperor's favor and giving him a child. Both women also became involved with government decision-making, further demonstrating their political prowess and value in court. After the death of their husbands (the emperors), Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi ensured that they had full control as regent to the new emperor. In doing so, they were able to keep their hold of the throne, even when tradition would have dictated that their sons took power.

The historiography of Emperor Wu Zetian varies through the years, including a bout of rumors created to ruin her legacy which resulted in later historians attempting to debunk these. Not

⁸ Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 26.

⁹ Marina Warner, *The Dragon Empress: The Life and Times of Tz'U-Hsi, Empress Dowager of China 1835–1908* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 22.

long after her rule, a rumor was invented that claimed that she “smother[ed] her new-born daughter to cast the blame upon Empress Wang” to replace her and become the new empress.¹⁰ This rumor conveys the damaging image of a ruthless woman who would do anything to gain power. The author of *Empress Wu in Fiction and in History*, Dora Shu-Fang Dien, debunks several myths about Emperor Wu Zetian, in which Shu-Fang Dien tries to find the truth hidden beneath the lies. This is an example of some of the efforts to correct rumors and to give an important female historical figure her due. Author X. L. Woo takes a different approach with redefining Emperor Wu Zetian. In *Empress Wu the Great: Tang Dynasty China*, Woo states that Emperor Wu Zetian and Gaozong (628–683), the emperor’s son, were in love with each other regardless of her position as his father’s concubine.¹¹ This demonstrates a romantic view of Emperor Wu Zetian because it shows that it was love, not ambition, that drove her to pursue a relationship with Gaozong. Her focus was her feelings for him, not the position of power that he could give her. The historiography of Emperor Wu Zetian shows two extremes: romanticism and deep cruelty, and it is possible that her true character was somewhere in the middle.

Empress Dowager Cixi also has varying degrees of caricature in her historiography. In *The Dragon Empress*, author Marina Warner shares a myth that states Empress Dowager Cixi killed Tongzhi (1861–875), her own son, to get the power of the throne back.¹² The myth insinuates that she was willing to do anything to get to the throne, including killing her child. However, it is doubtful that she would have killed him because she already had full power over the government when he occupied the throne, so it is unlikely that she would have taken such a drastic measure to obtain something that she already possessed. One could infer

¹⁰ Dora Shu-Fang Dien, *Empress Wu Zetian in Fiction and in History: Female Defiance in Confucian China* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.), 34.

¹¹ Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 34.

¹² Warner, 125.

that the purpose of the myth was to taint Empress Dowager Cixi's image. Warner presents the falsehoods about Empress Dowager Cixi, and she debunks them to show that Empress Dowager Cixi was not as horrible as historians made her seem. Other authors have also tried to patch up the image of Empress Dowager Cixi. Jung Chang, author of *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine who Launched Modern China*, writes in the epilogue of her book that Empress Dowager Cixi,

brought medieval China into the modern age. Under her leadership, the country began to acquire virtually all the attributes of the modern state: railways, electricity, telegraph, telephones, Western medicine, a modern-style army and navy, and modern ways of conducting foreign trade and diplomacy.¹³

This conflicts with the version of Empress Dowager Cixi intimately known by Princess Der Ling (1885–1944), First Lady-in-Waiting to Empress Dowager Cixi for two years.¹⁴ She writes that Empress Dowager Cixi had a disdain for foreigners and the emperor's attempts to reform to fit their beliefs.¹⁵ Therefore, any movement towards modernization that Empress Dowager Cixi would have made would be slow and necessary. She did not want to change China to conform to the wants of Western countries. Warner explains this, stating that:

Intent on their Confucian vision of the agricultural, frugal society, [Empress Dowager Cixi] and ministers like Prince Kung rejected, however, the idea of

¹³ Jung Chang, *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine who Launched Modern China* (New York: Anchor Books, 2013), 371.

¹⁴ Princess Der Ling, *Two Years in the Forbidden City* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1925), viii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 210–211.

strengthening the country by increasing trade and industry as the West would have liked and would have taught. Throughout the decade they refused more advanced advice to build telegraphs and railways, mines and mills, the organs of the modern world, insisting, correctly, that such innovations would attack the very fibre [sic] of traditional Chinese society.¹⁶

This shows that the historiography that Chang was trying to convey is not accurate. She may have been trying to portray Empress Dowager Cixi as a better ruler than she was. Not all of the books written about a historical figure are accurate as to who they were. Several historians have tried to correct the history written about Empress Dowager Cixi, but some take it too far and create an inaccurate narrative.

The Tang (618–907) and Qing (1644–1900) Dynasties

Emperor Wu Zetian rose to power during the Tang Dynasty (618–907).¹⁷ During this time, women had more freedoms than in the past. In her guide on behavior for Confucian wives, *Admonitions for Women*, Ban Zhao (c. 45–c. 117) wrote about an older custom. On the third day after a baby girl was born, she had to be placed “below the bed [which] plainly indicated that she was lowly and humble and should regard it as a prime duty to submit to others.”¹⁸ Confucianism restricted women to serving everyone around them before themselves. Restrictions lightened up when Steppe (a grassland region in the north) and Chinese culture blended. This “loosened the hold of Confucian values on women” by giving them

¹⁶ Warner, 102.

¹⁷ Ebrey, 180.

¹⁸ Ban Zhao, *Admonitions for Women*, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 1*, Second Edition, comp. William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 822.

access to “higher legal status than their counterparts in earlier and later dynasties, though they were still subject to many restrictions.”¹⁹ This may explain why many people were not as opposed to Emperor Wu Zetian co-ruling with her husband as would have been expected. However, there were still gender norms that would have hindered her rise to power. For example, Ban Zhao also explained how women should act:

To choose her words with care, to avoid vulgar language, to speak at appropriate times, and not to be offensive to others may be called womanly speech... With wholehearted devotion to sew and weave, not to love gossip and silly laughter, in cleanliness and order [to prepare] the wine and food for serving guests may be called womanly work.²⁰

Tang society expected women to follow a strict set of rules. It did not allow them to voice their opinions or participate in any activity that was not meant specifically for women, such as the aforementioned sewing, weaving, and serving guests. Emperor Wu Zetian broke each of these expected behaviors by taking the throne. Furthermore, Mr. Yan, or Yanshi Jianxun, wrote *The House Instructions of Mr. Yan* during the Tang Dynasty, and it conveys some Confucian ideas of the time about how a household should be run:

Just in the state, where women are not allowed to participate in setting politics, so in the family, they should not be permitted to assume responsibility for affairs. If they are wise, talented, and versed in the ancient and modern writings, they ought to help their husbands by supplementing the latter’s

¹⁹ N. Harry Rothschild, *Wu Zhao: China’s Only Woman Emperor* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 12.

²⁰ Zhao, 824.

deficiency. No hen should herald the dawn lest
misfortune follow.²¹

This shows how society welcomed Emperor Wu Zetian's intelligence and competency when ruling by her husband's side, but no one expected or wanted a woman to rule alone. That changed when Emperor Wu Zetian came to the throne, and she was able to use some of the main religions practiced at this time (Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism) to her advantage. The Chinese thought these belief systems to be compatible enough to use alongside each other in private practice and in the government.²² They blended to form the religious culture of the period. The characteristics of the Tang Dynasty shaped Emperor Wu Zetian's ascent to the throne and the decisions she made to get there.

Empress Dowager Cixi lived during China's last dynasty, the Qing (1644–1900).²³ The Manchus, “a non-Chinese people living in the hilly forests and plains to the northeast of China proper,” invaded China as the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) began to fall.²⁴ The Manchus were able to establish their own dynasty after ten years of expanding their control of the country.²⁵ In reaction to the fall of the Ming and the conquest of a non-native group, the Han Chinese shifted towards conservatism. They perceived the “more open and fluid society” as the cause of the change in China's leadership, and “concern for the purity of women reached an all-time high.”²⁶ However, the Han's shift towards conservatism had little impact on the now ruling Manchu

²¹ Yanshi Jianxun, *The House Instructions of Mr. Yan*, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 1*, Second Edition, comp. William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 545.

²² Ebrey, 120.

²³ Ibid., 220.

²⁴ Ibid., 190, 220.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 228–229.

and their practices. The Manchu gave more authority and respect to women than the Han society did. For example, Manchu women did not bind their feet.²⁷ Starting in the Song Dynasty (907–1276), foot binding was a tool used by Han men to control the freedom of women because the pain caused by having their feet tightly bound to alter their shape made it impossible to move anywhere without assistance.²⁸ Therefore, the liberties that Manchu women experienced were not only legal but physical as well. Manchu women's rights and freedoms continued to improve and develop during the Qing, such as the opening of women's schools and the creation of the "Beijing Women's News, a Manchu feminist daily [newspaper]."²⁹ The paper focused on women's issues, such as "women's education, equality of the sexes, and women's independence."³⁰ Despite the increase in conservative thought, Empress Dowager Cixi's rise to power is understandable when considering the expansion of rights for Manchu women. She could only benefit as women received more rights.

Religion also changed during this time as Confucians tried to "free their understandings of the classics from the contamination of Buddhist and Daoist ideas."³¹ This shows a contrast to the Tang emphasis on the blending of all three religions. It also demonstrates another change in culture during the Qing Dynasty. Empress Dowager Cixi came to power in a time when Manchu women, like herself, were gaining more momentum in society and culture as a whole became more conservative.

²⁷ Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Manchus & Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861–1928* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 62.

²⁸ Ebrey, 136; Unpublished manuscript of Cynthia De Anda "Foot Binding as a Consequence of the Powerful Women of the Tang."

²⁹ Rhoads, 92–93.

³⁰ Ibid., 94.

³¹ Ebrey, 229.

From Concubine to Ruler of China

Emperor Wu Zetian

Emperor Wu Zetian (r. 624–705) began her life at the palace as a concubine and became the most powerful person in China.³² She started in a low rank, but she began reporting the doings of the other concubines to Emperor Taizong.³³ This allowed her to become well-known and recognized around the palace. From this she was able to catch the eye of the Emperor's son Gaozong, which worked in her favor later.³⁴ When the emperor died, Emperor Wu Zetian was sent to a nunnery to live out her days as she had not given him any children.³⁵ When an emperor passed away, tradition during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) dictated that “those concubines of the deceased emperor who had born children would be confined in their own chambers and those who had not borne any children would all go to a nunnery to be nuns.”³⁶ Any favor a concubine had gained by helping the emperor no longer benefitted her. Tradition had trapped Emperor Wu Zetian at the nunnery without the ability to see her family or friends for the foreseeable future.

All of this changed with Emperor Gaozong, however, because she caught his attention and affection while she was still at the palace, so he began to visit her.³⁷ Gaozong had to hide any feelings he had towards Emperor Wu Zetian until after the death of his father. Although a man's concubine was occasionally given to another to elevate their relationship, a father, especially an emperor, was unlikely to give a concubine to his son because it

³² Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers*, 1.

³³ Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 26–27.

³⁴ Shu-Fang Dien, 33.

³⁵ Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37; Ebrey, 180.

³⁷ Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 42.

would be like taking his father's mistress while he was alive.³⁸ Gaozong's affections saved Emperor Wu Zetian from the nunnery and set her life on a new course. After many visits, she gave birth to his son.³⁹ The Emperor brought her back to the palace to be his concubine, and he awarded her a higher status than what she held under his father.⁴⁰ Her position continued to improve as she had more children, gained more of Gaozong's love, and acted in the role of empress by creating standards for court ladies.⁴¹ Gaozong liked Emperor Wu Zetian enough to not only make her his concubine after she was originally his father's but to then make her his new empress. He went against social norms and he had her rule in his stead when he became ill.⁴²

This was the first time a woman in China took the emperor's place "and surprisingly there was no overt protest on the part of high officials at the time."⁴³ As a result, she continued to rule as his equal after he recovered, but she tended to do most of the leading.⁴⁴ This shows that the emperor believed in her ability to rule, so he made her his equal. Despite being a woman, she had control of the government with the emperor's support. Before Emperor Gaozong died, he wanted to ensure that his wife continued to have some influence over the government, so he made her a regent for the new emperor, their adult son Zhongzong (656–710).⁴⁵

Gaozong believed so much in her ability to rule that he wanted her to continue to serve the country after his death, which is shown through the position he gave her. He put her in charge of their adult son because he trusted her abilities over what their son

³⁸ Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 34.

³⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁴¹ Shu-Fang Dien, 34.

⁴² Ibid., 34.

⁴³ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

had to offer. Her husband looked past her gender and recognized her ability and knowledge to rule. Emperor Wu Zetian had co-ruled with Gaozong, so he saw first-hand what she was capable of. As the regent, Emperor Wu Zetian made decrees for her son in court by claiming he “had a speech impediment,” but she was using this to rule in his stead.⁴⁶ Although her son was old enough to take control at any point, she continued to hold on to power, so the emperor was little more than a figurehead. This is evident in Emperor Wu Zetian’s choice to “[defy] the conventional practice of female regents” by showing her face to her audience instead of “staying behind a curtain.”⁴⁷ Female regents could not reveal their faces because they represented the young emperor, and they could not show that they held real power over men. Hiding behind a curtain kept up the illusion that the young emperor was in charge instead of his mother, who really held power. By going against this, Emperor Wu Zetian showed that she was the one pulling the strings, not her son. She did not care what other people thought of her, and she was not afraid to show that she was the most capable person to sit on the throne.

In October 690, she became the “‘Holy and Divine Emperor’ of the new Zhou Dynasty.”⁴⁸ She was the only woman in Chinese history to rule as an emperor. It is unclear why she decided to claim the title of emperor, but one can infer that she did so to convey to others that she was the only one that controlled the country. She was no longer just an empress with influence over the true ruler. Emperor Wu Zetian was a concubine to two emperors, and she used opportunity and ambition to become the most powerful woman in Chinese history up to that point.

⁴⁶ Shu-Fang Dien, 41.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 47–48.

Empress Dowager Cixi

Empress Dowager Cixi (r. 1861–1908) was also a concubine that rose through the ranks to become the most powerful person in China.⁴⁹ She came to the palace as the lowest ranking concubine at the age of sixteen.⁵⁰ Being a concubine usually meant “waiting on the empress dowager as a servant in all but rank” and sometimes never getting to meet the emperor.⁵¹ This is an example of how out of the ordinary it was for concubines to take power. Considering Empress Dowager Cixi’s rank and lack of initial interaction with the emperor, it would have been more likely for her to become a nun like Emperor Wu Zetian did immediately after the death of Emperor Taizong. However, fortunes changed for Empress Dowager Cixi when Empress Zhen (1837–1881) found she could not have more children after giving birth to her daughter. Empress Dowager Cixi had become friends with the empress, and Empress Dowager Cixi may have persuaded some eunuchs to recommend she provide the emperor with an heir.⁵² Therefore, her ability to befriend those around her may have helped her considerably in acquiring that favorable position.

She then gave birth to the only son of Emperor Xianfeng (1831–1861), which increased her concubine rank from the lowest to second only to the empress.⁵³ Empress Dowager Cixi’s ambition led her to befriend those around her who helped her rise above the rest. She may have also been doing so to make her life happier because she only had interactions with the empress, the eunuchs in charge of ensuring the chastity of the concubines, other concubines, and sometimes even the emperor.⁵⁴ She could not see her family and she lived in an area of the palace that was kept

⁴⁹ Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 5.

⁵⁰ Warner, 22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 43; Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 5.

⁵⁴ Warner, 30–31.

away from any visitors. This may have caused loneliness that inspired her to make friends with the eunuchs around her. Concubines had to wait on the empress like a servant, so being in her favor would have only made Empress Dowager Cixi's life easier.⁵⁵

Early on, Emperor Xianfeng let her be involved in the daily tasks of the government.⁵⁶ However, her vocal stance against the emperor's decision to flee rather than fight invaders during the Second Opium War (1856–1860), resulted in her losing any influence she had gained over him and the court.⁵⁷ She had been in an important position as an advisor to the emperor, but she lost it all when she disagreed with the actions he was taking. This shows that Empress Dowager Cixi was a tough woman that believed in standing her ground and speaking out about the emperor's mistake. As a result, he lashed out at her because a woman pointed out his weakness, so he punished her and took away the control that she had. She continued to be ignored by the emperor until he was on his deathbed and she forced her way into his room to demand that he make her son his heir instead of one of his many brothers, which he ended up doing.⁵⁸ Empress Dowager Cixi took her future into her own hands by physically going to her husband to take what she wanted, which shows an ambition to move above her status of merely a former concubine.

Concubines that gave the emperor a child had the security of a place to live in the palace with their children. Empress Dowager Cixi took a risk to improve her station, but her priority was to protect the throne that rightfully belonged to her son. Empress Dowager Cixi and the empress became regents and received the rank of empress dowager, the mother of the emperor that ruled in his stead until he was old enough to rule alone, which

⁵⁵ Warner, 29.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 78; Woo, *Empress Wu the Great*, 7.

⁵⁸ Warner, 85.

gave them “precedent over the eight seasoned regents.”⁵⁹ Empress Dowager Cixi was one of the most powerful people in the court, having much sway over the government. Her brother-in-law Prince Kang (1877–1955), the brother of the former emperor and husband to Empress Dowager Cixi’s younger sister, worked with the empresses to pass an edict under the child emperor’s name.⁶⁰ The edict “stripped the regents of all their offices, blamed them—with some reason—for the recent troubles of China and arrested them.”⁶¹ Through this edict, Empress Dowager Cixi and her fellow Empress Dowager were the most powerful people in China. This shows Empress Dowager Cixi getting rid of the people that stood between her and complete control of the government. Although she shared the throne with Empress Zhen, Empress Dowager Cixi held the most power due to her ability to sway her co-ruler’s opinion.⁶² Empress Dowager Cixi began her life in the palace as a concubine, used her connections to get the emperor to notice her, and relied on her own ambitions to secure a position of power.

Retaining Power Over China

Emperor Wu Zetian

After securing her position as emperor, Emperor Wu Zetian had to take unique steps to make herself appear to be a legitimate ruler to those around her. Association with political ancestors was not a new concept when Emperor Wu Zetian began using it. Emperor Taizong established a new form of legitimization in which “authority depended more on association with a great tradition of virtuous political ancestors than blood succession.”⁶³ Emperor Wu

⁵⁹ Warner, 85.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁶¹ Ibid., 87.

⁶² Ibid., 85.

⁶³ Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers*, 7.

Zetian utilized this technique to her advantage by using the three religions to legitimize herself, so she could appease everyone in the empire that questioned her. She began her political career by relating herself to the traditional Chinese goddesses of silk, the Luo River, and creation, which worked to influence the older generations of China.⁶⁴ They compared her to these older and traditional goddesses, and they thought she, by association, was traditional enough to sit on the throne. When she became the mother of the emperor, she compared herself to important mothers of Confucianism.⁶⁵ She wanted to appear as the mother of China who was following tradition by comparing herself to influential Confucian mothers, but she was also breaking tradition by being a woman in charge of the country.

Emperor Wu Zetian also added “a range of female Daoist divinities into her pantheon of forebears,” which appealed to strong believers of Daoism.⁶⁶ She made herself into a figure that was more godlike than human, thereby deserving of their allegiance for being holy. After someone discovered a stone with the message that a Sage Mother would rule China, Emperor Wu Zetian took on the name “Sage Mother, Divine Sovereign.”⁶⁷ This shows how she used a prediction for personal gain. Naming herself after the prophecy would make it self-fulfilling, thereby gaining the respect of the people. Emperor Wu Zetian also used Buddhism to her advantage when she joined its pantheon in 690 after the official Buddhist clergy named the empress the Bodhisattva Maitreya.⁶⁸ She became a powerful divinity within the religion, which allowed her to earn her place on the throne because the people believed that a divine being would be the best candidate to hold power. Using the techniques of past emperors, Emperor Wu Zetian displayed to

⁶⁴ Rothschild, *Emperor Wu Zhao and Her Pantheon of Devis, Divinities, and Dynastic Mothers*, 16–17.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁷ Shu-Fang Dien, 45.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

the people of China that she had the Mandate of Heaven.⁶⁹ She had deities and authority figures from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism to justify her rule.

Empress Dowager Cixi

Empress Dowager Cixi kept power by getting rid of those that threatened her rule. The first to feel her wrath was Prince Kang, her brother-in-law. She felt that she owed him a debt since he helped her get the throne, and she did not want him to take advantage of that debt. As a result, she got rid of him and put someone she could trust in his place. She accused him of trying to hurt her, then replaced him with Prince Chun (1883–1951).⁷⁰ When her son died, Empress Dowager Cixi adopted Prince Chun's three-year-old son Zaitian (Tsai-t'ien, 1887–1908), so he could become the next emperor, which went against Confucian tradition because the boy she adopted was not next in line for the throne.⁷¹ She gave power to the person she could raise to eventually control, while also keeping power as he came of age.⁷² Empress Dowager Cixi's reputation for getting rid of those that threatened her power caused historians to speculate whether she was involved in the death of her fellow empress dowager. The two rose to power together, but Empress Dowager Zhen died coincidentally in 1881 after getting into a fight with Empress Dowager Cixi and her top eunuch.⁷³ Although there was no proof that Empress Dowager Cixi ordered her to be poisoned, historian Charlotte Haldane argues that

⁶⁹ William de Bary and Irene Bloom, "Chapter 2: Classical Sources of Chinese Tradition," in *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol. 1*. Second Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 27. The Mandate of Heaven was the divine right to rule that gave legitimacy to a ruler, which could be taken away at any point.

⁷⁰ Warner, 114.

⁷¹ Ibid., 127.

⁷² Ibid., 127.

⁷³ Haldane, 101.

the coincidence should not be overlooked.⁷⁴ In order to keep her hold on the government, Empress Dowager Cixi neutralized any threat that reared its head.

Friends of Empress Dowager Cixi

To better understand who Empress Dowager Cixi was, we can look at *Two Years in the Forbidden City*, the memoir of Princess Der Ling, and *Letters from China*, a collection of letters written by Sarah Pike Conger (1843–1932). Princess Der Ling was the First Lady-in-Waiting to Empress Dowager Cixi for two years, from 1903 to 1905.⁷⁵ She spent almost every day with Empress Dowager Cixi, so she can give the clearest view of who the Empress Dowager was behind closed doors. Sarah Pike Conger was the wife of an American minister to China.⁷⁶ Her book is a collection of letters that she wrote to friends and family during her stay in China from 1898 to 1908.⁷⁷ She had several audiences with Empress Dowager Cixi and developed a close relationship with her, which came as a surprise to those who knew Empress Dowager Cixi. As stated previously, Empress Dowager Cixi did not like foreigners.⁷⁸ Princess Der Ling further elaborated on Empress Dowager Cixi's feelings towards foreigners and quoted her as saying:

I can tell in a moment...whether any of these people are desirous of showing proper respect to me, or whether they consider that I am not entitled to it. These foreigners seem to have the idea that the Chinese are ignorant and that,

⁷⁴ Haldane, 101.

⁷⁵ Der Ling, viii.

⁷⁶ Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1909), vii.

⁷⁷ Ibid., ix–xi.

⁷⁸ Der Ling, 210–211.

therefore, they need not be so particular as in European Society.⁷⁹

Empress Dowager Cixi saw foreigners in China attempt to erase Chinese culture. She saw through their facades of respect as hiding their true feelings which saw her as less than themselves. This ability shows that she trusted Conger despite her country of origin. Like Princess Der Ling, Conger also gives an intimate look at who Empress Dowager Cixi was.



“The Portrait of the Qing Dynasty Cixi Imperial Dowager Empress of China” by Hubert Vos (1855–1935), dated 1906. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Der Ling, 367.

⁸⁰ Image made public domain because the copyright term is the author's life plus 80 years or fewer. Hubert Vos, “The Portrait of the Qing Dynasty Cixi Imperial Dowager Empress of China” oil on canvas, 1906, Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Portrait_of_the_Qing_Dynasty_Cixi_Imperial_Dowager_Empress_of_China.PNG.

One incident that links these two accounts is Conger's idea of having Empress Dowager Cixi's portrait painted. Conger stated that she "had conceived the idea of asking her Majesty [Empress Dowager Cixi] permission to speak with her upon the subject of having her painted."⁸¹ Princess Der Ling describes the same event in her memoir. She explains that Mrs. Conger asked Empress Dowager Cixi if she would be willing to have an American artist paint her a portrait, so Americans could get a clearer understanding of who she was.⁸² This retelling of the event gives a new perspective and clearer understanding of what happened during this exchange. Mrs. Conger did not speak Chinese, and Empress Dowager Cixi could not speak English. As a result, Princess Der Ling and a missionary that accompanied Mrs. Conger translated for them. Therefore, Princess Der Ling was privy to information that Mrs. Conger could not understand. During this event, she says that at one moment Empress Dowager Cixi spoke "in the Court language, which the visitors were unable to understand, it being somewhat different from the ordinary Chinese language."⁸³ The Court language was a different dialect only understood by those in court, which separated it from the language of the everyday person possibly to maintain superiority. What these two accounts give us is a complete perspective of what was happening around Empress Dowager Cixi: the person that was always by her side and the person on the outside looking in. Princess Der Ling and Mrs. Conger gave a detailed recounting of their time with Empress Dowager Cixi.

These two women had a unique opportunity to see who Empress Dowager Cixi really was. For example, Princess Der Ling stated in her memoir:

I had been told that the Empress had a very fierce temper, but seeing her so kind and gracious to us

⁸¹ Conger, 247–248.

⁸² Der Ling, 199.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 200.

and talking to us in such a motherly way, I thought that my informant must be wrong and that she was the sweetest woman in the world.⁸⁴

This shows that Empress Dowager Cixi was more gracious than the media would have had people believe. Princess Der Ling got to experience a side of her that she hid from the rest of the world. She may have wanted to appear tough and strong so others would not take advantage of her. Mrs. Conger made a similar comment. In one letter, she explained the reason why she wanted to have the portrait painted. She stated that “[f]or many months I had been indignant over the horrible, unjust caricatures of Her Imperial Majesty in illustrated papers, and with a growing desire that the world might see her as she really is.”⁸⁵ Just like Princess Der Ling, Mrs. Conger also thought that Empress Dowager Cixi was a better person than the world believed. She wanted to show everyone that the person she knew was not the person they read about. These two perspectives show a caring and kind woman.

However, Princess Der Ling also wrote about the side of Empress Dowager Cixi that was not so sweet. She told the story of the lessons that Empress Dowager Cixi would conduct for the ladies-in-waiting:

The younger eunuchs also took part in these lessons and some of their answers to Her Majesty’s questions were very amusing. If Her Majesty were in a good humor she would laugh with the rest of us, but sometimes she would order them to be punished for their ignorance and stupidity.⁸⁶

This shows that Empress Dowager Cixi could be difficult to deal with. Sometimes she was happy, and other times she became easily

⁸⁴ Der Ling, 43.

⁸⁵ Conger, 247–248.

⁸⁶ Der Ling, 376.

agitated. From the writings of these two women that personally knew Empress Dowager Cixi, it is evident that she was a woman who was nice to her friends but was authoritative when necessary. These two books paint a better picture of who Empress Dowager Cixi was, but they cannot tell how her rule affected the average person in China. It is possible that she was a good person but an unfair ruler.

Princess Der Ling gave an interesting insight into the relationship between Empress Dowager Cixi and the emperor. She observed that Empress Dowager Cixi sat on a throne while the emperor sat on an ordinary chair.⁸⁷ The separation of the two seats shows that Empress Dowager Cixi was the one with all the power. The emperor did not even get a fake throne to sit on. It was evident to everyone who came to see Empress Dowager Cixi and the emperor that she was the one in charge. Furthermore, when talking to her ladies-in-waiting and some foreign guests, Empress Dowager Cixi revealed a desire to travel the world, but she stated, “[b]y the time I returned I should not know the place anymore, I’m afraid. Here everything depends on me. Our Emperor is quite young.”⁸⁸ This shows Empress Dowager Cixi revealing how much the country truly relied on her guidance and control. She did not trust the emperor to take over for her if she decided to leave or retire. In her opinion, he was not competent enough to rule.

Furthermore, the emperor was not very different from any other person at the palace. Princess Der Ling stated that “[e]verybody, with the exception of the Court ladies, had to kneel when [Empress Dowager Cixi] was speaking to them. Even the Emperor himself was no exception to this rule.”⁸⁹ She explained that the constant conversation between the ladies-in-waiting and Empress Dowager Cixi would make it tedious to have to always bow when speaking.⁹⁰ This is the most obvious evidence that

⁸⁷ Der Ling, 190.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 198.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 217.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 218.

Empress Dowager Cixi held full control of the government. The emperor was supposed to be the most powerful person in China. He had the Mandate of Heaven so he ruled with the favor of the gods. Although the younger generation respected their elders, an adult son had the authority over his mother so the emperor should have had superiority over Empress Dowager Cixi. However, this shows that the emperor held nothing more than a title. Princess Der Ling's memoir shows that Empress Dowager Cixi was the true ruler of China, and the emperor was merely a figurehead.

Comparing Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi

Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi had several similarities. Not only were they concubines that went on to rule China, but they also used similar tactics to stay in power as long as possible. One interesting commonality was their ability to aid other women during their rule. They each attempted to grant women more rights, but neither of them succeeded in creating long-lasting change.

Emperor Wu Zetian's impact on women was focused within the court. She raised the social status of women by creating an examination system that allowed them to take part in banquets at court.⁹¹ She also had lower level female officials.⁹² Authors Hu Shen-sheng, Feng Tan-feng, and Huang Lung-chen explain that this did not give these women any power, but it increased their social status by giving them the ability to appear at court. Women may not have been able to control government proceedings, but they were physically there to remind officials that women were a part of the country. Emperor Wu Zetian showed that women could advise a leader, just like men. She was demonstrating that she could run the country, and other women could help, too. Although

⁹¹ Hu Shen-sheng, Feng Tan-feng, and Huang Lung-chen, "Female Emperor Uu Tse-T'ien," *Chinese Studies in History* 8, no. 4 (1975): 24.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 24.

her efforts may not have had a lasting impact, they convey her motivation to help other women in China.

Empress Dowager Cixi also tried to help women. She passed an edict that called for the end of foot binding.⁹³ As stated previously, Manchu women did not bind their feet, but it was a practice that Han women continued to follow. Empress Dowager Cixi wanted to give more freedom to the women in her country that did not have much. She did not want them to suffer through a tradition that was “so injurious to health and inhuman in practice.”⁹⁴ Despite the effort, this portion of her edict was unsuccessful. Empress Dowager Cixi addressed Mrs. Conger about the edict’s results saying, “the Chinese move slowly. Our customs are so fixed that it takes much time to change them.”⁹⁵ Although they were not successful, Empress Dowager Cixi tried to improve the lives of women in China.

Nevertheless, Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi also have some differences. Emperor Wu Zetian was sent to a nunnery and wooed an emperor that she had not been the concubine to. Empress Dowager Cixi fell out of favor with her emperor but was able to gain it back on his deathbed. One major way in which they differed was their method of ruling. Emperor Wu Zetian passed edicts that helped her people, while also helping herself. She tried to get on the good side of Chinese people. Empress Dowager Cixi, on the other hand, passed an edict that appeared to help the people, but it only succeeded in preserving her public image. The similarities and differences between Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi demonstrate their unique tactics for handling circumstances despite their common background.

⁹³ E. Backhouse and J. O. P Bland, *China Under the Empress Dowager: Being the History of the Life and Times of Tzū His, Compiled from State Papers and the Private Diary of the Comptroller of Her Household* (London: William Heinemann, 1910), 428.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 428.

⁹⁵ Conger, 254.

Additionally, despite having the same humble beginnings, Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi differed in their ability to rule the country. In 684, Emperor Wu Zetian passed an Act of Grace, “an imperial decree to reward merit and pardon convicted felons on auspicious occasions.”⁹⁶ The act gave Emperor Wu Zetian’s mother the title of “‘Empress Dowager,’ implying her own status of Emperor,” improved the bureaucracy, brought relief to the poor, tax relief for some, and some troops were allowed to go home to worship ancestors, just to name a few.⁹⁷ In this act, Emperor Wu Zetian attempted to legitimize herself while also helping her people. Although there is some speculation as to her true intentions behind the act, she still aided those in need. This shows that she was able to do great things for her country and secure her place of power.

The same is not true for Empress Dowager Cixi. When she was in power, she faced the Boxer Uprising (1899–1901). During the uprising and subsequent war, she passed a decree under the emperor’s name that stated Prince Chuang (1853–1912), “acting as the leader of the savage Boxers, put to death many innocent persons. As a mark of clemency unmerited by these crimes, we grant him permission to commit suicide.”⁹⁸ This shows an effort to end the uprising and protect her people. She ordered its alleged leader to kill himself after the many deaths he caused. Yet after the uprising, she changed her tune. She passed a degree that read, “[t]he Degrees issued at that time were the work of wicked Princes and Ministers of State, who, taking advantage of the chaotic condition of affairs, did not hesitate to issue documents under the Imperial seal, which were quite contrary to our wishes.”⁹⁹ This shows an attempt to cover her tracks. She wanted to appear to be on the side of the Boxers.

⁹⁶ Shu-Fang Dien, 42.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 42–43.

⁹⁸ Backhouse and Bland, 365.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 375.

In *Two Years in the Forbidden City*, Princess Der Ling revealed Empress Dowager Cixi's true opinion of events. In a conversation with Princess Der Ling, she conveyed her thoughts about the Boxers:

Do you know how the Boxer rising began? Why, the Chinese Christians were to blame. The Boxers were treated badly by them and wanted revenge. Of course that is always the trouble with the low class of people. They went too far, and at the same time thought to make themselves rich by setting fire to every house in Peking...These Chinese Christians are the worst people in China. They rob the poor country people of their land and property, and the missionaries, of course, always protect them, in order to get a share themselves.¹⁰⁰

This shows that Empress Dowager Cixi sympathized with the Boxers. She disliked foreign religions coming into China and converting her people. She thought these new Christians unfairly treated those that refused to convert. This change in opinions brings to question her earlier decision to order the death of the Boxer's leader. It is possible that she was trying to save her image in the face of the destruction that they were causing. Others, like authors J. O. P. Bland and E. Backhouse, believe that she opposed the Boxers to save her own skin as they made their way closer to her own home.¹⁰¹ When looking at these pieces of legislation, it is clear that these two rulers had different tactics for ruling China. Although both appear to be serving themselves, only one woman could help her people while helping herself.

¹⁰⁰ Der Ling, 179.

¹⁰¹ Backhouse and Bland, 365.

Conclusion

Despite all odds, Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi used opportunity and ambition to rise above their circumstances and become the only female rulers in the history of China. What makes their positions of power more remarkable is that they began life at the palace as concubines to the emperor. Both women put in hard work, but they also faced unique circumstances that allowed them to climb the ranks.

As this article has shown, it was possible that they both could have ended up in nunneries. In Emperor Wu Zetian's case, she did end up there at first, but she was able to get herself back to the palace. Emperor Wu Zetian caught the eye of the new emperor and gained success. For Empress Dowager Cixi, the empress could no longer have children, so she used networking to get the attention of the emperor. She put herself in a position to give the emperor a child and she was able to climb the social ladder from the lowest status to ranking just under the empress. This shows that both women took the situations before them and used them to their advantage.

As women ruling in a patriarchal society, they had to ensure they kept a tight hold on power. Emperor Wu Zetian used religion to associate herself with gods and influential women, just as other emperors had done before her. Empress Dowager Cixi, on the other hand, got rid of any competition that stood in her way and kept only loyal people around her. Empress Dowager Cixi was willing to take out anyone she needed to, while Emperor Wu Zetian chose to use tradition in her favor. Despite being the most powerful people in China, both women continued to be ambitious and strove to hold onto their power as long as possible. They refused to give up despite the obstacles that they had to face. Emperor Wu Zetian helped the people of her country while using tradition to help herself. She made her mother an empress dowager to further legitimize her position as emperor, and she also gave soldiers time off to worship their ancestors, showing her support for tradition and religious practices. When allowed to further their

public appeal, both rulers took it. They were both willing to do what they could to keep power, including increasing support for them from the people.

Overall, Emperor Wu Zetian and Empress Dowager Cixi were a sight to behold. Against all odds, they rose above the patriarchy and their position as concubines to rule all of China. Although they may not have been the greatest rulers in Chinese history, they demonstrated the power that women can have in the face of adversity, no matter the place or period.

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Author Bio

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History in the Making

In Memoriam

“The Great Dissenter”: Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the Fight for Equality

By Celeste Nunez and Jacquelyne R. Anton

Generalizations about “the way women are,” estimates of what is appropriate for most women, no longer justify denying opportunity to women whose talent and capacity place them outside the average description.

- United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, majority opinion, *United States v. Virginia*, 518 US 515 (4th Cir. 1996).¹

On September 18, 2020, the United States Supreme Court lost one of the most influential Justices of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933–2020) passed away due to complications of metastatic pancreatic cancer at her home in Washington, D.C., at the age of eighty-seven. Regarded as a feminist icon, Justice Ginsburg made significant strides in the fight for gender and racial equality throughout her legal career. In June of 1993, Ginsburg accepted her nomination to the United States Supreme Court by then-President Bill Clinton where she

¹ *United States v. Virginia*, 518 US 515 (4th Cir. 1996).

served as the second female justice and the second Jewish justice.² Over time, Justice Ginsburg earned the moniker “The Great Dissenter” for her infamous dissenting opinions on United States Supreme Court cases.³ She was also notorious for her views on racial and gender equality, in which she believed that the law was gender-blind and that all groups were entitled to equal rights.

Through her legal career, including her twenty-seven-year term as a United States Supreme Court Justice, Justice Ginsburg continued advocating and fighting for gender equality until her final days. She became known as “Notorious RBG” on many social media platforms due to her dissenting opinion on *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 US 529 (2013). This case was a crucial civil rights suit that overturned part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, making it illegal for states to require literacy tests and other methods of discrimination that barred African American citizens from voting.⁴ After a law student referred to her as “Notorious RBG” in an online post praising Justice Ginsburg for her dissent to the ruling in which she defended voting rights, she became a pop culture icon.⁵ Though she initially was taken aback by “notorious,” she later warmed up to her newly established following and continued to inspire and leave a lasting legacy that will prevail for many generations to come.

² Ken Rudin, “The ‘Jewish Seat’ On The Supreme Court,” NPR, May 28, 2009, https://www.npr.org/sections/politicaljunkie/2009/05/heres_a_question_from_carl.html.

³ “Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg: Dissenting For Democracy,” *People For the American Way*, July 2014, <https://www.pfaw.org/report/justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-dissenting-for-democracy/>. A dissent, or “dissenting opinion,” is a written statement expressing disagreement with the majority opinion of the court which gives reason to question the judgment.

⁴ Morgan Brinlee, “Who Coined Notorious RBG? Here’s The History Of Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s Nickname,” *Bustle*, September 19, 2020. www.bustle.com/rule-breakers/who-coined-notorious-rbg-heres-the-history-of-ruth-bader-ginsburgs-nickname-13163770.

⁵ Shana Knizhnik and Irin Camron, *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015).

“Every now and then, it helps to be a little deaf...that advice has stood me in good stead. Not simply in dealing with my marriage, but in dealing with my colleagues.”⁶

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was born Joan Ruth Bader in Brooklyn, New York, on March 15, 1933, to Nathan (1896–1968) and Celia Bader (1902–1950). Her only sibling, Marilyn Bader (1927–1934), tragically passed away from spinal meningitis at the age of six.⁷ Her mother, Cecelia, passed away due to cancer the day before Justice Ginsburg graduated from high school in 1950.⁸

After graduating from James Madison High School in Brooklyn, New York, Justice Ginsburg attended Cornell University from 1950–1954, where she majored in government; this set a strong foundation for her legal education and her notable career.⁹ During her time at Cornell, she met her late husband, Martin Ginsburg (1932–2010). Justice Ginsburg often stated that he “was the first boy I met who cared that I had a brain.”¹⁰ After graduating from Cornell University in 1954, the two wed later that year and had their first child, Jane Ginsburg, in 1955. They continued their education together at Harvard Law School from 1956–1958. During her time at Harvard, Justice Ginsburg overcame many obstacles, which included balancing motherhood

⁶ Stanford University, *Stanford Rathbun Lecture 2017 - Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, YouTube Video, 1:27:15, February 10, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83XnwyWg_q8.

⁷ Ruth Bader Ginsburg, *The Way Women Are: Transformative Opinions and Dissents of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, edited by Cathy Cambron. New York: Welcome Rain Publishers LLC, 2020.

⁸ Blaine Friedlander. “Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg ‘54 Dies,” *Cornell Chronicle*, September 18, 2020, <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2020/09/supreme-court-justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-54-dies>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Rachel E. Greenspan, “‘The Only Person I Have Loved.’ Inside Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s History-Shaping Marriage of Equals,” *Time*, September 19, 2020, <https://time.com/5488428/ruth-bader-ginsburg-marriage-equals/>.

with law school, and being one of only nine women in her male-dominated class of five hundred. The dean and her professors frequently berated her place at Harvard Law because she “occupied a seat that could have gone to a man.”¹¹

In 1956, Martin Ginsburg was diagnosed with testicular cancer during his second year of law school. Not one to let a hard time defeat her, Justice Ginsburg attended all of her husband’s classes, in addition to her own, to take notes for him. She also tended to her young daughter Jane and still maintained her position as the top scholar of her class. After Martin recovered from his battle with cancer, he joined the law firm Weil, Gotshal & Manges in New York. To keep her family together, Justice Ginsburg transferred from Harvard Law School in Massachusetts to Columbia University in New York, where she graduated at the top of her class in 1959.

Despite being at the top of her class at both Harvard Law and Columbia, Justice Ginsburg struggled to secure employment as an attorney due to gender-based discrimination. In 1960, when a dean at Harvard Law School, Professor Sachs, recommended Justice Felix Frankfurter (1882–1965) of the Supreme Court hire Ginsburg as a law clerk, Justice Frankfurter stated that “while the candidate was impressive, he just wasn’t ready to hire a woman and so couldn’t offer a job to Ruth Bader Ginsburg.”¹²

After clerking with United States District Judge Edmund L. Palmieri (1907–1989) from 1959 to 1961, Justice Ginsburg became a professor at Rutgers University Law School from 1963 to 1972. Following her time educating at Rutgers, Justice Ginsburg became a professor at Columbia University from 1972 to 1980, where she became the school’s first female tenured professor.

¹¹ “Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” Oyez, accessed March 27, 2021.
https://www.oyez.org/justices/ruth_bader_ginsburg.

¹² Neil A Lewis, “Rejected as a Clerk, Chosen as a Justice - Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 1993,
<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/15/us/rejected-as-a-clerk-chosen-as-a-justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg.html>.

In the 1970s, she teamed up with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). She served as their Women's Rights Project Director, where she argued six cases before the United States Supreme Court concentrating on gender equality; she won five of the six cases.¹³ Justice Ginsburg believed the law was gender-blind and should not discriminate based on race and sex. She continued to hold this belief well into her legal career, and, in 1980, she was appointed to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia by then-President Jimmy Carter. In 1993, then-President Bill Clinton appointed her to the United States Supreme Court to fill the vacant spot left by Justice Byron White (1962–1993). The Senate confirmed her nomination in a 96-3 vote.¹⁴

“Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.”¹⁵

The following court cases highlight only some of Justice Ginsburg's many achievements in the courtroom. Each case covers a different area of her influence, ranging from her first gender-discrimination case to her famous dissents, and, further, to her work against equal pay discrimination between men and women.

¹³ Anthony D. Romero, “In Memory of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933–2020),” ACLU, September 19, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/in-memory-of-justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-1933-2020/>. Justice Ginsburg won *Frontiero v. Richardson*, 411 US 677 (1973), *Edwards v. Healy*, 421 US 772 (1975), *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*, 420 US 636 (1975), *Califano v. Goldfarb*, 430 US 199 (1977), and *Duren v. Missouri*, 439 US 357 (1979). She lost *Kahn v. Shevin*, 16 US 351 (1974).

¹⁴ “Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” History.com, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/ruth-bader-ginsburg>.

¹⁵ “Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” *Oyez; RBG*, directed by Betsy West and Julie Cohen (2018; Los Angeles, CA: Magnolia Home Entertainment, 2018).

*“On the Basis of Sex”*¹⁶

In 1972, Justice Ginsburg argued her first case regarding gender discrimination in *Charles E. Moritz v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*, 469 F. 2d 466 (10th Cir. 1972), in which evidence of gender discrimination against a man was ultimately used to pave the way for gender equality. The case was argued in the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, where the court held that discrimination based on sex constituted a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution. Justice Ginsburg argued that the plaintiff, Charles Moritz, claimed a tax deduction for the cost of a caregiver for his mother. The Internal Revenue Service denied him the deduction because it was limited to “a woman, a widower or divorcee, or a husband whose wife is incapacitated or institutionalized.”¹⁷

Since Moritz had never married, Justice Ginsburg and her legal team made a strong case by drawing upon the expenses of Moritz’s mother. Their case rested upon Moritz’s inability to be employed, the denial of the deduction to a man that never married, and its comparison to women and widowers, divorcees, and husbands under certain circumstances. They argued that it was arbitrary, irrational, and denied due process if the provision denied the deduction to a man who has not married.¹⁸ This ultimately led to the reversal of the earlier decision imposed by the Tax Court, now concluding that the taxpayer, Charles Moritz, was entitled to the deduction claimed.

¹⁶ *Charles E. Moritz v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*, 469 F. 2d 466 (10th Cir. 1972).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

*“The Way Women Are”*¹⁹

In 1990, the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington, Virginia, became the state’s only remaining single-sex public college or university with the favorability of men. In *United States v. Virginia*, 518 US 515 (4th Cir. 1996), the United States government sued the state of Virginia, claiming that gender-based admission at a public university violated the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of equal protection of laws to all persons. The government relied heavily on the United States Supreme Court’s gender discrimination cases that Justice Ginsburg had argued and won as a lawyer in the 1970s, ultimately ruling that VMI had to open its doors to women.²⁰

Virginia attempted to circumvent the ruling by establishing a new program at a *private* women’s college that paralleled the VMI experience. The Virginia Women’s Institute for Leadership (VWIL) provided an opportunity for women to participate in similar activities to those offered at VMI; however, in Justice Ginsburg’s opinion, the standards and experiences offered at the women’s institute fell short of those offered to the men. Justice Ginsburg’s opinion acknowledged the physical differences between the sexes, stating: “Inherent differences between men and women, we have come to appreciate, remain cause for celebration, but not for denigration of the members of either sex or for artificial constraints on an individual’s opportunity.”²¹ Just as she consistently briefed and argued gender discrimination cases in the United States Supreme Court in the 1970s, Ginsburg continued to keep her focus on the way gender stereotypes distort and obstruct human potential.

¹⁹ *United States v. Virginia*, 518 US 515.

²⁰ Ginsburg, *The Way Women Are: Transformative Opinions and Dissents of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*. In the 1970s, Justice Ginsburg won two cases—*Reed v. Reed*, 404 US (1971) and *Frontero v. Richardson*, 411 US 677 (1973)—where men were denied Social Security survivors benefits because they were men. These cases paved the way for *United States v. Virginia* 518 US 515.

²¹ *United States v. Virginia*, 518 US 515.

In her deciding vote, she stated, “[g]eneralizations about ‘the way women are’ estimates of what is appropriate for most women, no longer justify denying opportunity to women whose talent and capacity place them outside the average description.”²² In a world of consistent comparison between women and men on a physical level, the admittance of women into VMI opened a new gateway to gender equality by not limiting the opportunity to the physical differences between a man and a woman. Women were now allowed to engage in the same rigorous physical activity imposed by the VMI that a man would experience at the institution.

*“I Dissent.”*²³

The *Bush v. Gore*, 531 US 98 (2000) case served as a prominent case in Justice Ginsburg’s legal career. It resulted in a halt on a state recount of the presidential candidates, George W. Bush and Al Gore, in the presidential election of 2000. In the United States, presidential elections rely on the Electoral College to declare who will be the president rather than the popular vote.²⁴ On November 7, 2000, the Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore had won the popular vote; however, the vote of the Electoral College remained unclear for nearly another month.

The morning after the election, Republican nominee George W. Bush had 246 electoral votes while Democratic nominee Al Gore had a total of 250 votes. In order to secure the presidential office, a candidate must obtain a total of 270 electoral votes. The stand-still fell on three states—Wisconsin, Oregon, and Florida—whose votes became too close to call. After a few days, Wisconsin and Oregon added their votes to Gore’s count; however,

²² *United States v. Virginia*, 518 US 515.

²³ *Bush v. Gore*, 531 US 98 (2000).

²⁴ The Electoral College is made up of representatives selected by state voting. The popular vote is the vote of all voters in the nation as a whole.

Florida's twenty-five electoral votes remained in the air, and neither candidate could reach the required 270.

The closeness of the vote in Florida triggered a machine recount, and on November 26, Florida certified Bush as the winner of the Florida election by 537 votes. Gore challenged this count, and the Bush campaign asked the Florida Supreme Court to recount more than 70,000 ballots that the machine counters had initially rejected. Bush appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which halted the count on December 9. On December 12, the court ruled that the recount order was unconstitutional, ultimately granting the presidency to Bush.²⁵

Justice Ginsburg, along with three other justices, dissented from this ruling.²⁶ What was most significant in Justice Ginsburg's dissent was the famously omitted word "respectfully."²⁷ She argued that the Florida Supreme Court should be allowed to determine how to select Florida's representatives to the Electoral College. She also stated, "a prophecy the Court's own judgment will not allow to be tested. Such an untested prophecy should not decide the Presidency of the United States."²⁸

*"The Ball Lies in Congress's Court."*²⁹

The case of *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, 550 US 618 (2007) concentrates on the issue of equal pay between men and women. The plaintiff in the case, Lilly Ledbetter, was a manager at

²⁵ Ginsburg, *The Way Women Are: Transformative Opinions and Dissents of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*.

²⁶ "Supreme Court, Split 5-4, Halts Florida Count in Blow to Gore," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/10/politics/supreme-court-split-54-halts-florida-count-in-blow-to-gore.html>. The Justices who voted to grant the stay were the conservative Justices. The liberal members dissented.

²⁷ Ginsburg, *The Way Women Are: Transformative Opinions and Dissents of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, 142.

²⁸ *Bush v. Gore*, 531 US 98.

²⁹ *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, 550 US 618 (2007).

a Goodyear Tire and Rubber plant in Alabama for nineteen years (1979–1998). Before her planned retirement from the company, she received an anonymous note containing salary information claiming that she received about \$1,500 a month less than the department’s lowest-paid man with the same job. Goodyear’s position was that Ledbetter’s payment was less “because her performance was poor.”³⁰ However, evidence that the company had awarded her as a top performer undermined this claim.³¹

Justice Ginsburg’s vigorous dissent in the case led to a challenge aimed at Congress to change the wage discrimination law. According to Justice Ginsburg, “the ball is in Congress’ court.”³² With that, Congress passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, which reinstituted the wage discrimination law in which Justice Ginsburg’s dissent advocated.³³ In 2009, then-President Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law.

Justice Ginsburg overcame many obstacles in her educational and legal careers. She looked adversity in the face and refused to back down. She issued many powerful dissents over the years and, when faced with discrimination, stood tall and fought for equality. As an opponent of gender and race-based discrimination, many of her notable cases paved the way for gender and racial equality and have provided the essential foundation for the crucial work that still needs to be done.

³⁰ *Ledbetter v. Goodyear*, 550 US 618.

³¹ Ginsburg, *The Way Women Are: Transformative Opinions and Dissents of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg*.

³² *Ledbetter v. Goodyear*, 550 US 618.

³³ *Ibid.*

“Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”³⁴

In 2015, the Harvard Radcliffe Institute held their annual Radcliffe Day event where Dean Elizabeth Cohen presented Justice Ginsburg with the Radcliffe Medal, an award intended to honor an individual “who has had a transformative impact on society.”³⁵ When asked what advice she had for young women today, Justice Ginsburg replied: “Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”³⁶

This quote is perhaps most emblematic of how Justice Ginsburg lived her life. With her tenacity for legal arguments, personal strength and determination, and advocacy for equal rights, she was known as someone who “knocked on closed doors, opened them, and held them open for others.”³⁷ She led by example and inspired a generation of people, both women and men alike, to fight for equality and stand up in the face of discrimination and bigotry. Her “notorious” dissents remind us to be mindful and resilient, understanding, yet firm in our convictions, and composed but passionate.

Beginning with her early career in law, Justice Ginsburg fought for gender equality and women’s rights, where she turned adversity into opportunity. She set in motion the fight to persuade the courts that the Fourteenth Amendment applied to women, as

³⁴ Harvard University, “Radcliffe Day 2015 | Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg || Radcliffe Institute,” July 17, 2015, YouTube, 1:09:09, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzhWFhOJV4>.

³⁵ Harvard Radcliffe Institute, “Radcliffe Medalists,” <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/about-radcliffe/radcliffe-medalists>. Other Radcliffe Medal recipients include Lena Horne (1987), Toni Morrison (2007), Sandra Day O’Connor (2009), Gwen Ifill and Judy Woodruff (2017), Hilary Clinton (2018), and Delores Huerta (2019).

³⁶ Harvard University.

³⁷ Colleen Walsh, “Honoring Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” *The Harvard Gazette*, May 29, 2015, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/05/honoring-ruth-bader-ginsburg/>.

well as racial and ethnic minorities, arguing “that word, ‘any person,’ covers women as well as men.”³⁸ In 1971, she wrote her first United States Supreme Court brief for *Reed v. Reed*, 404 US (1971) in which she raised the constitutional issue of whether the state automatically preferred men over women as executors of state. The all-male justices responded with a unanimous “no”; this marked the first time the court struck down a law that discriminated based on gender and commenced a shift in the course of history.

Truly advocating for gender equality and recognizing the need to persuade male, tradition-based judges, Justice Ginsburg sought out cases of gender discrimination in which she could demonstrate how discrimination against women also harmed men. In her oral argument in front of the United States Supreme Court for the 1975 case, *Weinberg v. Wiesenfeld*, 420 US 636 (1975), Justice Ginsburg stated, “[t]his absolute exclusion, based on gender per se, operates to the disadvantage of female workers, their surviving spouses, and their children.”³⁹ The male-dominated United States Supreme Court agreed with Justice Ginsburg, delivering an 8-0 majority and overturning the statute.

Unafraid to question precedent and unwilling to compromise her views, she became known as “The Great Dissenter.”⁴⁰ On the importance of dissents, she stated:

Dissents speak to a future age. It’s not simply to say, ‘My colleagues are wrong, and I would do it

³⁸ Nina Totenberg, “Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Champion Of Gender Equality, Dies At 87,” NPR, September 18, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/18/100306972/justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-champion-of-gender-equality-dies-at-87>.

³⁹ Ibid.; “Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld,” Oyez, accessed March 27, 2021, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1974/73-1892>.

⁴⁰ Atiba Ellis, “The Great Dissent: Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and *Shelby County v. Holder*,” Oxford Human Rights Hub: A Global Perspective on Human Rights, April 2021, <http://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/the-great-dissent-justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-and-shelby-county-v-holder/>.

this way.’ But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views become the dominant view. So that’s the dissenter’s hope: that they are writing not for today, but for tomorrow.⁴¹

She dissented in around 115 United States Supreme Court cases, most famously the *Bush v. Gore* case in 2000, and concurred in part/dissented in part in around 14 cases.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is undoubtedly a heroic figure who changed the world for women. She faced gender-based discrimination throughout her education and career and dedicated her life to fighting for all others who faced it as well. Justice Ginsburg was an advocate for equal rights based on gender and race, those with mental disabilities, environmental justice, the removal of partisan politics in drawing political maps, voting rights, and abortion, to name a few. During her twenty-seven-year term as a United States Supreme Court Justice, Ginsburg fought for equality for all through personal hardships and turbulent times. She did not miss a day of oral arguments between the time she became a Justice in 1993 and 2018.⁴² Ginsburg showed her dedication and ambition time and time again, showing up to court no matter the personal hurdles. She served directly after surgery for colon cancer in 1999 and when she underwent chemotherapy on and off between 1999 and 2019. “Notorious RBG” even served the day after her beloved husband passed away in 2010.

She came to be viewed as calculated, powerful, unshakable, and as the embodiment of Justices who held liberal views of the law. In 2010 during the presidency of Barack Obama, Justice

⁴¹ Rebecca Mennecke, “The Notorious RBG: Mural at Artisan Forge Honors Ginsberg,” October 22, 2020, <https://volumeone.org/articles/2020/10/22/267782-the-notorious-rbg-new-mural-at-artisan-forge>. Local artist Enamel Hands painted a mural of Justice Ginsburg after her passing with the words “Our Lady of Dissent” in Wisconsin..

⁴² She missed an oral argument in December 2018 because she was recovering from lung cancer surgery and a subsequent fall in which she broke three ribs.

Ginsburg refused to retire as long as she was mentally sharp enough to perform her duties. She received some backlash for this decision, as progressives called for Justice Ginsburg to retire while Democrats controlled the Senate. She refused again in 2013 for fear that Republicans would use the filibuster to prevent then-President Obama from appointing a new like-minded Justice. She continued as justice for seven more years. During this time, she delivered important decisions and dissents in cases like *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 US 529 (dissent, 2013), *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, 573 US 682 (dissent, 2014), *Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*, 576 US 787 (majority decision, 2015), and *Timbs v. Indiana*, 586 US (majority decision, 2019).⁴³

“[I would like to be remembered as] someone who used whatever talent she had to do her work to the best of her ability.”⁴⁴

In 2019, Justice Ginsburg underwent radiation treatment for pancreatic cancer, which she had been battling on and off since 2009. She was briefly cancer-free until February 2020, when the cancer in her pancreas returned. In May, the news was made public in a statement issued by Justice Ginsburg. Responding to questions about her retirement, she stated, “I have often said I

⁴³ “*Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*,” Oyez, accessed May 3, 2021. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2014/13-1314>; “*Timbs v. Indiana*,” Oyez, accessed May 3, 2021. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2018/17-1091>; and “*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*,” Oyez, accessed May 3, 2021. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2013/13-354>.

⁴⁴ Ruth Bader Ginsburg, interview by Irin Camron, “Exclusive Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg interview: Full transcript,” MSNBC, February 17, 2015, <https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/exclusive-justice-ruth-bader-ginsburg-interview-full-transcript-msna531191>.

would remain a member of the Court as long as I can do the job full steam. I remain fully able to do that.”⁴⁵

Justice Ginsburg was very aware that her poor health came at a turbulent time in United States politics. Then-President Donald Trump was nearing his final days in the presidency, and controversies arose regarding the nomination and confirmation of a new Justice. Days before her death, she made a statement to her granddaughter, Clara Spera, regarding her fears: “My most fervent wish is that I will not be replaced until a new President is installed.”⁴⁶ She continued to carry out her judicial duties as justice until her death on September 18, 2020. Despite Justice Ginsburg’s wishes and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s previous statements cautioning against appointing a new justice at the end of a presidential term, Republican Amy Coney Barrett was appointed as her successor on October 27, 2020.

Justice Ginsburg’s passing sent shockwaves throughout the world. Thousands of people gathered in front of the United States Supreme Court to pay their respects, lay flowers, light candles, and leave messages. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, her casket was placed outside the Supreme Court’s west entrance so the public could mourn her passing and pay their respects. Over the next two days, thousands of people lined up to pay tribute to the pathbreaking champion of women’s rights and equality. Public sentiments of love, gratitude, and mourning began to flood public platforms where she was heralded as a feminist icon and hero. United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor issued a statement that reads, “Ruth lived a profoundly meaningful life,

⁴⁵ Ruth Bader Ginsburg, “Statement from Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” *Supreme Court Press Releases*, July 17, 2020, https://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/press/pressreleases/pr_07-17-20.

⁴⁶ Philip Ewing, “Granddaughter Presages Battle Royale: When Will New Justice Be Confirmed?,” accessed March 27, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/sections/death-of-ruth-bader-ginsburg/2020/09/18/914643289/granddaughter-presages-battle-royale-when-will-new-justice-be-confirmed>.

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and the numerous ways in which she changed ours will never be forgotten.”⁴⁷ This sentiment can undoubtedly be echoed by millions of women as Ruth Bader Ginsburg undeniably changed the way the world is for women in the United States.



*“Vigil outside of the Supreme Court after the passing of Ruth Bader Ginsburg.”
Courtesy of Yashi Mori.⁴⁸*

Justice Ginsburg was a strong proponent of the idea that “Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.”⁴⁹ Therefore, she advocated for attacking specific areas of discrimination one at a time rather than enacting sweeping limitations on gender-and-race-based discrimination. She believed that meaningful social change should come from Congress, not the

⁴⁷ “Statements from the Supreme Court Regarding the Death of Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” September 19, 2020, https://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/press/pressreleases/pr_09-19-20.

⁴⁸ Mori, Yashi, “Vigil for Ruth Bader Ginsburg at Supreme Court, 2020,” Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vigil_for_Ruth_Bader_Ginsburg_at_Supreme_Court_\(50365304203\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vigil_for_Ruth_Bader_Ginsburg_at_Supreme_Court_(50365304203).jpg).

⁴⁹ “Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” Oyez; *RBG*, directed by Betsy West and Julie Cohen.

courts. However, direct involvement in the judicial system is not the only way to enact change. Social movements throughout history have demonstrated that many believe change comes from the general public. Historically, support for change in the United States has come from social movements and community organizations from all over the country. This pattern is apparent in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the Chicano/a movements in the 1970s, LGBTQ movements in the 1980s, third wave feminism in the 1990s, and the gay rights movement in the 2000s. Today, we see large-scale social activism occurring in response to police brutality, violence against Asian Americans in the United States, transgender rights, immigration reform, and racial and gender inequality. Like Justice Ginsburg, the general public has challenged Congress, injustice, and inequality; however, they have done so through large-scale social movements.

Justice Ginsburg's life and legacy should encourage us all to be kind, passionate people who strive for equality and the betterment of society for everyone. She should inspire us to do something outside of ourselves to fight for real and enduring change. However, she also reminds us that there is still much work to be done to make the world a better place, even if it is not always kind to us in return. Her dedication and commitment to equality and her willingness to depart from tradition to better the world for those after her will hopefully inspire generations to come. Justice Ginsburg opened doors for us, so let us ensure we open doors for the generations to come.

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To the Beat of Brilliance: The Life and Legacy of Viola Smith

By Sarah Shumate



Photograph of Viola Smith in 1941 by James J. Kriegsmann.¹

¹ James J. Kriegsmann, “Viola and her 17 drums,” c. 1941, Public domain. Reprinted in Alex Vadukul, “Viola Smith, ‘Fastest Girl Drummer in the World,’ Dies at 107,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/06/arts/music/viola-smith-dead.html>.

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Viola Smith (1912–2020) was a prolific and vivacious musician who made a powerful impact on the world of music and sought to create equal opportunities for female musicians during her time. She lived for a spectacular 107 years, playing and performing music for the majority of her life.² Her musical family and her own love for music served to launch her into a career as one of the first professional female drummers of the time, gaining countless accolades across the nation.³ Her musical skills as a drummer and the vibrant energy that sparked every performance were paralleled by few in her era and arguably even beyond it. She left a legacy of passion through her music.

The joy of music is something that brings an unmatched vibrance and vitality to life. It has often been said that music keeps the soul young and Viola Smith was living proof of that. Her life was filled with music, from childhood to well beyond her 100th birthday. She was known as “the fastest girl drummer in the world” and this was easily observable in her phenomenal skill and passion for the drums.⁴ Very few women were professional musicians at the time, not due to lack of talent, but simply because of a lack of opportunity. Viola Smith sought to create change and leave a legacy beyond just the music she played. Her story is one of a phenomenal musician and woman who lived an extraordinary life.

² Katerina P., “106-Year-Old Woman Has Been Drumming for 80 Years, and She's Still Got It,” *Thinking Humanity*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.thinkinghumanity.com/2019/04/106-year-old-woman-has-been-drumming-for-80-years -and-shes-still-got-it.html>.

³ Vadukul.

⁴ Adam Bernstein, “Viola Smith, Swing Era’s ‘Fastest Girl Drummer in the World,’ Dies at 107,” *The Washington Post*, October 23, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/viola-smith-swing-eras-fastest-girl- drummer-in-the-world-dies-at-107/2020/10/23/770c3758-154a-11eb-bc10-40b25382f1be_story.html.

From Hometown to Hollywood

Viola Smith was drawn toward music from the start. Born Viola Clara Schmitz on November 29, 1912, in Mount Calvary, Wisconsin, she was encouraged to pursue music early on.⁵ Her father was a musician himself and made sure that each of his children had the opportunity for music education. Each of the children, including Viola, took piano lessons.⁶ They had two pianos and an organ so it is not difficult to imagine the music that must have constantly filled their home. In addition to piano lessons, all of the children were also encouraged to learn other instruments so that they could create a family jazz band, later called the Schmitz Sisters Orchestra.⁷ Since she was the sixth child of ten, most of the instruments were already played by her older sisters when she entered the band, but her father decided that it was time to add drums. Smith considered this to be a lucky break saying later in her life, “What better instrument is there to play than the drums?”⁸ Whether it is considered a coincidence or a divinely orchestrated turn of events, it is clear that this allowed her to truly find her passion and make an indelible mark on the world of music.

⁵ Bernstein.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Vadukul.

⁸ *Tom Tom Magazine*, “Viola Smith: America’s Original Hep Girl,” YouTube, 14:06, January 31, 2013, <https://youtu.be/jlzCWHw7ZW8>.



The Schmitz Sisters Orchestra (ca. 1920). Courtesy of the Mills Music Library.⁹

The band of sisters was a great success and performed locally in vaudeville tours and state fairs. Before long, Smith and her seven sisters were in great demand at weddings and other events, but this was just the beginning of the fame that she would achieve. Soon, the group's talent matched and even superseded that of the best. They traveled frequently to Chicago for radio gigs where they even outplayed an all-male band in their rendition of the classic *Rhapsody in Blue*.¹⁰ A year-long national tour sponsored by a talent contest followed and their fame spread throughout the country. After many of the sisters branched off into marriage and other pursuits, Smith and her sister Mildred (1916–1997), a multi-instrumentalist herself, formed the Coquettes,

⁹ "Schmitz Sisters Orchestra," ca. 1920, Wisconsin: Mills Music Library, *Mills Music Library Digital Collection*, <https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/XLJODS6DMXQQG8L>.

¹⁰ Cree McCree, "Pioneering Drummer Viola Smith Was 'An Advocate For The Rights Of All Women Musicians,'" *DownBeat Magazine*, November 13, 2020, <https://downbeat.com/news/detail/pioneering-drummer-viola-smith-was-an-advocate-for-the-rights-of-all-women>.

another all-girl big band.¹¹ This band was quite successful and toured for about four years.

Smith eventually moved to New York where her compelling talent earned her a scholarship to the Juilliard School. There she studied timpani under Ed Fischer, a top drummer and educator.¹² She also studied at Radio City Music Hall under Billy Gladstone (1893–1961), one of the most famous jazz drummers in America.¹³ Perfecting her style and her skill, Smith became an established performing musician in New York and one of the first female drummers in America to have a professional career in the field. Many referred to her as “the female Gene Krupa” but Smith replied to this in utmost humility and simply acknowledged that all of them were skillful in their own right.¹⁴

At one point, Smith was performing in five shows a day, seven days a week, for about two months at New York’s Paramount Theatre. During this time, one day rang out in her memory as one of the most difficult in her entire life. On June 6, 1942, Smith’s fiancé was taken overseas and her father passed away, leaving her to cope with immense loss and still carry on through five shows that day. She nearly fainted during a performance because of the shock but was brought back into the moment at a fellow bandmate’s cue in time for her drum solo. In that moment, she remembers that her heart was pounding as fast as her drums.¹⁵

One of Smith’s most infamous accomplishments is her performance in the Kit-Kat band for the original 1966 Broadway production of *Cabaret*, which she considered “the highlight of

¹¹ “Viola Smith,” Oral History Program: Viola Smith, NAMM.org, National Association of Music Merchants, October 23, 2012, <https://www.namm.org/library/oral-history/viola-smith>.

¹² *Tom Tom Magazine*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

[her] life.”¹⁶ She also began her own band called Viola and Her Seventeen Drums in addition to having an extended career playing with the House of Charm Orchestra, a popular all-girl band at the time.¹⁷ Smith made myriad appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and performed for many other notable bands and events as well.¹⁸ She played alongside some of the most famous big-bands in America during the 1949 presidential inauguration of Harry Truman (1884–1972), including Count Basie (1904–1984), Duke Ellington (1899–1974), Phil Spitalny (1890–1970), and Benny Goodman (1909–1986).¹⁹ Other notable achievements include her performances for the NBC Symphony Orchestra, various Hollywood film orchestras (such as the one for the film *Here Come the Co-eds* (1945) directed by Jean Yarbrough and starring Bud Abbott and Lou Costello), and with other jazz greats such as Ella Fitzgerald (1917–1996) and Billie Holiday (1915–1959). She continued to play and perform until well into her 90s.²⁰

Stereotypes and Spotlights

Viola Smith was one of the very few women who had the opportunity to pursue music as a career. Women were unfortunately and inaccurately viewed as less than their male peers in the big-band arena where men were thought to have more stamina and skill. However, this was clearly not the case, as can be seen by Smith’s performance abilities and that of numerous other women. Smith sought to change this state of inequality and prejudice by writing an article for *Down Beat Magazine* titled “Give Girl Musicians a Break!” in 1941. In this article, she boldly stated, “Some girl musicians are as much masters of their instruments as are male musicians. They can improvise, their solos

¹⁶ *Tom Tom Magazine*; Vadukul.

¹⁷ McCree.

¹⁸ Vadukul.

¹⁹ *Tom Tom Magazine*.

²⁰ McCree.

are well-defined and thought-provoking and show unlimited imagination.”²¹ She passionately defended the talents of her fellow women musicians and urged her readers to consider the immense vault of talent and skill that was left untapped and smothered under the stereotypes of society.

With a large majority of men drafted in the war, including male musicians, someone had to fill their place. Smith unabashedly asked, “Instead of replacing them with what may be mediocre talent, why not let some of the great girl musicians of the country take their places?”²² World War II finally opened up an opportunity for women to demonstrate that they could perform on the same level as their male counterparts. As Smith stated in an interview with *Tom Tom Magazine*, “since all the men were getting drafted overseas, any girl musician who wanted a job could have one” and that was “wonderful for musicians.”²³ A great deal of work still needed to be done in the following decades, but Smith helped to spearhead this call for change and was a passionate advocate for equality in the music field.

Longevity and Legacy

Viola Smith lived a long and fruitful life and credited her astounding longevity predominantly to her drumming, since it involved the whole body and kept her in terrific physical condition.²⁴ In 2012, she moved to a Christian commune in Costa Mesa where she resided until her peaceful passing in October of 2020, due to Alzheimer’s complications.²⁵

Viola Smith was not driven by a thirst for fame but simply by her deep love for music and drumming. When she did discover her popularity and renown across the internet and even the world,

²¹ McCree.

²² Ibid.

²³ *Tom Tom Magazine*.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bernstein.

she was shocked and claimed that it was quite a surprise saying, “I’m happy that I’m accepted as a girl drummer, because at the time there was no such thing.”²⁶ Her story is a testament to the joy that flows from music. She considered her life to be quite “charmed” and not too difficult saying, “Unless people call drumming work, then I worked hard in my life.”²⁷

Viola Smith had a legendary career and was known on a national scale, not only for her incredible skill behind the kit but for her impact in creating greater equality and opportunities for women musicians in her field. Although she retired in her sixties, she kept drumming well after she turned one hundred.²⁸ Viola Smith was a maverick in her era and beyond it. Her pioneering spirit and unmatched talent inspired countless other women to pursue their passions for music.

²⁶ *Tom Tom Magazine*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

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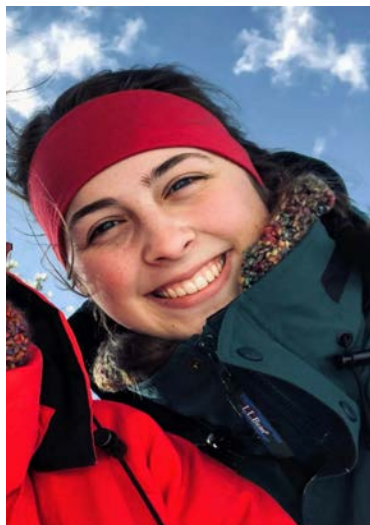
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Elder of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, Marshall McKay

By Jenessa Howard

On January 2, 2021, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article titled, “Marshall McKay, Indigenous leader who helped steer Autry Museum, dies of COVID-19 at 68.”¹ Despite his lifelong work as a Native American activist, dated records of Marshall McKay’s achievements are rare, which complicates the chronology of his life. McKay worked in institutions across the state of California such as the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Tribal Council, the Native American Heritage Commission, the University of California, Davis, and the Autry National Center. Through his work with these institutions, McKay advocated for Indigenous rights through politics and education reform.

On June 5, 1952, Marshall McKay was born to his biological mother Frances Lorenzo McDaniels and his father Charles McKay in Colusa, California.² He was raised by his mother Mabel Lorenzo McKay in migrant housing in Arbuckle, California.³ Little is known about his early or personal life. He

¹ Carolina A. Miranda, “Marshall McKay, Indigenous leader who helped steer Autry Museum, dies of COVID-19 at 68,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2021-01-02/marshall-mckay-indigenous-leader-autry-museum-dies>.

² “Marshall C. McKay (1952-2020),” *Daily Democrat*, April 24, 2021, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dailydemocrat/obituary.aspx?n=marshall-c-mckay&pid=198371489&fhid=3131>.

³ Native News Online Staff, “Tribal Elder Marshall McKay, a ‘Resolute Protector’ of Native Culture, Dies from Covid-19,” *Native News Online*, January 7, 2021, <https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/tribal-elder-marshall-mckay-a-resolute-protector-of-native-culture-dies-from-covid-19>; “Marshall C. McKay (1952-2020).”

eventually became the first person to represent his tribe, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, at Sonoma State University and the University of California, Berkeley.⁴ As a Native American from a low-income background, it was an achievement for him to be the first to represent his tribe as a university student. Furthermore, during an unspecified time in his life, McKay supervised work crews to repair and maintain submarines for the United States Navy's Department of Defense for fifteen years.⁵ Regarding his personal life, McKay married his first wife, Electa Reynolds in 1976, but later remarried to Sharon Rogers in 2003.⁶ He had two children with Reynolds, Rebecca, and Dillon, and adopted Rogers' kids, Brent Rogers, Hsin Neh Rogers, and Alexander Finkel, into his family.⁷

One of his most important leadership positions was his time as a representative of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. According to The Tribal Council of his nation,

for 31 years, from 1984 to 2015... [McKay] served as a member of the Yocha Dehe Tribal Council, elected to lead the Tribe as its Chairman for nearly a decade of that time. He served on many of the Tribe's governmental bodies, including the Board of Directors for Cache Creek Casino Resort.⁸

The Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation is an independent tribal government recognized by the United States and is located in Sacramento, California. The Wintun have survived many difficulties including the Spanish mission system in the eighteenth

⁴ Native News Online Staff; "Marshall C. McKay (1952-2020)."

⁵ Native News Online Staff.

⁶ "Marshall C. McKay (1952-2020)."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Tribal Council of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, "Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Mourns Passing of Tribal Elder," Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, December 30, 2020, <https://www.yochadehe.org/news/yocha-dehe-wintun-nation-mourns-passing-tribal-elder>.

century and the exploitation and land acquisition of the Gold Rush in northern California in 1855. During an interview tour with documentary media-maker, Jesikah Maria Ross, McKay said,

I think it's important for non-Native people in Yolo County [California] to understand what happened to the Wintun people so that there's a truthful exchange of information. I want to bring out the facts rather than the fantasy and I think that's necessary in order to get an understanding between cultures and I think it's important for historical value that these incidents become part of our history here in Yolo County.⁹

McKay, as both chairman and director, secured economic stability for the Yocha Dehe Wintun by developing Cache Creek Casino Resort.¹⁰

As an educational activist, he championed cultural renewal, promotion, and advancement. He established sustainable agricultural practices by founding Séka Hills, an artisanal olive oil company.¹¹ Moreover, the Séka Hills company continues to practice Patwin cultural beliefs through the preservation of the environment and Indigenous language.¹² During his interview with Jesikah Maria Ross, McKay stated,

The name of my language is Southern Wintun. We also have in our own dialect we call it Patwin, the language of the people and it was almost a dead

⁹ Jesikah Maria Ross, "Audio Tour Interview With Marshall McKay Stop 5: Memorial Grove," Art of Regional Change University of California Davis, November 9, 2011, http://restorerestory.org/sites/default/files/files/tour-transcripts/McKay_05_Memorial.pdf.

¹⁰ Miranda.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Yocha Dehe," Seka Hills, accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.sekahills.com/story/yocha-dehe/>.

language. We had two culture keepers that knew the language. One has since passed last year and we still have one and she is graciously helping us reclaim that language.¹³

That action led to the present Patwin language preservation.

The preservation of the Patwin language follows McKay's cultural beliefs in the protection of the environment. In another interview with Jesikah Maria Ross, McKay expressed, "restoration means to me directly a representation of a time before destruction and I mean by that not so much an absolute destruction, but whenever something is disturbed in a fundamental way with mining or farming even or even over-cultivation of plant material or basket making material, it becomes an unnatural setting" for the environment.¹⁴

McKay has represented Indigenous Americans locally, nationally, and internationally. In 2007, McKay served on the boards of both the Native American Heritage Commission and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian.¹⁵ According to the California Native American Heritage Commission, "Commissioner McKay carried the tribe's sovereignty and advocacy for California Native Americans into the halls of power, from the Governor's Office to two State Commissions (the NAHC and the State Historical Resources

¹³ Jesikah Maria Ross, "Audio Tour Interview With Marshall McKay Stop 1: The Overlook," Art of Regional Change University of California Davis, November 9, 2011, http://restorerestory.org/sites/default/files/files/tour-transcripts/McKay_01_Overlook.pdf.

¹⁴ Jesikah Maria Ross, "Audio Tour Interview With Marshall McKay Stop 2: Wetlands," Art of Regional Change University of California Davis, November 9, 2011, http://restorerestory.org/sites/default/files/files/tour-transcripts/McKay_02_Wetlands.pdf.

¹⁵ Miranda.

Commission), with grace and humility.”¹⁶ This made him a memorable and impactful figure in the Native American community. Furthermore, in 2015, in defiance of the United States pulling out of the Paris Climate Accords, McKay attended the accords to represent Indigenous Americans.¹⁷

After being chairman of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Tribal Council, McKay later became a member of the University of California Davis Foundation Board in 2008.¹⁸ As former chairman, he utilized his connections with the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation to provide financial support to the University of California, Davis. That support led to the creation of the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts and two endowed chairs in the Department of Native American Studies and the Pediatric Endocrinology clinic within the University of California, Davis school of medicine.¹⁹ According to the regents of the University of California, the governing body of the University of California system, a “cornerstone of Marshall McKay’s vision is his commitment to Native American cultural renewal—a focus he extended into education and sustainable land practices.”²⁰ The Native American Studies program at the University of California, Davis, which McKay helped establish, “has supported undergraduate student internships, graduate student research, hosting California Indian speakers, and the development and publishing of research on

¹⁶ California Native American Heritage Commission, “In Remembrance of Commissioner Marshall McKay and Commissioner Joseph A. Myers,” The State of California Native American Heritage Commission, accessed January 2021, <http://nahc.ca.gov/2021/01/in-remembrance-of-commissioner-marshall-mckay-and-commissioner-joseph-a-myers/>.

¹⁷ Paige Laduzinsky, “Remembering Marshall McKay,” KCET, February 10, 2021, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/tending-nature/remembering-marshall-mckay>

¹⁸ The regents of the University of California, Davis campus, “Renewing Culture Marshall McKay,” UC Davis Stories, accessed March 2021, <https://stories.ucdavis.edu/stories/community/mckay.html>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

California Indian land and water rights and restoration.”²¹

McKay’s activism included the preservation and revitalization of some California native languages, a perfect example of his support for Native American Studies.²²

McKay further fulfilled his leadership role in 2010, as he “was the first Native American to be appointed Chairman of the Board for the Autry National Center,” which includes the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, the Museum of the American West, and the Institute for the Study of the American West.²³ McKay’s appointment was significant because it signaled the shift of the center’s focus away from an archetypal American cowboy museum to one inclusive of Native Americans. As Chairman of the Autry, he advocated for changing the museum’s viewpoint to give voice to Native Americans. Following the end of his term as Chairman at the Autry in 2016, McKay loaned the museum some Indigenous artifacts that he and his second wife, Sharon Rogers, had collected.²⁴ Among these artifacts was a signed logbook by thousands of Indigenous activists who occupied Alcatraz from November 20, 1969, to June 11, 1971.²⁵ The Autry Museum even featured an exhibit in 2018 that represented his mother as a prominent Pomo teacher, renowned healer, and basket weaver.²⁶

²¹ The regents of the University of California, Davis campus, “UCD NAS Remembers Yocha Dehe Chairman Emeritus Marshall McKay,” UC Davis Department of Native American Studies, accessed March 2021, <https://nas.ucdavis.edu/news-and-events/ucd-nas-remembers-yocha-dehe-chairman-emeritus-marshall-mckay>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Claire Selvin, “Marshall McKay, ‘Pioneering Former Board Chair of Autry Museum, Has Died at 68,’” *ART News*, January 5, 2020, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/marshall-mckay-autry-museum-dead-1234580793/>; “Marshall C. McKay (1952–2020).”

²⁴ Miranda.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

McKay strove for the implementation of Native American representation on multiple platforms. McKay had spoken at the 35th annual American Indian Film Festival in 2010 that featured the documentary, *A Good Day to Die*. The film was executively produced by his nation and covers the American Indian Movement (AIM), a civil rights movement dedicated to protecting Native Americans, established in 1968.²⁷ AIM's focus was directed towards the independence of American Indians and their lands to preserve culture and traditions. They have also fought to hold the United States government accountable by honoring past treaties with Indigenous nations. At the festival, McKay stated that this "movement has changed and continues to change the way the country and the world perceive tribal people in North America."²⁸

The Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation's Tribal Council issued the following statement upon hearing of Marshall McKay's death on December 30, 2020: "We know also the pain of Marshall's loss is shared by the many who loved him and learned from him. We will miss his strength and wisdom. He was a resolute protector of Native American heritage here, within our own homeland, but also throughout California and Indian Country."²⁹ The Native American Heritage Commission remembered him "with heavy hearts and deep sadness," stating that they were "devastated beyond words...May Commissioner McKay...be warmly welcomed by the ancestors [he] sought to honor."³⁰ He was remembered by educational bodies, such as The Department of Native American Studies at the University of California, Davis, who expressed their deepest condolences: "Marshall was a visionary leader; a champion of Indian education, self-determination, tribal government, economic development, and the arts. A kind,

²⁷ Quanah Brightman, "Marshall McKay speaking at the 35th annual American Indian Film Festival," YouTube, 3:48, November 17, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0moYWRyV_w.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The Tribal Council of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

³⁰ California Native American Heritage Commission.

inclusive, and friendly man, he was also a fierce advocate for Indian students and Native American Studies.”³¹ Even the University of California, Davis’s Chancellor, Gary S. May, personally expressed his deepest respect for McKay and remembered him as a good friend and inspiration to the students, faculty, and staff alike.³² In remembrance of McKay, Jackie Autry, Founding Chair and Life Trustee of the Autry Museum, wrote, “Marshall was an inspiration to me and to everyone at the Autry Museum...[he] was an extra leader...a generous and beautiful soul and I will miss him with all my heart.”³³ McKay was a man remembered by his colleagues and friends endearingly.

Native elders like McKay thought seven generations ahead, anticipating the future instead of reacting to the present. He inspired future generations of children to remember their ancestors with the creation of educational programs through Native American communities in California’s higher education system. Moreover, he actively represented those native elders as a leader of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation and his work at the University of California, Davis, the Native American Heritage Commission, and the Autry Center by sharing his experience as a Native American with others. McKay advocated for Indigenous peoples to be represented through political organizations and the California education system and helped adjust the perception of non-Indigenous Americans. However well described he may be in this article, he describes his values, beliefs, and his life best in his own words:

My name is Marshall McKay and I am honored to
lend my support as the Chairman of the Native Arts

³¹ The regents of the University of California, Davis campus, “UCD NAS Remembers Yocha Dehe Chairman Emeritus Marshall McKay.”

³² News and Media Relations, “Chancellor’s Statement on the Passing of Marshall McKay,” UC Davis, January 04, 2021, <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/chancellors-statement-passing-marshall-mckay>.

³³ Jackie Autry, “A Tribute to Marshall McKay,” Autry Museum of the American West, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://theautry.org/marshall>.

and Cultures Foundation Board of Directors. As the son of renowned healer and basket weaver Mabel McKay, I understand and respect artistic vision and practice. Through our artforms, Native people have described our agonies, mobilized for our struggles, talked of our cosmologies and world-views, transmitted our histories and celebrated our joys and our hopes. Our arts and cultural expressions are the key to the very survival of American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and in fact, all cultures. For me, the significance of keeping our stories, art, language and culture alive is personal, because it is central to our own survival as a people. It reflects the promise we have made to generations of storytellers and culture keepers – the promise that we will carry the knowledge of our traditions on into perpetuity – to preserve the core of who we are as Native people.³⁴

³⁴ Marshall McKay, “Chairman Marshall McKay on The Cultural Survival of Native Nations,” Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.yochadehe.org/news/chairman-marshall-mckay-cultural-survival-native-nations>.

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<https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/tribal-elder-marshall-mckay-a-resolute-protector-of-native-culture-dies-from-covid-19>.
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<https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/chancellors-statement-passing-marshall-mckay>.
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2021. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/marshall-mckay-autry-museum-dead-1234580793/>.

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Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation. Accessed March 15, 2021.

<https://www.yochadehe.org/news/yocha-dehe-wintun-nation-mourns-passing-tribal-elder>.

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Author Bio

As a student at California State University, San Bernardino pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in History, Jennessa Howard is dedicated to preserving Indigenous Peoples' culture, traditions, and informing the public about the historical significance of those topics. She takes inspiration from Professor Raul Chavez, Elder Robert John Knapp, and Professor Francis Borella who were instrumental in igniting her respect for history and Indigenous Peoples. She is a professional dancer, dance instructor, and student of the world, with a forward focus on ensuring that the nameless and voiceless are represented and recognized in the world today. Beyond dance, Jennessa is an avid writer; she is concentrating on her internship with Dr. Long. As a former member of the Native American Inter-tribal Student Association (NAISA), she is always looking for the next story to be told through a historical lens.



Mario Molina

By Jose Castro



Photograph of Dr. Mario Molina. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.¹

I met Mario Molina (1943–2020) in Mexico City in 2004 at an academic conference where he defended his environmental plan to improve the city’s air quality. By this time, Dr. Molina had already won a Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1995 for his work in atmospheric chemistry. In 1973, he discovered that the compounds known as chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, used in aerosol sprays, plastic foams, and refrigerants could destroy the oxygen compound that forms the ozone layer. This was groundbreaking work that

¹ Distributed under CC BY 3.0 CL. Gobierno de Chile, “Mario Molina (cropped),” via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mario_Molina_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mario_Molina_(cropped).jpg).

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revealed the danger CFCs pose to climate change and their role in the depletion of the ozone layer which ultimately awarded him the Nobel Prize. On October 7, 2020, Dr. Molina passed away due to a heart attack. He dedicated his life as a scientist to finding ways to better care for the environment and humankind. Dr. Molina's prestige was the result of his work for humanity.

A full list of Dr. Molina's awards, grants, and medals would be pages long. Besides being awarded the Nobel Prize, he also earned the Esselen Award of the Northeast section of the American Chemical Society in 1987. The American Chemical Society in Chicago gave Dr. Molina the Willard Gibbs Medal and the American Chemical Society Prize for Creative Advances in Environment Technology and Science in 1998. Between 1997 and 2010, he was awarded honorary degrees from Harvard, Duke, and other prestigious universities around the world.² Dr. Molina was a tireless scientist who worked up until the days before his death and who, from a very young age, fostered a curiosity for chemistry that led him to be recognized all over the world.

Mario Molina was born in Mexico City on March 9, 1943. Since childhood, he had a curiosity for chemistry. One of his aunts, Esther Molina, who was a chemist herself, saw his aptitude for science and helped him do chemistry experiments at home in a small laboratory that he had built in the bathroom. His passion for science and chemistry continued throughout his adolescence. By 1965, he had earned a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

After receiving his undergraduate degree, he decided to study in Europe for two years, however, he never put aside his aspirations to obtain his PhD in the United States. In his autobiography on the Nobel Prize website, Dr. Molina humbly acknowledges his weaknesses in science during his early career:

² Kate S. Petersen, "Institute Professor Emeritus Mario Molina," *Mit News*, October 9, 2020, <https://news.mit.edu/2020/mario-molina-environmental-dies-1009>.

After finishing my undergraduate studies in Mexico, I decided to obtain a PhD degree in physical chemistry. This was not an easy task; although my training in chemical engineering was good, it was weak in mathematics, physics, as well as in various areas of basic physical chemistry—subjects such as quantum mechanics were totally alien to me in those days.³

In 1967, he earned a postgraduate degree in Polymerization Kinetics at the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, West Germany. Before applying to the PhD program at the University of California, Berkeley, he decided to study mathematics on his own. He then returned to Mexico City to work as an Assistant Professor at the UNAM in 1968. Dr. Molina eventually obtained a PhD in physical chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley in 1972.

At the University of California, Berkeley, Dr. George Pimentel (1922–1989), the inventor of the chemical laser, was his instructor. Dr. Pimentel helped the doctoral student in his research and dissertation and was, as Dr. Molina stated, “an excellent teacher and a wonderful mentor; his warmth, enthusiasm, and encouragement provided me with inspiration to pursue important scientific questions.”⁴

In 1973, Dr. Molina decided to go to the University of California at Irvine to work with Professor F. Sherwood Rowland (1927–2012) as a postdoctoral fellow. Together they developed the “CFC-Ozone Depletion Theory.” With this theory, they discovered that the dwindling of the ozone layer was caused by increasing concentrations of ozone-depleting chemicals known as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Dr. Molina wrote, “we realized that

³ Mario J. Molina, “Mario J. Molina Biographical,” Nobel Media AB 2021, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/chemistry/1995/molina/biographical/>.

⁴ Ibid.

the chlorine atoms produced by the decomposition of the CFCs would catalytically destroy ozone. We became fully aware of the seriousness of the problem when we compared the industrial amounts of CFCs to the amounts of nitrogen oxides which control ozone levels.”⁵ Dr. Molina and Dr. Rowland saw the damage CFCs do to the atmosphere and the climate on earth. They began to exchange information with different scientists at the University of California, Berkeley, and other universities throughout the world, because they knew that if something were not done to stop this, there would be a significant depletion of the earth’s stratospheric ozone layer.

On June 28, 1974, Dr. Molina and Dr. Rowland published their results in *Nature*, a scientific journal, and decided to draw the attention of the media, policymakers, and other scientists. They faced significant criticism for their findings. In 1977, “the chief of one aerosol manufacturer alleged that their theory was ‘orchestrated by the Ministry of Disinformation of the KGB.’”⁶ Moreover, “[o]fficials from the Manufacturing Chemists Association and Du Pont emphasized that Rowland and Molina’s theory was ‘purely speculative.’”⁷ Of course, CFC manufacturers like Du Pont could not prove that to be true and, by fall, “officials at the National Academy of Sciences formed the first of several study committees that would eventually confirm the validity of Rowland and Molina’s hypothesis.”⁸

Even though Dr. Molina and Dr. Rowland rang the alarm bells in 1973, they were not taken seriously until “the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released a report in 1976 that confirmed the essential premises of Molina’s ozone depletion hypothesis, and more resources were assigned to study the

⁵ Molina, “Mario J. Molina Biographical.”

⁶ Laine Jones, “Ozone Warning: He Sounded Alarm, Paid Heavy Price,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-07-14-mn-8873-story.html>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

problem.”⁹ Even then, the world was not aware of the significance of Dr. Molina’s findings until “an alarming observation in 1983 by British scientist Joseph Farman and colleagues [proved] that the ozone levels in the stratosphere above Antarctica had been dropping dramatically.”¹⁰

Dr. Molina and Dr. Rowland then decided to promote their theories around the United States. By 1985, 197 countries signed “the Vienna Convention for the protection of the ozone layer, and, in 1987, they agreed to the Montreal Protocol with the establishment of goals and concrete actions to limit and eliminate the production of industrial gases that deplete the ozone layer.”¹¹

The “CFC-Ozone Depletion Theory” eventually earned Dr. Molina the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1995 alongside Dr. Rowland from the University of California at Irvine. Dr. Molina was the first Mexican-born Nobel laureate in science. In Mexico, Dr. Molina decided to spend part of his Nobel Prize money to award scholarships to young students in public schools “so they could study abroad, as he did at the beginning of his career.”¹² He wanted to bring science to children because he was convinced that through education, society can be transformed.

In 1982 he decided to move from the University of California at Irvine, where he was a professor and researcher, to NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory to continue his research on the Ozone layer. From 1989 until his death in 2020, he taught classes

⁹ “Mario J. Molina, Ph.D. — Academy of Achievement,” Academy of Achievement, October 10, 2020, <https://achievement.org/achiever/mario-j-molina-ph-d/>.

¹⁰ “Mario Molina,” Science History Institute, October 9, 2020, <https://www.sciencehistory.org/historical-profile/mario-molina>.

¹¹ Julia Carabias, “Mario Molina, Científico Mexicano Excepcional [Mario Molina, Exceptional Mexican Scientist],” *Revista Nexos*, October 12, 2020, <https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=50667>.

¹² Sonia Corno, “Mario Molina, el nobel pionero sobre el calentamiento global [Mario Molina, the Nobel Pioneer on Global Warming],” *El País*, October 7, 2020, <https://elpais.com/mexico/2020-10-08/mario-molina-el-nobel-pionero-sobre-el-calentamiento-global.html>.

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and lectures at different universities throughout the United States and Mexico, like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of California at San Diego, and the UNAM in Mexico City.

When I met Dr. Molina in 2004 at the Technology University of Mexico (UNITEC), he shared his plan to fight air pollution in Mexico City. In 2005, Dr. Molina established the Centro Mario Molina, also known as the *Mario Molina Center for Strategic Studies on Energy and the Environment*, which was dedicated to finding solutions to the challenges related to climate change, sustainable development, and the efficient use of energy. With the help of the Mexican government, private companies, and the people, he launched an initiative in the Centro Mario Molina to put together a plan to reduce air pollution in the city. He suggested renewable sources like solar and wind, among other sustainable resources, to improve the air quality in the city. Dr. Molina declared:

The goal was to make sure that the work has an impact in society and that it affects public policy. We had success working with air quality in Mexico because it was a very polluted city. And so with many colleagues starting then, we were able to work with the government so that the city became much cleaner.¹³

Dr. Molina was recognized by governments for his humanitarian work. He collaborated with then-President Barack Obama as a member of the United States President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology throughout Obama's presidency, and on August 8, 2013, Obama announced that Dr.

¹³ Angeta W. Levinovitz, "A Conversation with Mario Molina," Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement, May 19, 2011, <https://tylerprize.org/laureates/laureate-conversations/2021-conversation-mario-molina/>.

Molina was a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.¹⁴ In 2014, he was given the Knight Medal of the Legion of Honor by then-President of France, Francois Hollande, and in 2017, he was inducted into the California Hall of Fame.¹⁵ After Dr. Molina's passing in 2020, Al Gore, who was Vice President from 1993 to 2001, wrote in *The New York Times* that he "never backed down from political pressure, always speaking truth to power, grounded in science and reason."¹⁶ Dr. Molina influenced climate change policies during the Obama administration, encouraging the accession of the United States into the Paris Agreement in 2016, which then-President Donald Trump left in 2017 and current President Joe Biden rejoined in 2021.

Due to his work as a climate activist and efforts in encouraging Latino children to pursue science as a career, he became an inspiration for many of those young immigrants who come to the United States to earn an education. Those young students who seek social change and world well-being through science look at Dr. Molina as an example. Arriving as an immigrant to the United States and pursuing his dream of having higher education, he saw few Latino students in scientific fields in universities. Therefore, he wanted to promote scientific education and careers in minority communities. Dr. Molina achieved this goal by participating "in the Society for the Advancement of Chicano and Native American Scientists and the American

¹⁴ "Mario Molina Receives Presidential Medal of Freedom For Helping Save Ozone Layer," Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development, August 9, 2013, <https://www.igsd.org/mario-molina-receives-presidential-medal-of-freedom-for-helping-save-ozone-layer/>.

¹⁵ Petersen.

¹⁶ John Swartz, "Nobel Laureate Mario Molina Dies at 77," *The New York Times*, October 14, 2020, <https://www.firstpost.com/tech/science/nobel-laureate-mario-molina-dies-at-77-after-sounding-alarm-for-ozone-layer-depletion-in-1974-8912111.html>.

Chemical Society School program, which encourages underrepresented groups to become scientists.”¹⁷

While he was working at the University of California, San Diego, Dr. Molina worked to mitigate the contagion of COVID-19. On June 11, 2020, the publication of the “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,” a document on the spread of the virus through the air, was deemed controversial in the scientific and epidemiological world. Dr. Molina concluded that, “Our results show that the airborne transmission route is highly virulent and dominant for the spread of COVID-19.”¹⁸ Epidemiologists denounced Dr. Molina’s claims, arguing that he was not an epidemiologist or a doctor and his methodology had flaws and false statements. Dr. Molina replied to the critiques declaring,

We are part of a different community, which is mainly connected with air quality and therefore very familiar with the properties of tiny particles called “aerosols.” These penetrate humans to the lungs causing multiple deaths. We have close collaboration with epidemiologists, but with those who have worked on air quality issues and who are aware of the deaths caused by breathing aerosols of polluted air.¹⁹

¹⁷ Bonnie Denmark, “Recipiente del Premio Nobel Mario Molina [Nobel Prize Recipient Mario Molina]” *Visionlearning* SCIRE-1, no. 9 (2015), <https://www.visionlearning.com/es/library/Adentro-de-la-Ciencia/58/Recipiente-del-Premio-Nobel-Mario-Molina/211>.

¹⁸ Mario J. Molina, Renyi Zhang, Yixin Li, Annie L. Zhang, and Yuan Wang, “Identifying airborne transmission as the dominant route for the spread of COVID-19,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117, no. 26 (June 30, 2020): 14857-14863, <https://www.pnas.org/content/117/26/14857>.

¹⁹ Mario J. Molina, “Carta Aclaratoria [Explanatory Letter],” *El Universal*, June 6, 2020, <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/ciencia-y-salud/ciencia/carta-aclaratoria-de-mario-molina>.

Dr. Molina criticized then-President Trump's stance against the use of face masks and sought to raise awareness for their use in mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

Dr. Mario Molina died on October 7, 2020, aged seventy-seven, due to a heart attack, but his legacy in science and academia continues. Most importantly, he leaves behind a warning for humanity about the damage we are doing to our world. The day before he died, Dr. Molina "signed a newspaper petition asking for the expansion of bike paths in Mexico City" to reduce car use in the city and lower pollution levels.²⁰ In a statement issued after Dr. Molina's passing, Al Gore recognized that he was a "trailblazing pioneer of the climate movement."²¹

Dr. Molina was a member of the National College (El Colegio Nacional) in Mexico City. This institution is an honorary academy where the members consist of the most prestigious Mexican artists and scientists. Dr. Molina was participating in conferences on health and the environment in the days just before his death. He had scheduled online conferences along with other Mexican scientists and intellectuals, like Dr. Julio Frenk who is president of the University of Miami. Juan Villoro, president of the National College, declared that,

[Dr. Molina] was a person who contributed decisively to trying to reverse the harmful role of the human being against nature, and in these times of pandemic, in these times in which coexistence with nature is becoming more and more challenging, it seems to me central to highlight the importance of his legacy.²²

²⁰ Rodolfo Dirzo and Adrián Fernández, "José Mario Molina: Life and legacy of a man who helped to save Earth's ozone layer," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 1 (January 5, 2021).

²¹ Swartz.

²² Yanet Aguilar Sosa, "Hace dos días Mario Molina estuvo muy activo en la reunión de El Colegio Nacional [Two days ago, Mario Molina was very active

In Memoriam

Mario Molina's life should be remembered for his love of science and his work for the environment and humanity as a whole. He leaves behind institutions that continue his scientific work in Mexico and the United States where his legacy will continue to inspire new generations of students to work in the pursuit of human well-being. With the work done by Dr. Molina, we must be able to raise awareness about the damage we are doing to our environment and observe the ways we can use science to save our planet.

in the meeting of El Colegio Nacional],” *El Universal*, October 7, 2020, <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/ciencia-y-salud/vio-juan-villoro-muy-activo-mario-molina-hace-dos-dias>.

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Author Bio

Jose was born and raised in Mexico City. He obtained his first Bachelor of Science in Communication Studies in Mexico in 2006 and his second Bachelor of Science in History at California State Polytechnic University in 2018. He is currently a docent at the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum and is pursuing a Master of Arts in History at California State University, San Bernardino. His love for books and history led the retired DJ and radio producer to seek a new career as college professor and public historian to help young, underrepresented students pursue higher education. He is interested in the history of California, history of Mexico, and the history of Christianity in North America.



In Memoriam

John Lewis

By Cecelia Smith



John Lewis (February 21, 1940–July 17, 2020)
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.²³

Of all the people connected to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Congressman John Lewis (1940–2020) belongs squarely at the forefront. His speech at the March on Washington in 1963, was in front of hundreds of thousands; he stood shoulder to shoulder with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) and displayed a measure of wisdom and grace well beyond his twenty-three years. He took a leadership role in the march across the Edmund Pettus

²³ Wikimedia Commons, “John Lewis.” Made public domain by the United States Congress. Accessed April 28, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_Lewis-2006.jpg.

Bridge in Selma, Alabama, on “Bloody Sunday” on March 7, 1965, for which he was brutally beaten by the authorities. He was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1986 and served Georgia’s 5th Congressional District until his death in 2020. John Lewis’s foray into good trouble, necessary trouble, should be an inspirational mantra to every human being who seeks justice in a world full of injustice.

Oftentimes famous public figures are measured only by the specific events that they participate in and are frequently pigeonholed into one-note caricatures of themselves. When many people think of John Lewis today, they most often recollect an icon in the black civil rights movement. Considering only his moment of greatness solidifies his iconic status, but it molds him into a somewhat featureless cardboard cutout. When examining his life in retrospect, a more complete picture of John Lewis, the family man, the legislator, and yes, a driving force in the civil rights movement, emerges.

A Life of Chickens and Bibles

John Lewis was born in 1940 to sharecroppers, Willie Mae (1914–2003) and Eddie Lewis (1909–1977). He was the third of ten children. Interviews with family members recall a young John “preaching to the chickens” on the family’s farm in Alabama, and traveling to school with a Bible in hand. He himself recalled this story, laughing when he remembered that “the chickens nodded or shook their heads, but never quite said amen.”²⁴ It seemed that even as a young child he knew the direction that he wished to take in life. He carried his Bible into seminary school as a young adult and graduated from the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee in 1961. Lewis noted that his parents were disapproving of people trying to push things, no matter the cause, no matter if right or wrong. But Lewis was strongly influenced by

²⁴ *John Lewis: Good Trouble*, directed by Dawn Porter (2002; AGC Studios, CNN Films, Color Farm Media, 2020), Documentary.

the style and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights and non-violence movement from around 1955 until his assassination in 1968, and the horrific murder of the teenager, Emmett Till, also in 1955.²⁵

Lewis acknowledged that he had difficulty with the church. His faith was strong, but he could not understand why people treated each other with such cruelty, and often in the name of the Bible. He used these conflicting feelings as he gathered his courage and preached his first sermon at sixteen years old.²⁶ Those feelings carried on with him throughout the remainder of his life. He got his first taste of politics when he became president of the student body at the American Baptist Theological Seminary in 1961.²⁷ With this direction, thus began the journey that led him to be beaten, stomped on, and maligned, but never broken. He once remarked, "Human dignity is the most important thing in my life."²⁸

The Route of Non-Violence

Lewis was a firm believer in non-violent resistance. Upon hearing a discussion of the philosophy of non-violence, he remarked that it felt like it was something for which he had been searching for his whole life.²⁹ Arrested at least forty times in the 1960s, he put himself in the midst of violence, acquiescing to the mobs of segregationists that often surrounded and assaulted protestors. He withstood their beatings and fought back with only his civil disobedience.

²⁵ John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "Freedom Riders | American Experience | PBS," PBS, May 26, 2011, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomriders/>.

²⁹ "John Lewis," *SNCC Digital Gateway* (blog), accessed March 31, 2021, <https://snccdigital.org/people/john-lewis/>.

As a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), he belonged to one of the more revered civil rights organizations of the time.³⁰ Created in 1960 with the guidance of civil rights leader Ella Baker (1903–1986), SNCC emerged as a vehicle for the youth. Its students, including Lewis, had been involved in lunch counter sit-ins, and now moved on to challenge politics and the registration of African American voters in the South. Lewis spoke of himself in the leadership role in the organization when he wrote:

I had no dream, no ambitions, certainly no designs for such a position. I never really saw myself as a leader in the traditional sense of the word. I saw myself as a participator, an activist, a *doer*. My talent, if I had one, was in mobilizing—organizing and inspiring people to come together and act to create that sense of community that would bring us all together, both ourselves and those who stood against us.³¹

Whether participating in lunch counter sit-ins, Freedom Rides, or marches, Lewis stood up for what he believed in: equality. He wrote in his autobiography,

That path involves nothing less than the pursuit of the most precious and pure concept I have ever known, an ideal I discovered as a young man and that has guided me like a beacon ever since, a concept called the Beloved Community.³²

³⁰ Peter Ling, “SNCCs: Not One Committee, but Several,” in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s*, ed. Iwan Morgan and Philip Davies (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 81–96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvx0721t.8>.

³¹ Lewis and D’Orso.

³² Ibid.

Historian Raymond Arsenault's assessment of Lewis sums him up succinctly: "For more than half a century, despite numerous beatings and arrests, he has been a rock of strength, a singular moral force prodding Americans of all colors, classes, and faiths to live up to the professed national ideal of liberty and justice for all."³³

A Politician's Life

Following his participation in the fight for civil rights, he became engaged in politics. As a religious man, an organizer, a believer in Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s non-violence convictions, he segued into a profession not always known for its principled tactics. Initially, he was unsuccessful in his bid for the 5th congressional district covering Atlanta, Georgia. Lewis accepted a position in then-President Jimmy Carter's administration (1977–1981), as an associate director of ACTION for domestic operations.³⁴ He made a second attempt at public office and was ultimately elected to the city council in Atlanta. Years later he ran again for the 5th congressional district seat in the United States House of Representatives. After a bitterly fought battle against another icon of the civil rights movement, Julian Bond (1940–2015), he won the seat in 1986.³⁵ Lewis remained in his congressional seat until his death.

³³ Raymond Arsenault, "The John Lewis I Knew | American Experience | PBS," PBS, September 8, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedom-riders-civil-rights-john-lewis/>.

³⁴ ACTION was the federal agency for volunteer service, which directed both the Peace Corps abroad and several other agencies domestically. Lewis would be responsible for the VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) operation, often referred to as the domestic Peace Corps, and two national programs for elderly volunteers: RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) and FGP (Foster Grandparent Program).

³⁵ Lewis and D'Orso; "NAACP Civil Rights Leaders, Julian Bond," NAACP, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history->

Congressman Lewis was often called the “Conscience of Congress.”³⁶ He was influential, and as a senior member, was always an inspiration to those seeking their turn in politics. He was liberal, in his thoughts and ideas, but fiercely independent as well, authoring controversial acts such as the Confederate Monument Removal Act (H.R. 7217), the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020 (H.R. 7120), the Haitian Deportation Relief Act (H.R. 6798), and the Black History is American History Act (H.R. 6902).³⁷ Congressman Lewis merged his personal beliefs with the democratic process and fought relentlessly for his constituents, as well as the nation.

The Woman in the Driver’s Seat

Congressman Lewis always joked among his family and friends about how he had traveled all across the country but did not drive. In his autobiography, he spoke of not receiving his driver’s license until the age of forty-two and related the anger and embarrassment he felt at failing in his first attempt as a teenager.³⁸ The driving was left to the Congressman’s wife, Lillian Miles Lewis (d. 2012), his confidant, companion, and soul-mate of forty-four years.

Lewis discussed meeting Lillian Miles at the behest of a friend, Xernona Clayton (b. 1930). He offered his initial

[explained/civil-rights-leaders/julian-bond](#). Horace Julian Bond was a leader of the American Civil Rights Movement, and helped found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He also helped found the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Bond was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1965 and served six terms. He ran for the United States House of Representatives, but lost to John Lewis after a contentious campaign.

³⁶ Bill Barrow and Andrew Taylor, “John Lewis Hailed as the ‘Conscience’ of Congress,” *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, July 27, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedom-riders-civil-rights-john-lewis/>.

³⁷ *Legislation Sponsored or Cosponsored by John Lewis*, Congress.gov, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/member/john-lewis/L000287?searchResultViewType=expanded>.

³⁸ Lewis and D’Orso.

impressions of her when he wrote that, “Lillian hadn’t said much at all up to that point, but when Dr. King was attacked, she rose to his defense, speaking strongly and very surely. I was extremely impressed. She not only had feelings about this, but she knew her facts as well.”³⁹

According to the biography page of the John and Lillian Miles Lewis Foundation website, Mrs. Lewis was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. She was a cum laude graduate from California State College at Los Angeles and received her master’s degree in library science from the University of Southern California. Mrs. Lewis held leadership roles in such committees as the auxiliary organization for spouses of Congressional Black Caucus members which was established in 1971.⁴⁰ Congressman Lewis credits his wife as the “proverbial power” behind his political career. The couple had one adopted son, John-Miles. Mrs. Lillian Miles Lewis passed away on December 31, 2012.⁴¹

His Legacy

Lewis’s influence was not only felt in his politics but pop culture as well, as he is the only member of Congress who has published graphic novels. Book One of his trilogy entitled *March* was released in 2013 and is a treatise on the Civil Rights Movement and Lewis’s life. The trilogy became *New York Times* bestsellers and garnered numerous awards. In their article, “John Lewis’ *March*, Book Two: Assessing the Impact of a Graphic Novel on Teaching the Civil Rights Movement,” authors Meghan Hawkins, Katie Lopez, and Richard L. Hughes note that in 1957, a comic book was successful in teaching the youth about the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–1956). It was an important document for

³⁹ Lewis and D’Orso.

⁴⁰ “John and Lillian Miles Lewis Foundation, Inc. – My WordPress Blog,” accessed February 15, 2021, <https://johnandlillianmileslewisfoundation.org/>.

⁴¹ Lewis and D’Orso.

“black college students across the South.”⁴² Lewis himself acknowledged the importance of that comic book. His graphic novel opens up a new and important page in a move to educate the youth about history. Former President Bill Clinton praised Lewis’ efforts stating:

Congressman John Lewis has been a resounding moral voice in the quest for equality for more than 50 years, and I’m so pleased that he is sharing his memories of the Civil Rights Movement with America’s young leaders. In *March*, he brings a whole new generation with him across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, from a past of clenched fists into a future of outstretched hands.⁴³

Watching documentaries and interviews with the Congressman, as well as his speeches on the floor of Congress, one gets a feeling of calm. Soft-spoken but determined, he always appeared eager to help, available to listen, and forever on the move. Lewis continued to push forward an agenda that argued for inclusivity. He was the sponsor of 21 bills that became law ranging from resolutions on taxes to healthcare, to civil rights. Considering the difficulty in getting a piece of legislation passed, this was a remarkable feat. In an interview with Lewis in 2006, Kevin N. Hoover of Fordham University raised the topic of the “War on Terror,” and Congress’ responsibilities. Lewis’ responses still evoked his fighting spirit from the 50s and 60s when he answered:

I think a lot of people, black and white, feel that it doesn’t even matter anymore, if we speak out and we make some noise it doesn’t matter. Those in the

⁴² Meghan Hawkins, Katie Lopez, and Richard L. Hughes, “John Lewis’s *March*, Book Two: Assessing the Impact of a Graphic Novel on Teaching the Civil Rights Movement,” *Social Education* 80, no. 3 (May 5, 2016): 151–56.

⁴³ “*March* / Top Shelf Productions,” Top shelf Productions, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://www.topshelfcomix.com/march>.

media, the White House, and the Congress will continue to do what they are going to do. My generation would not take this; there is something missing in this generation's attitude and we must change that.⁴⁴

This quote is a vivid reminder of the importance of the work that Lewis completed in his lifetime, but it also shows that his work was not finished. The necessity to shed light on the struggle for equal rights in the 1960s is relevant to the continued fight for voting rights and equality in the United States today. A concerted effort to silence people and alter history should compel everyone to, in the Congressman's words, "Get into good trouble, necessary trouble."⁴⁵

Congressman John Lewis's tenacity and perseverance are always on display and we are reminded that efforts continue in the spirit of his name. It has been proposed that the pending "For the People Act," a House of Representatives voting rights bill be renamed the "John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act," in his honor.⁴⁶ It is a consistent and fitting tribute that will ensure that the achievements of Congressman John Lewis are not forgotten.

⁴⁴ Kevin Hoover, "Is The Civil Rights Movement Really Dead: The Social Philosophy of Congressman John Lewis," *African & African American Studies Senior Theses* (2006): 42, https://fordham.bepress.com/aaas_senior/45.

⁴⁵ Lewis and D'Orso.

⁴⁶ "John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act One Pager.Pdf," accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/John%20Lewis%20Voting%20Rights%20Advancement%20Act%20one%20pager.pdf>.

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Author Bio

Cecelia M. Smith was born and raised in Los Angeles County and attended Howard University after high school. She relocated to San Bernardino County as an adult and resumed her pursuit of higher education at Chaffey College. She eventually obtained a Bachelor of Arts in History at California State University, San Bernardino in 2013. After a hiatus, she returned to CSUSB and enrolled in the inaugural class of the Master of Arts in History program. Her focus is on African-American women's history. She plans on graduating in 2022, and engaging in further research and writing. She retired from the City of Los Angeles as a dispatcher for the police department after 35 ½ years of service. Cecelia is a breast cancer survivor, the mother of two children, Alycia and Cameron, and currently resides in Fontana with her husband, Lydell, and dog, Ruckus.



Rush Limbaugh

By David Swistock, John Nielsen, and Devin Gillen



Rush Limbaugh at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida in April 2019. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.¹

Rush Limbaugh (1951–2021), the infamous conservative radio talk show host, passed away from lung cancer on February 17, 2021.² Limbaugh’s name has been synonymous with populist conservatism since he became a national political radio commentator in 1988.³ During his career, Limbaugh amassed

¹ Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. As a work of the United States federal government, this photograph is public domain.
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Rush_Limbaugh#/media/File:Limbaugh_at_Trump_International_Golf_Club_\(46762054255\)_cropped.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Rush_Limbaugh#/media/File:Limbaugh_at_Trump_International_Golf_Club_(46762054255)_cropped.jpg).

² “Rush Limbaugh Is Dead.” Democracy Now! February 18, 2021.
https://www.democracynow.org/2021/2/18/headlines/rush_limbaugh_is_dead.

³ Christopher H. Sterling, Cary O’Dell, and Michael C. Keith, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of American Radio* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 233.

millions of viewers, mostly white men over thirty-five, to whom he repeatedly espoused controversial attacks against marginalized groups such as feminists, environmentalists, and the LGBTQ+ community.⁴ He consistently equated the difficulties of white men in the United States with those of marginalized communities.⁵ Though not the sole contributor, his success has in part led to the hyperpolarization and emergence of media “echo chambers” that broadly define the modern political public sphere. Researchers Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Cappella use the term “echo chambers” to “capture the ways messages are amplified and reverberate through the conservative opinion media. This “echo chamber” creates a common frame of reference and positive feedback loops for those who listen to, read, and watch these media outlets.”⁶ Limbaugh invested mightily in this type of political discourse, and his effects on the political landscape have been well studied and researched throughout his career.⁷ Furthermore, Limbaugh is credited by many for saving AM radio and pioneering conservative talk radio.⁸

However, it is essential to remember the man for what he was: a vulgar entertainer who profited off inflaming bigoted men’s

⁴ Stephen Earl Bennett, “Who Listens to Rush Limbaugh’s Radio Program and the Relationship Between Listening to Limbaugh and Knowledge of Public Affairs, 1994–2006,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 16, no. 1 (2009): 67.

⁵ Jeff Engelhardt, and Sarah Campbell, “False Double Consciousness: Hermeneutical Resources from the Rush Limbaugh Show,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 36, no. 2 (2018): 310.

⁶ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and Joseph N. Cappella, *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 76. Jamieson and Cappella also state, “On the plus side, the echo chamber encourages engagement and increases the audience’s ideological coherence; on the downside, its balkanization, polarization, and use of ridicule and ad hominem rhetoric have the potential to undercut individual and national deliberation.”

⁷ David A Jones, “Political Talk Radio: The Limbaugh Effect on Primary Voters,” *Political Communication* 15, no. 3 (1998): 367-381; Joshua Shenk, “Limbaugh’s Lies II,” *New Republic*, August 8, 1994.

⁸ Sterling, O’Dell, and Keith, 233.

cognitive dissonance over the white supremacist structures that saturated the United States.⁹ Limbaugh's corporate parents, Clear Channel Communications' subsidiary, Premiere Radio Networks, continuously foisted him into the public due to the high viewership and popularity, which translated to investors' monetary gain. Despite a career rife with controversies, his radio program would only lose advertisement revenue in 2009 when he referred to a female graduate student, Sandra Fluke (b. 1981), as a "prostitute" and a "slut" following her testimony advocating for hormonal treatment covered by insurance providers.¹⁰

Limbaugh Before National Broadcasting

Rush Hudson Limbaugh III was born on January 12, 1951, in a Missouri town named Cape Girardeau, where Limbaugh's father, grandfather, and uncle were prominent lawyers.¹¹ Therefore, "Rusty," his mother's nickname for him in his childhood, was exposed to politics from an early age, a particular brand of hyper-conservative Republicanism.¹² Limbaugh attended Cape's Central High School in 1965, an institution that had recently integrated

⁹ Engelhard and Campbell. According to Engelhard, and Campbell, the "interpretive resource Limbaugh has created and maintains represents a liberal community as continually making easily dismissed accusations of racism, sexism, transphobia. Limbaugh represents his audience—who are predominantly middle-class white men—as disprivileged and oppressed by these accusations or by the groups who make them."

¹⁰ Nancy J. Legge, James R. DiSanza, John Gribas, and Aubrey Shiffler, "'He Sounded like a Vile, Disgusting Pervert...': an Analysis of Persuasive Attacks on Rush Limbaugh during the Sandra Fluke Controversy," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 19, no. 2 (2012): 175, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2012.722468>. According to the authors, "These attacks cost him a large number of sponsors, cost some radio conglomerates millions of dollars, and were used by the Democrats to paint the entire Republican Party as a bunch of misogynists."

¹¹ Donna L. Halper, *Icons of Talk: The Media Mouths That Changed America* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2009), 172.

¹² Halper, 172.

African-American students for the first time. However, Central High discovered a legal loophole to systemically reinforce an inequitable structure: the African American students were in “special” programs taught by faculty from the former “black-only” school that had burnt down under suspicious circumstances following a basketball victory over Central.¹³ One could say, in light of the developments at Central High, Limbaugh received primary education in a Jim Crow-esque institution.

During his time at Central High, Limbaugh dipped his feet into the world of broadcasting, working part-time at a local station, KGMO, partially owned by his father. Following his high school graduation in 1969, where he not only played football but was also a member of the debate team, Rush briefly attended Southeast Missouri State College.¹⁴ However, after little more than two semesters, Limbaugh dropped out to pursue his interests in a radio career.¹⁵ His previous experience landed him a spot during the morning show at WIXZ, a radio station in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh.¹⁶ Limbaugh selected the name “Rusty Sharpe” for his on-air persona at WIXZ and changed his name to “Jeff Christie” when he later moved to a Pittsburgh-based radio station, KQV.¹⁷

After his time with the Pennsylvania radio station, Limbaugh moved to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1979 to work in marketing and promote the Kansas City Royals, the city’s professional baseball team.¹⁸ However, as a well-known media

¹³ Ze’ev Chafets, *Rush Limbaugh: An Army of One* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 40. According to Chafets, “‘An informal game was arranged between Central and Cobb High,’ says historian Frank Nickell. ‘Cobb won. Shortly thereafter, Cobb mysteriously burned down.’”

¹⁴ Ibid., 172.

¹⁵ Halper, 172.

¹⁶ Sterling, O’Dell, Keith, 234.

¹⁷ Halper, 172.

¹⁸ Roger Chapman, James Ciment, and Tim Lacy, *Culture Wars an Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices*. Volumes 1 and 2 (London: Routledge, 2015), 322.

historian with expertise in broadcasting and social history, Donna Halper details, “[Limbaugh] stayed for five years, but while he enjoyed the work and made friends with several of the players, his heart was still in radio. However, he concluded that if he did go back to radio, he wanted to be a talk show host rather than a disc jockey.”¹⁹

Reagan Years (1980s)

In 1983, KUDL in Kansas City gave Rush Limbaugh a position as a talk show host despite a lack of experience in politics or talk radio. Nonetheless, Limbaugh’s career in political commentary was born.²⁰ However, his time at KUDL was short-lived, as only a year later Limbaugh was fired from the station for his extreme political views.²¹ He briefly returned to KMBZ in November of 1983, however, following his termination at KMBZ, Limbaugh moved to Sacramento, California, to work for another radio station, KFBK, in 1984.²² During his time in Sacramento, Limbaugh fine-tuned his chauvinist on-air persona and increased ratings for KFBK.²³

The deregulatory policies of the Reagan administration (1981–1989) were ultimately a massive boost to Limbaugh’s career opportunities. A Federal Communications Commission (FCC) guideline from 1949, known as the Fairness Doctrine, required that any broadcast of controversial opinion regarding issues of public interest must share their airtime with opposing viewpoints. This doctrine stood in the way of more extreme political talk shows, as television stations were required by license to follow these guidelines in an attempt to uphold unbiased broadcasting standards. However, during the Reagan

¹⁹ Halper, 172.

²⁰ Sterling, O’Dell, Keith, 234.

²¹ Ibid., 234.

²² Ibid., 234.

²³ Ibid., 245.

administration, the FCC vetoed the bill on August 4, 1987.²⁴ The deregulation of the airways allowed Limbaugh to run his show how he wanted, and at the same time, avoid being fired for his political views, unlike his time at KMBZ.

In this new era of deregulated media, Limbaugh met media executive Edward McLaughlin (1926–2018), who saw potential in Limbaugh and his brand of political commentary, and the two began their partnership.²⁵ Since there was no real competition against the two for a national AM political talk show in these years, McLaughlin convinced fifty-seven stations across several cities to host the show. August 1, 1988, was Limbaugh's first national radio broadcast as the mouthpiece for conservative populism.²⁶ Within only two years, Limbaugh had 177 stations broadcasting his show nationwide.²⁷

Limbaugh would come to be defined by this media career, as his character and on-air persona became a household name with the expansion of his audience across the nation, whether for good or ill. The highly politicized nature of contemporary United States news media was not nearly as extreme during this time. Limbaugh's experiment in one-sided punditry made him a pioneer in an industry that has produced figures like Alex Jones, Ben Shapiro, Glenn Beck, and Tucker Carlson (the most-watched news show host today).²⁸ These hosts sought to create their own shows that replicated Limbaugh's popular bombastic format, only legal following the FCC deregulation. The adverse effects of this deregulation and Limbaugh's influence over American media are

²⁴ Robert Slayton, "Ronald Reagan's Worst Decision Created Rush Limbaugh," Public Seminar, March 4, 2021, <https://publicseminar.org/essays/ronald-reagans-worst-decision-created-rush-limbaugh/>.

²⁵ Halper, 173-174.

²⁶ Ibid., 174.

²⁷ Ibid., 174.

²⁸ Mark Joyella, "Tucker Carlson Is Most-Watched Host In Cable News For Last Week," *Forbes Magazine*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markjoyella/2020/06/16/tucker-carlson-takes-title-as-most-watched-host-in-cable-news/?sh=69c5bf8032f4>.

demonstrated by the likes of Limbaugh's imitators, as seen with the 2020 dismissal of a slander lawsuit by the United States District Judge Mary Kay Vyskocil (in agreement with Fox News lawyers), protecting Tucker Carlson's supposed right to spew thinly veiled lies as news. American reporter, David Folkenflik, states, "[Carlson] is not stating 'actual facts' about the topics he discusses and is instead engaging in 'exaggeration' and 'non-literal commentary.'"²⁹ The fact a sitting United States judge ruled in favor of such one-sided commentary to be run as the most-watched American "news" program in 2020 can only be understood as a continual slide into complacency for misinformation that began with the 1987 FCC deregulation and Limbaugh's rise to popularity.

While Limbaugh's exact impact on the success of conservative talk shows is unknown, the country was becoming more conservative, and the growth of conservative media reflected that change.³⁰ Limbaugh successfully gave a voice to those who accepted the false double consciousness that asserted that conservative Republicans, predominantly white males, were facing attacks from liberals calling them to recognize racism, sexism, and transphobia. According to psychoanalytic research partners Jeff Engelhardt and Sarah Campbell, authors of the study "False Double Consciousness: Hermeneutical Resources from the Rush Limbaugh Show," Limbaugh falsely frames arguments concerning issues such as racism and feminism, so his listeners view any social or political success for minorities in the United States as an

²⁹ David Folkenflik, "You Literally Can't Believe The Facts Tucker Carlson Tells You. So Say Fox's Lawyers," NPR. September 29, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/29/917747123/you-literally-cant-believe-the-facts-tucker-carlson-tells-you-so-say-fox-s-lawyers>.

³⁰ Halper, 174. Halper states, "it would be an oversimplification to dismiss Limbaugh as just another partisan. After all, there had been right-wing talk show hosts on the air prior to Limbaugh, but none became as popular or as dominant. It is not an exaggeration to say that Rush Limbaugh put conservative talk radio on the map. How it happened is still the subject of scholarly debate, but the short answer is that as the country was becoming more conservative, Limbaugh reflected that change and gave voice to millions of people who felt he spoke for them and understood their issues."

implied attack on white men.³¹ Throughout Limbaugh's career, he framed liberal criticism of bigotry as nefarious attempts to silence conservative protests on government spending, liberal media bias, environmental excesses, and feminism on a near-daily basis.³²

The 1990s

Limbaugh's show peaked during the mid-1990s, broadcasting to over 665 stations nationwide, reaching more than twenty million people.³³ From 1988 until 1996, the year Fox News launched, Limbaugh was *the* voice of the conservative movement.³⁴ He became a multimedia star reaching the eyes and ears of millions of Americans with two best-selling books, a magazine called the *Limbaugh Letter*, and a television show.³⁵ Limbaugh claimed to use these platforms to voice the voiceless but instead continued to espouse conspiracy theories and insults against Democrats.

After George H. W. Bush (1924–2018) lost his presidential reelection campaign in 1992, former president Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) reportedly wrote Limbaugh a letter designating him

³¹ Engelhardt and Campbell, 310-311. According to Engelhardt and Campbell, "In false double consciousness, a privileged and oppressing group represents themselves as dis-privileged and oppressed either by claims that they are privileged/oppressive or by calls for them to acknowledge their privilege/oppression."

³² Chapman, and Ciment, 323. Chapman and Ciment state that, "Limbaugh's conservative ideals generally support the Republican Party and always denigrate the Democratic Party. Perhaps with his marriage foibles in mind, he has rarely appropriated the 'family values' rhetoric of evangelicals. He has instead focused on the "dangers" of government spending, liberal media bias, feminism, the Clinton family, H. Ross Perot, political correctness, and what he has regarded as environmentalists' excesses."

³³ *Ibid.*, 323.

³⁴ Nicole Hemmer, "The Comeback," in *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 265.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 323.

as the “leader of the Republican Party.”³⁶ Limbaugh touted this designation and used this “appointed position” to provide conservative legislators support in their Republican Revolution of 1994 when the party retook majority control of the House of Representatives after decades of Democratic dominance.³⁷ His thrust to the forefront of Republican politics came from his show’s ability to reach such a large audience. While the actual effects of his show on the election are unknown, Republican lawmakers and party members awarded him with a “majority makers” pin for playing his part.³⁸ Furthermore, Republicans, such as Newt Gingrich, honored him with the position of keynote speaker at a dinner following the 1994 election.³⁹

Throughout the Clinton administration (1993–2001), Limbaugh frequently attacked the First Lady on his show. Hillary Clinton was one of the most politically active First Ladies of the United States, having headed the Task Force on National Health Care Reform to develop a universal healthcare system, coined “Hillary-care,” during her husband’s first term (1993–1996).⁴⁰ Limbaugh repeatedly attacked her, referring to her as a “bitch” and “ugly;” he questioned her gender and her sexuality, and even

³⁶ Halper, 270-271. The letter read, “‘Dear Rush...thanks for all you’re doing to promote Republican and conservative principles. Now that I’ve retired from active politics, I don’t mind that you’ve become the number one voice for conservatism in our country.’ Beaming with pride, Limbaugh read the letter on his television show. The Limbaugh era of Republican politics had arrived.”

³⁷ Ibid., 176.

³⁸ Kevin Merida, “Rush Limbaugh Saluted as a ‘Majority Maker,’” *The Washington Post*, December 11, 1994, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/12/11/rush-limbaugh-saluted-as-a-majority-maker/e4f879c5-a0d2-43b8-ac56-9e24eeb82b62/>. Merida notes that “Limbaugh was presented [with] a ‘Majority Makers’ pin, the emblem of the newcomers who have given their party majority status in the House for the first time in 40 years. Six GOP women in the class added their own special thanks, presenting Limbaugh with a plaque that said: ‘Rush was right.’ And Rep.-elect Barbara Cubin (R-Wyo.) added: ‘There’s not a femiNazi among us.’”

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Chapman, and Ciment, 98.

attacked her thirteen-year-old daughter, slandering her by referring to her as a dog.⁴¹

Through the corporate Trojan horse Coalition for Health Care Choice, the pharmaceutical industry-funded Limbaugh's supposed grassroots campaign in 1993 to damage the universal healthcare initiative. Limbaugh gave fiery rants about how "Hillary-care" was essentially a form of Stalinism.⁴² Following these rants, an industry-sponsored ad then came in during the commercial break: "If you're upset about health care reform, call 800-000-0000."⁴³ From there, callers were connected to their congressperson's office free of charge. According to propaganda expert John Stauber, the damage of this "Astroturf" system (an outwardly "grassroots" campaign funded or organized by large donors and organizations) was the potentially permanent diminishment of genuine grassroots campaigns. With the introduction of corporations as the dominant force, community-built movements became overshadowed by the overwhelming resources held by the corporate world.⁴⁴ In the end, Hillary-care died on the House floor in 1994.⁴⁵

He continued to attack Hillary Clinton by affording considerable airtime to the Whitewater Controversy. This controversy stemmed from a failed 1992 real estate deal in

⁴¹ Jeffrey M. Berry, and Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and The New Incivility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5; Robert E Brown, "The President of Talk Radio: The Crystallization of a Social Movement," *American Behavioral Scientist* 61, no. 5 (2017): 497, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217693279>.

⁴² Philip J. Hilts, "Coalition Opposing Health Plan Is Called Front Group for Insurers." *The New York Times*, October 20, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/20/us/coalition-opposing-health-plan-is-called-front-group-for-insurers.html>.

⁴³ John Stauber, "Toxic Sludge Is Good for You: Lies, Damn Lies, and the Public Relations Industry," *Democracy Now!* March 5, 1996, https://www.democracynow.org/1996/3/5/toxic_sludge_is_good_for_you.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Chapman, and Ciment, 98.

Arkansas, just before the Clinton presidency.⁴⁶ When White House deputy counsel Vince Foster (1945–1993) tragically took his own life, Limbaugh used the tragedy to accuse Hillary of wrong-doing, going as far as accusing her outright of arranging his death.⁴⁷ While Foster's death had little to do with the scandal itself, his position as a lawyer for the Clinton administration allowed Limbaugh to take advantage of tabloid reports that claimed he was murdered and, further, that essential documents on the Whitewater Scandal had been taken from his home by the Clintons.⁴⁸ It is generally agreed these attacks swayed the system's popularity, and, as stated, "Hillary-care" died on the House floor in 1994.⁴⁹

Despite his television show's success, in 1996, the same year Fox News launched, Limbaugh returned to his radio program.⁵⁰ His show gradually became less prevalent throughout the early 2000s as new conservative personalities began to steal some of his audience.⁵¹ Moreover, Limbaugh's show was most culturally relevant when the Republicans were voted out of power, especially out of the presidency. Therefore, despite a slight decline in popularity during George W. Bush's presidency, Limbaugh's popularity rose again with Barack Obama's successful presidential campaign in 2008.⁵²

⁴⁶ Chapman, and Ciment, 98.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁸ Russell Watson, "Vince Foster's Suicide: The Rumor Mill Churns," *Newsweek*, March 20, 1994, <https://www.newsweek.com/vince-fosters-suicide-rumor-mill-churns-185900>.

⁴⁹ Chapman, and Ciment, 98.

⁵⁰ Hemmer 265.

⁵¹ Ibid., 267. Hemmer notes that a "slew of new hosts gained national syndication between 2000 and 2002: Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, Laura Ingraham, Bill O'Reilly, Glenn Beck, Mark Levin, Monica Crowley...2007 study of 257 news/talk stations by the progressive Center for American Progress found 91 percent of the programming was conservative, an imbalance they concluded was not market driven but a result of "multiple structural problems in the U.S. regulatory system."

⁵² Sterling, O'Dell, and Keith. 234.

Rush Limbaugh 2000–2008

Limbaugh's years under the Bush Administration were filled with numerous controversies due to his harsh on-air statements, as well as adversities that surrounded his personal life. The persona that he enveloped himself with was a magnet for polemics from his early days. After his significant growth in the 1990s, he ran into many more controversies. However, they brought his name into the spotlight once more. Ironically, to Limbaugh, the hatred against him was a prominent part of why his radio shows reached such high heights of success.⁵³



Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb in 2004. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.⁵⁴

Despite more than a decade of controversial statements defining his public persona, ESPN ostensibly accepted the cliché that no press is bad press by deciding to offer Limbaugh a job in

⁵³ Chafets, 75.

⁵⁴ As a work of the United States federal government, this photograph is public domain in the United States.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Donovan_McNabb#/media/File:Donovan_McNabb.jpg.

2003, presumably to gain popularity through shock factor.⁵⁵ Near immediately, Limbaugh made racist comments on air about Donovan McNabb, the Philadelphia Eagles starting quarterback at the time. The comments centered around how the Eagles struggled at the beginning of the season since McNabb was only a quarterback because, as Limbaugh alleged, the media “desired” black quarterbacks and coaches. After the national controversy, Limbaugh resigned only a month after he had started at ESPN.⁵⁶

Limbaugh was the focus of several other controversies during this time as well. In 2006, Limbaugh made fun of actor Michael J. Fox, known for his role in *Back to the Future*, by saying that he looked like he was exaggerating the effects of his Parkinson’s disease symptoms.⁵⁷ This tasteless accusation occurred after the actor had released political ads that supported candidates that had advocated for stem-cell research.⁵⁸ The following year, Limbaugh again found controversy by calling soldiers who did not support the Iraq War (2003–2011) “phony soldiers.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵Douglas Hartmann, “Rush Limbaugh, Donovan McNabb, and ‘A Little Social Concern,’” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 31, no. 1 (2007): 45–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723506296831>.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁷ “Michael’s Story,” The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research | Parkinson’s Disease, accessed May 2021,
<https://www.michaeljfox.org/michaels-story>. Fox has reportedly suffered from the disease since 1991.

⁵⁸ David Montgomery, “Limbaugh Mocks Michael J. Fox Political Ad,” NBC News, NBC Universal News Group, October 25, 2006,
<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna15408508>; Amy Goodman and Arthur Caplan, “Rightwing Attacks on Stem Cell Research Advocate Michael J. Fox Spotlight One of Election 2006’s Most Heated Ballot Issues.” Democracy Now! November 1, 2006.
https://www.democracynow.org/2006/11/1/rightwing_attacks_on_stem_cell_research.

⁵⁹ Jeremy Schulman, “Limbaugh Falsely Recasts ‘Phony Soldiers’ Smear.” Media Matters for America, September 28, 2007,
<https://www.mediamatters.org/rush-limbaugh/limbaugh-falsely-recasts-phony-soldiers-smear>. According to Schulman, “On September 28, Limbaugh asserted

Moving away from his on-air personality, Limbaugh suffered various difficulties in his personal life during the beginning of the new millennia. In 2001, for example, Limbaugh announced that he was deaf and would likely be completely unable to have auditory perception without the assistance of hearing technology, like a cochlear implant.⁶⁰ Limbaugh's personal life again made major news broke of his arrest for drug charges in 2006. Limbaugh had previously publicly announced his battle with addiction and had entered into a drug rehabilitation facility, but the prosecution charged that he had continued. The case was dismissed under the stipulation that Limbaugh must continue to seek treatment for his addiction.⁶¹ It should be made clear: one's struggle with addiction is nothing to be criticized. However, what is worthy of criticism is hypocritically using an immense public platform to unsympathetically attack and call for the prosecution of others struggling with addiction. Limbaugh frequently made such attacks, saying, "Drug use, some might say, is destroying this country.... And so if people are violating the law by doing drugs, they ought to be accused and they ought to be convicted, and they ought to be sent up."⁶² These personal hurdles, however, did not stop Limbaugh from continuing his radio show.

that his 'phony soldiers' comment was a reference to Jesse MacBeth, an anti-war activist who pleaded guilty to one count of making false statements to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for pretending to be an injured Iraq war veteran. However, Limbaugh did not refer to MacBeth during his September 26 broadcast until one minute and 50 seconds after making his 'phony soldiers' comment."

⁶⁰ Frank Ahrens, "Radio's Rush Limbaugh Suffers Rapid Hearing Loss," *The Washington Post*, October 9, 2001.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2001/10/09/radios-rush-limbaugh-suffers-rapid-hearing-loss/b9d23acb-2e34-4982-b819-814629baa8e9/>.

⁶¹ "Rush Limbaugh Arrested On Drug Charges," CBS News, July 16, 2007,
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rush-limbaugh-arrested-on-drug-charges/>.

⁶² Ibid.

Obama Years (2008–2016)

Limbaugh once again rose to relevancy during the 2008 Democratic Primary, which quickly narrowed to front-runners Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Continuing his career in outrage, Limbaugh dedicated airtime to creating a fallacious “straw-man” out of Obama and labeled the future president a “Magical Negro.”⁶³ Limbaugh explained how this metaphor (with minstrel show origins) described liberal white Americans’ desire, as Limbaugh saw it, to use Obama to absolve them of their racial sins; a parody song typically followed this accusation. Limbaugh, of course, denied that such actions indicated any racist beliefs on his part.

During the United States presidential primaries in 2008, Limbaugh launched “Operation Chaos,” hoping to improve the Republican candidate’s chances of winning by extending the election.⁶⁴ Specifically, Limbaugh called for his supporters to strategically switch sides to vote for Hillary Clinton, who was trailing Obama. Limbaugh hoped this strategy would politically bloody Obama, thus making him look like a weaker candidate for president, a strategy Dr. Stephen Earl Bennett argues was not enormously successful.⁶⁵ Despite its lack of measurable efficacy, it nonetheless speaks to the obsession with antagonizing the Democratic Party that Limbaugh manipulated to create a triumphant example of political performance art.⁶⁶

Determined to do his part to deepen the growing political divide in the United States for his own profit, Limbaugh hoped for catastrophe in Obama’s presidency. On his show after the

⁶³ Chapman, and Ciment, 412.

⁶⁴ Frank E. Stephenson, “Strategic Voting in Open Primaries: Evidence from Rush Limbaugh’s ‘Operation Chaos,’” *Public Choice* 148, no. 3-4 (2010):446, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-010-9664-z>.

⁶⁵ Bennett, 67.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

presidential inauguration, Limbaugh stated, “I hope he fails.”⁶⁷ This statement shows how Limbaugh, a multi-millionaire, actively hoped for Americans to suffer from inadequate presidential guidance during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.⁶⁸

A key achievement of the Obama administration was the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), a comprehensive healthcare reform bill that was signed into law on March 23, 2010.⁶⁹ Unsurprisingly, Limbaugh regularly targeted the legislation on his broadcast, fallaciously linking the reform to Nazism.⁷⁰ Limbaugh also falsely attributed this accusation to “Hillary-care” in the 1990s.⁷¹ As a part of the ACA’s ongoing implementation, Obama mandated that insurance providers cover contraceptives to uphold women’s reproductive rights.⁷² In response, the United States Congress investigated the constitutionality of the mandate.⁷³

⁶⁷ Chafets, 14.

⁶⁸ From 2007 to 2008, the United States and the rest of the globe faced a financial crisis.

⁶⁹ Uwe E. Reinhardt, “Wrapping Your Head Around the Health Bill,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2010, <https://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/24/wrapping-your-head-around-the-health-bill>.

⁷⁰ Berry and Sobieraj, 49. When discussing the similarities between Obama’s health care plan and socialism, Berry and Sobieraj note that “Limbaugh suggested there were ‘gazillions of similarities between National Socialism in Germany and Obama’s health- care plan,’ but made clear, ‘Nobody is saying that Obama is Hitler...What we’re saying is that this healthcare plan mirrors Nazi Germany’s. And the Nazi Germany healthcare plan was the foundation from which they built the rest of their socialist paradise.’”

⁷¹ Stauber.

⁷² Legge, DiSanza, Gribas, and Shiffler, 173–205. It should be noted that “the insurance company, not the faith-based organization, would be responsible for contacting the employee and offering coverage of contraception in their insurance plan free of charge. The insurance carrier, not the religious organization, would dispense and pay for this coverage.”

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 174.

A significant portion of the investigation consisted of a series of planned testimonies, including one by a Georgetown graduate student named Sandra Fluke.⁷⁴ Fluke gave compelling testimony in front of Democratic Congress members, rather than the entire Congress, detailing why hormone treatment is an essential part of many women's health.⁷⁵ She pointed out how her Catholic University's health coverage did not provide affordable access to these vital medications at an affordable price.⁷⁶ Initially, Republicans developed their opposition as a First Amendment debate, arguing that the mandate otherwise violated the Catholic university's religious freedom.⁷⁷

However, Limbaugh's derogatory slander of Fluke over a three-day tirade quickly overtook the moralist religious argument.⁷⁸ Limbaugh incorrectly claimed that the amount of hormonal treatment a woman receives directly correlates to how much sex she was having.⁷⁹ His verbal assault on Fluke continued as he stated, "What does that make [Fluke]? It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute. She wants to be paid to have sex. She's having so much sex she can't afford the contraception. She wants you and me and the taxpayers to pay her to have sex."⁸⁰ Limbaugh further suggested Fluke wanted Obama or the Pope to pay for her to have sex.⁸¹ While doubling down on his verbal

⁷⁴ Jessica L. Furgerson, and William L. Benoit, "Limbaugh's Loose Lips: Rush Limbaugh's Image Repair after the Sandra Fluke Controversy," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 20, no. 2 (2013): 273, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2013.823971>.

⁷⁵ Legge, DiSanza, Gribas, and Shiffler, 176.

⁷⁶ Berry and Sobieraj, 3.

⁷⁷ Legge, DiSanza, Gribas, and Shiffler, 174.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁰ "Limbaugh Calls Student Birth Control Activist a 'Slut,'" *Democracy Now!* March 1, 2012, https://www.democracynow.org/2012/3/1/headlines/limbaugh_calls_student_birth_control_activist_a_slut.

⁸¹ Furgerson and Benoit, 278.

assault in the following days, Limbaugh facetiously requested Fluke and other college students pursuing their constitutional rights record themselves engaged in sexual activity and post said recordings on the internet so the taxpayers could see what they were paying for.⁸²

There was a huge public outcry in response to Limbaugh's verbal assault against Fluke.⁸³ The most severe consequence for Limbaugh was the loss of advertisers to his show. This response is surprising in retrospect because Limbaugh, as previously detailed, had made a career out of making boisterously vulgar remarks.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, in the fallout of the Fluke controversy, Limbaugh bore rapidly diminishing advertising revenue, affecting himself and fellow right-wing pundits such as Sean Hannity and Glenn Beck. For example, the Ford Motor Company, supposedly unaware their ads ran on offensive programs like Limbaugh's and Beck's, permanently pulled their ads from such broadcasts.⁸⁵ Amidst this fallout, Limbaugh gave a tepid apology on-air to Sandra Fluke.⁸⁶

Limbaugh was also central in propagating the "birther" movement rumors surrounding Obama's presidency. Laced with thinly veiled racism, the slanderous conspiracy theory supposes Obama is not a "natural born citizen" and was, in reality, born to a Muslim family in Kenya.⁸⁷ Limbaugh dedicated a sizable sum of airtime to the ludicrous assertion while simultaneously claiming to be "color-blind" on the topic of race. This attack was the latest example of Limbaugh's lust for proliferating gross misinformation

⁸² Legge, DiSanza, Gribas, and Shiffler, 174.

⁸³ Berry and Sobieraj, 3.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁵ "96 More Companies Pull Ads from Rush Limbaugh's Program," Democracy Now! March 13, 2012, https://www.democracynow.org/2012/3/13/headlines/96_more_companies_pull_ads_from_rush_limbaughs_program.

⁸⁶ Furgerson and Benoit, 273.

⁸⁷ Charles Rivers Editors, *Rush Limbaugh: The Life and Legacy of the Conservative Political Commentator Behind America's Most Popular Radio Show* (Boston: Charles River Editors, 2020), 29.

through a fallacious framing of the political arguments. This manipulation of information for provocative political gain became a focal point of Donald Trump's strategy to win the presidential campaign.⁸⁸

Twilight Years 2016–2021

At his 2020 State of the Union Address, then-President Donald Trump awarded Limbaugh with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States.⁸⁹ The cyclical relationship between radical conservative media and politics crescendoed at this point of honor for Limbaugh. Limbaugh's extreme right populism helped build the audience that supported Trump and shared Trump's extreme pseudo-populist rhetoric in his 2016 presidential campaign. Trump and Limbaugh openly shared the same set of chauvinist and racist beliefs. Limbaugh's conspiracy-ridden ideologies and nationalist beliefs had gone beyond their previously attained heights in mainstream media; his influence now reached the top of the American government. In 2020, Rush Limbaugh was number one in talk radio with 15.5 million listeners, a million more than Sean Hannity's show at the time.⁹⁰ Limbaugh helped build the political climate that became synonymous with Trump's image upon his

⁸⁸ Rush Limbaugh, "Rush for President? Maybe Trump Made It Possible!" The Rush Limbaugh Show, November 21, 2018, <https://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2018/11/21/rush-for-president-maybe-trump-made-it-possible/>. In a conversation discussing his possible run for president, Limbaugh stated that the "word feminazi might kill [his] candidacy. But now with Trump having busted through all those kinds of barriers, it may be possible now."

⁸⁹ Matthew Daly, "Radio Host Limbaugh Awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom," *Associated Press News*, February 4, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/d79a7eead68d6a304d38b665e6f89c2a>.

⁹⁰ Jennifer Harper, "Nielsen: TV Viewing Now 'Dwarfed' by Huge Talk Radio Audience," *The Washington Times*, January 2, 2020, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jan/2/inside-the-beltway-nielsen-media-research-reality/>.

entrance into the political arena; symbiotically, the era of Trump also launched Limbaugh to the top of his career.

This period was also the end of his career in talk radio. In early 2020, Rush Limbaugh announced on air that he had been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. Only a month before his on-air reveal, he had renewed his four-year contract with the company that syndicated his show.⁹¹ Limbaugh, at least publicly, led the last years of his life with relative calm and coolness for someone given a terminal diagnosis that matched his brash on-air persona. The show went on. The Capitol Riot of January 6, 2021, was among the last meaningful events before Limbaugh's death. Incumbent Trump disputed the 2020 election results, and significant claims of voter fraud wracked the nation, claims spurred on by media figures such as Limbaugh.⁹² Limbaugh minimized Donald Trump's potential role in the incitement of the violence and maximized the blame for the actions of the insurrectionists on the political left and their supposed stealing of the election.⁹³ In fact, Limbaugh afforded air time to a guest that claimed, "I feel 100% confident based on the way the events rolled out that it had to have been Antifa because everybody was so peaceful."⁹⁴ Only a little over a

⁹¹ "Rush Limbaugh Reveals Advanced Lung Cancer Diagnosis Live on Radio Show." BBC news, February 3, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51365762>.

⁹² George Prayias, "What Else Can We Do to Fight Back Against This Stolen Election?," The Rush Limbaugh Show, December 22, 2020, <https://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2020/12/22/what-else-can-we-do-to-fight-back-against-this-stolen-election/>; George Prayias, "I Warned You About What We're Living Through Today." The Rush Limbaugh Show, January 7, 2021. <https://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2021/01/07/i-warned-you-about-what-were-living-through-today/>.

⁹³ Justin Peters, "Rush Limbaugh Signed On for 2021 Just in Time to Blame Democrats for the Capitol Riot," *Slate Magazine*, January 8, 2021, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2021/01/rush-limbaugh-trump-capitol-riot.html>.

⁹⁴ George Prayias, "Trump Rally Attendees Suspect Antifa Infiltration," The Rush Limbaugh Show, January 7, 2021,

month after this event, Rush Limbaugh died on February 17, 2021, due to his struggle with lung cancer. Immediately following his death, a popular Instagram page raised over one million dollars for Planned Parenthood in an ironic honor of Limbaugh.⁹⁵

Limbaugh left an immense legacy behind. The influence and sway he had over millions of conservative voters left behind a noticeable footprint in American media and politics. What is Limbaugh's legacy exactly? A war against truth. He helped to spawn the birther movement as a mainstream conspiracy; he created conspiracies against climate change and made a living out of mocking those with different political ideologies. He was a man whose life was enveloped in politics, and his life will be remembered for those overtly political aspects of his persona because to many Americans, that is who he was. He was *the* conservative talk show guy: spawning other talk shows and podcasts that follow his formula based on conspiracies and hate, creating the kind of people who attempted an insurrection at the capitol.

<https://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2021/01/07/trump-rally-attendees-suspect-antifa-infiltration/>.

⁹⁵ Jon Brown, "Instagram User Raises More Than \$1 Million For Planned Parenthood To Spite Rush Limbaugh," The Daily Wire, February 21, 2021, <https://www.dailywire.com/news/instagram-user-raises-more-than-1-million-for-planned-parenthood-to-spite-rush-limbaugh>.

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Author Bios

David Swistock is scheduled to graduate in 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. With this degree, he plans to pursue a career in teaching history at the high school level. History is, to him, the art of interpretation; the ability to think critically. He hopes his passion reflects through not only his writing but his eventual teaching as well. It was an absolute privilege for him to write this piece alongside Devin Gillen and John Nielsen. They have taught him an indescribable level of knowledge from the work they accomplished together. He is, likewise, enormously appreciative of the work of his editor, Angel Rivas, whose work helped elevate the project's voice to an otherwise unobtainable degree.



Devin Gillen is currently a student at California State University, San Bernardino scheduled to graduate with his Bachelor of Arts in History in 2022. He hopes to return to CSUSB to work on a master's degree in history and ultimately wishes to teach at the university level and publish future works. Devin is interested in history, philosophy, political science, and art history. He is also interested in pursuing artistic endeavors, ranging from multi-media work to painting and screen printing. He plays multiple instruments, which he hopes to make a career of in tandem with academic work. Prior to working as an author and editor on *History in the Making*, Devin planned to compile and print a zine of independent art and essays on global politics and history to be handed out at local concerts to educate the "underground." Devin would like to thank the editorial board at large, and David Swistock in particular for bringing him on to work on this piece.



In Memoriam

John Nielsen is an undergraduate at California State University, San Bernardino. As a history major, he is hoping to focus on authoritarian societies, with a particular emphasis on those that arose out of Europe. He wants to go into the political sphere to help voters and candidates better understand the importance of democratic systems and how quickly they can change. In his spare time, he enjoys taking time outside to camp or hike; he also has a deep interest in listening to and playing music. His primary thanks go to fellow student, David Swistock, for inviting him to assist in writing for the journal.



State of the Field

A Natural Arch: *Ecological Imperialism* and the “Crosby Effect” in American Environmental Historiography

By Joseph Esparza

In the modern historical field, few scholars actively court “large-scale” history as the foundation of their scope of study. Instead, most tend to concentrate on narrow ranges of fields, themes, and times. More than anything else perhaps, modern historians tend to interpret the past rather monolithically, through a particularly human-historical lens. It is indeed rare, although it is becoming more common, for professional historians to take an interdisciplinary approach by incorporating multiple fields and methods of study into their work. Environmental history is the subfield in which this method is most obviously used, and today’s historians borrow from a variety of thematic emphases. Modern environmental historiography’s emphasis towards ecological rather than postcolonialism, globalization, and anthropocentric agency is the dominant trend in the field.

As such, one book, Alfred Crosby’s *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900*, shifted the underpinning philosophical and methodological historical discourse of environmental history.¹ The work

¹ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

transformed the field from tending to emphasize the industrial or anthropocentric view of the interaction to a more environmentally-centered one.² By synthesizing the continuous tradition before it, the impact of Crosby's book resulted in a more intrinsic approach to examining human-environment relations. No longer would the environmental historian simply examine the impact of man upon nature, but of nature upon man. I argue that this shift, which I termed the "Crosby Effect," bridged the practice and philosophy of environmental history between two eras: environmental determinism and anthropocentric thinking, and a more nuanced postcolonial enviro-centric historiography, which can be seen through the discourse of United States' environmental historiography.

The Historiography of Alfred Crosby

For the late historian Alfred W. Crosby (1931–2018), understanding the emphasis of human agency in history needed to be rethought. History, the story of human activity and events, is not so much reliant on human choices and action but is a product of its relationship with the environment. In this way, Crosby contradicted this *de facto* state of environmental historiographical practice. Prior to Crosby, environmental historians generally tended to emphasize the industrial uses of nature towards humans or the influence of humanity upon nature. In his riveting and tremendously insightful 1986 work, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900*, Crosby offered the environmental historical field a new paradigmatic framework of interpretation.³ The work transformed the general discourse into examining nature as an agent in history in and of itself, thereby granting nature an intrinsic value of change. Moreover, Crosby's

² By "Human-Environment" interaction, I mean the general interplay and dynamic interaction between the natural environment and the artificial (human) environment.

³ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900–1900*.

work tended to interpret history through the perspective of nature's influence over humanity. The book applies this concept to the success of European imperialism by examining the concept of "portmanteau ecologies."⁴ In the text's radical new interpretational method of examining untraditional historical sources and centering a non-human-centered narrative, it remains the seminal work in environmental history. Its influence is especially felt in the environmental historiography of the United States. Due to the author's influence, Crosby is often referred to as the modern founder of modern environmental history.⁵ Historians of all fields would do well to examine this particular book in the wake of its author's passing in 2018 and reconsider the innovative "Crosby Effect" of interpretation offered.

Before writing *Ecological Imperialism* in 1986, Crosby already established notoriety amongst his colleagues for his work in environmental history. Crosby received his doctorate from Boston University after serving in the United States Army during the Korean War (1950–1953) and being stationed in the Panama Canal Zone (which may have influenced his anti-expansionist and anti-colonial positions). Crosby, from his early academic career in the 1960s, was interested in the confluence of the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences. This desire led to the incorporation of his landmark interdisciplinary approach to history. His first work in 1965, *America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon: American Trade with Russia 1783–1812*, examined the role of

⁴ "Portmanteau Ecologies or Biota": This term, coined by Crosby, refers to a collection of biotic agents (Europeans, animals, viruses, plants, etc.) that were specially evolved on the European continent. These same organisms adapted well to the new environments where they were brought by colonization. By this biotic success, Europeans were extraordinarily gifted and successful at their colonial efforts. For more information, see Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 7, 270, 293.

⁵ Jeffery L. Meikle, "Biographical Memoirs: Alfred W. Crosby," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 163, no. 1 (March 2019): 88, 92.

hemp in the Russo-American trade near the Baltic Sea.⁶ His most renowned book, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, came in 1972 and was truly a watershed in trans-Atlantic and postcolonial scholarship.⁷ Unlike previous scholarship, Crosby identified both cultural and biological interconnections between the Old and “New” Worlds, which eventually gave each constructed hemisphere specific ecological agency and a new historical identity. Previous scholars tended to focus on both the human and European aspects of the trans-Atlantic exchange, yet Crosby enhanced historians’ interpretation of the trans-Atlantic exchange by incorporating natural, biological, and indigenous components.

Together, these intertwined realities created the Columbian Exchange as the hallmark of early trans-Atlantic history. After writing *Ecological Imperialism*, Crosby continued to publish prodigiously in environmental history for both scholarly and popular audiences. As his career developed, he incorporated the study of technology and science into his scholarship, while simultaneously earning the reputation as the United States’ foremost environmental historian.

While not a strict environmental determinist, Crosby’s interpretive method requires the consideration of ecological factors in determining historical phenomena.⁸ However, environmental discourse is not a method that he entirely created, but transformed

⁶ Alfred W. Crosby, *America, Russia, Hemp, and Napoleon: American Trade with Russia 1783–1812* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1965).

⁷ Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: The Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972; repr., Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishing, 2003).

⁸ “Environmental Determinism” refers to the interpretive theory in both the humanities and social sciences that holds human culture and development in all places is strictly structured and defined by the limits of its geographic location (ocean, mountains, desert, valley, etc.) and environmental factors (water, soil, plants, climate, animals, etc.). It downplays the importance of human-agency and tends to emphasize the interconnected limiting factors of development proposed by the natural world.

and popularized.⁹ *Ecological Imperialism* is a watershed work in restructuring this method in the existing historiographical discourse surrounding environmental history. In retrospect, the book serves as a sentinel of differentiating two traditions in the environmental historiographical tradition.

Before 1920, with a few exceptions, environmental history closely resembled a mixture of Darwinian-Muirish natural histories or Frederick Jackson Turner-style expansionist narratives. Natural histories as such really cannot be considered “histories” in the modern sense of the term. Scholars and writers were purely concerned with the evolutionary history of the natural world and had little concern for constructed narratives or cultural history. Some of these include scholars such as Charles Darwin (1809–1882) with biology, John Muir (1838–1914) with earth science, Charles Lyell (1797–1875) with geology and glaciology, Clarence King (1842–1901) with geology, and Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) with biogeography. Likewise, expansionist narratives, such as Frederick Jackson Turner’s (1861–1932) “Frontier Thesis,” tended to be nationalistic and overtly industrial in their view of nature. From the 1920s to the 1970s, scholarship in environmental history tended to be centered around an anthropocentric viewpoint in the shaping of the environment or an environmental deterministic one.

After Crosby’s groundbreaking work, the entire field shifted towards embracing postcolonialism and more nuanced approaches in terms of agency and change towards the human-environment connection. Along with his earlier work *The Columbian Exchange*, *Ecological Imperialism* diverted the role of agency in environmental history by shifting the emphasis from human causes to environmental causes of history.¹⁰ Additionally, while previous scholarship tended to emphasize localized or

⁹ Alfred W. Crosby, “The Past and Present of Environmental History,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (October 1995): 1180–88.

¹⁰ Crosby, “The Past and Present of Environmental History,” 1180–88; Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*.

nationalized histories, later environmental historiography took on an overall distinctly postcolonial and global lens. In many respects, the old and new schools of environmental history reflect similar themes and approaches, but their conclusions are often radically opposed.

Ecological Imperialism is written as a history explaining the success of European colonization. Crosby explains this development in an international and enviro-centric framework. Firstly, Crosby labels the “Neo-Europes” as those places outside of Europe whose people today are primarily of European descent (i.e. United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia, to name a few). Secondly, the book argues that the success of European imperialism was mainly due to these favorable “portmanteau biota” in reshaping colonial landscapes of the “Neo-Europes.”¹¹ The aggregate literature suggests *Ecological Imperialism* bridged the historiographical debate between anthropocentric and enviro-centric emphases and became a catalyst towards a deeply postcolonial perspective on environmental history.

Scholarship Before Crosby (1893–1986)

In the United States, the historical trajectory of environmental history rose from the conservation-environmental movements in the late nineteenth century. Most tellingly, as greater concern for conserving the natural environment rose, so too did interest in what could be called proto-environmental history scholarship. Because environmental history, as both a discipline and an approach, requires, at minimum, something of an interdisciplinary method of historical analysis, the field could not truly rise until after the publication of the great modern tomes in the natural sciences. Texts such as Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859), Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830–1833), and Willis Linn Jepson’s *Flora of California* (1909), became some of the catalysts of broader academic interest in the natural and ecological sciences.

¹¹ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 7, 293.

The word “ecology” was not even part of the English lexicon until 1866.¹² All this to say, historians, subconsciously of course, had to allow the other disciplines to develop before incorporating their texts into an interdisciplinary historical discourse. On a larger scale, this was the era of a growing social consciousness of the importance of environmental conservation.

However, the mid-nineteenth century also saw justifications for racial and imperial superiority built on what is now known as the first wave of environmental determinism. Early pseudo-evolutionary ideas, such as Lamarckism, extolled Europeans’ ability to acclimate to climate and explained that tropical peoples generally lacked the strength of Europeans due to their climate.¹³ This kind of environmental determinism justified the superiority of an entire race and the “natural” ability of that race to dominate others.¹⁴ This idea would arguably reach its most infamous form in the racial theory of Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) which stated that Northern Europeans were destined by nature to be the greatest race. According to Hitler himself, “The North forced men to further activity – production of clothes, building of abodes. First, it was simple caves, later huts and houses. In short, he created a principle, the principle of work. Life would not have been possible without it.”¹⁵ The conceptions of the natural world and post-enlightenment secular rationalism clashed with devastating consequences. In its most insidious form, environmental determinism was used as a pretext for genocide.

¹² Crosby, “The Past and Present of Environmental History.”

¹³ Ernst Mayr, “Lamarck Revisited,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 5 (1972): 79–80.

¹⁴ J.A. Campbell and D.N. Livingstone, “Neo-Lamarckism and the Development of Geography in the United States and Great Britain,” in *Transaction of the Institute of British Geographers* (1983): 278.

¹⁵ Adolf Hitler, “‘Why We Are Anti-Semites’ - Text of Adolf Hitler’s 1920 speech at the Hofbräuhaus,” Carolyn Yeager, January 29, 2013, <https://carolynyeager.net/why-we-are-antisemites-text-adolf-hitlers-1920-speech-hofbr%C3%A4uhaus/>.

From the creation of the first federal reserve in Yosemite in 1864 to the first national park in 1872 to the Progressive Era's establishment of conservation-minded departments and bureaucracies, the nation slowly began grasping at a greater consciousness of the environment. Historians for the most part ignored this development, yet not all. In the wings of the early conservation movement was the birth of environmental history. More than anything else, both the early conservation movements and the historiography of environmental history (before the 1970s) tended to emphasize the instrumental value of the natural world. This general ideology would contrast with later environmental thought emphasizing the intrinsic value of nature and its causal agency in history. In other words, society and historians tended towards acting and writing on and about the environment and its relation to how humans could or had used the environment for human uses. Part of this included the idea that the ultimate agency of change rested with man, and therefore, this was an anthropocentric vision of history.

While historians tended to avoid what would now be called the environmental approach to history, there were some who fully, or at least partially, embraced it. One of the most infamous arguments in United States' historiography was proposed in Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, also known as the "Frontier Thesis."¹⁶ In this work, arguably the most well-known western American historical work centered on geographic and environmental expansion, Turner explains that the entire history of the United States could be linked to the expansionist fever that beset the nation from its earliest days. According to Turner, it was in the intercourse of "civilization" and "wilderness," and the latter's taming by the former, that the identity of the American spirit was born. Consequently, the idea of "the West" is what gave the United States its drive to expand and justify its national identity. With the "closure" of the American

¹⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* 1893 (1893; repr., Pinnacle Press, 2017).

frontier and the nation's imminent continental urbanization, Turner suggests that Americans would have to reexamine themselves. The book itself takes a traditional approach to history by examining letters, manuscripts, and other documents, but there is also a fair amount of interpretive license on the part of Turner to command such a lofty and sweepingly generalized thesis. Incidentally, the argument has been deconstructed, reconstructed, and critiqued in many forms by subsequent generations of historians for its oversimplistic monocausal nature. Nevertheless, the thesis itself relies primarily on conceptions of wilderness, land, geographic expansion, and the "taming" of the environment. In this particular way, Turner's frontier thesis is the first significant work in the environmental history of the United States.

What the "Frontier Thesis" lacked in specificity it made up for in impact. The opposite can be said of Avery Odell Craven's (1885–1980) *Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606–1860*, published in 1925.¹⁷ Environmental history still occupied a minuscule place among historians' research, as the bulk of the more popular human-environment writing at the time was related to the natural sciences. Despite this, *Soil Exhaustion* represented a distinct growth towards the interdisciplinary method of environmental history. Fundamentally, the book chronicles the poor uses of land in Virginia and Maryland and its economic, social, and political impacts on the region. The work covers the colonial through the antebellum periods, and, in furthering its narratives, it relies on statistics, records, and almanac-like information, as well as documents describing the political and economic results of poor land usage. In retrospect, this book's topic was almost prophetic in its timing, as poor soil-use habits would lead to the Dust Bowl of the Great Plains just a few years after its publication in the 1930s.

¹⁷ Avery Odell Craven, *Soil Exhaustion as a Factor in the Agricultural History of Virginia and Maryland, 1606–1860* (1925; repr., Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

James C. Malin's (1893–1976) *Grassland of North America*, published in 1947, applies Craven's methodology to the Mid-Western region of the United States.¹⁸ It amplifies Craven's scholarship by providing a geographic history of the region and its effects on agriculture. Like Turner's thesis, Craven and subsequent scholars like Malin intellectually bent their analyses towards how human agency on the environment caused specific phenomena, thereby keeping the causal agency as anthropocentric.

Turner and Craven introduced two important concepts into the historical discourse. Turner, with his "large-scale" and environmental approach, and Craven with his innovative methodology, contributed two features that would come to define future works in environmental history. Walter Prescott Webb (1888–1963) in his work, *The Great Frontier* (1952), added a third: globalization and colonization.¹⁹ Essentially, Webb applied Turner's distinctly American thesis of western expansion and broadened it to the entirety of the Americas. The environment is boundless, and it is appropriate that this style in the scope of a study reflects the diverse methods of analyzing the past. For Webb, the reality of a "great frontier" to the west of Europe, caused the four-hundred-year boom of the West. With the expansion of these continents now complete, Webb suggested the possibility of economic malaise. This economic-colonial approach examines the success of colonialism from the European perspective in North and South America, while also detailing the significant differences between Anglo-Saxon and Continental imperialism. The book covers topics that are now commonplace in subfields such as Indigenous histories, colonial governance, and comparative imperialism. Notwithstanding, the most prominent theme again runs parallel to the existing environmental motif: the expanding control of humanity upon the natural world.

¹⁸ Robert Galen Ball, "James C. Malin and the Grasslands of North America," *Agricultural History* 46, no. 3 (Jul 1972): 414–424.

¹⁹ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1952).

In 1962, the book *Silent Spring*, by marine biologist Rachel Carson (1907–1964), was written in the wake of nuclear testing, massive habitat degradation, and growing pollution.²⁰ While it is not considered an academic work by any means, its influential narrative for the masses proved a bellwether for the direction of environmental historiography. The work affected millions by its calls against the insecticide DDT and its impact upon wildlife in the United States.²¹ Countless lay readers read the book, ingraining in the American populace a newfound, almost ecocentric, view of the environment. As Carson concludes her work, she writes, “The ‘control of nature’ is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man.”²² Carson viewed nature not only as a commodity for humanity but as a positive good of itself. For this reason, 1962 is popularly seen as the birth of the modern environmental movement. The book’s publication was a pivotal point in which the existing conservation movement was about to transform. *Silent Spring* helped shift the emphasis from recognizing the industrial view of nature to the intrinsic value of nature in popular culture. What Carson encapsulated to the populace, Crosby would do to the historical academy.

The Natural Arch: Crosby and *Ecological Imperialism*

Ecological Imperialism is as much a case study in a radical methodological approach as it is a historical argument about European-based imperialism itself. Turning to the former, the book is composed primarily in thematic style. Separated into twelve chapters, the book analyzes several specific topics ranging from

²⁰ Crosby, “The Past and Present of Environmental History.”

²¹ DDT: (Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane) A odorless gas used as mosquito repellent.

²² Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962; repr., Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., n.d.), https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/More_Books_and_Reports/Silent_Spring-Rachel_Carson-1962.pdf.

geology to epidemiology, and from botany to anthropology. This range of fields alone makes the work idiosyncratic among modern historical work. Crosby does not try to contextualize human activity in the traditional sense of a *singular* event between two distinct human events. Instead, he contextualizes human activity within the scope of environmental constraints. This is why Crosby is so keen on detailing non-historical topics such as the breakup of Pangea, human evolution and migration, wind patterns, and other natural historical factors. Understanding these differing fields makes the work an outlier not only in its diverse analytical method but in its historiography.

Crosby relies on traditional historical primary sources such as letters from explorers and natural history manuals, and secondary sources from previous environmental historians in the mid-nineteenth century. However, Crosby's interdisciplinary method to his broad thesis demands more breadth. Thus, Crosby considers scholarship in other fields. This includes peer-reviewed studies from the natural and earth sciences, statistical data, anthropology and archeology, and geography. This plethora of source material is the fuel of Crosby's approach. He regularly employs a "proxy method" of analysis to his study, applying data about nature and evolutionary biology from one historical instance to another as opposed to the use of direct evidence. In this approach, there is a sense of universalism in his work. Just as the natural environment is complex, interconnected, and fluid in its boundaries, so too is environmental history. This leads to the characteristic "large-scale" approach to the past by which environmental historians are so often marked. The environment knows no arbitrary or methodological boundaries, and Crosby's revolutionary approach reflects this.

The specific argument of *Ecological Imperialism* is founded on two main historical questions. First, why is it that Europe was so successful in achieving world hegemony in comparison to other world powers of the past? Secondly, as a corollary to the first, what were the specific environmental conditions that allowed the Europeans to be so successful? The

former question was answered quite promptly by Crosby in the prologue and first chapter of the book, wherein he explains that something of a perfect combination of geographical and ecological factors allowed European imperialism to rise to unrivaled power. He writes:

North America...South America, Australia, and New Zealand are far from Europe in distance but have climates similar to hers, and European flora and fauna, including human beings, can thrive in these regions if the competition is not too fierce. In general, the competition has been mild...the success of European imperialism has a biological, and ecological, component.²³

This idea then divides the world of imperialism into two main spheres: the European and the Neo-European. By “Neo-Europes,” Crosby names those places in the world that Europeans successfully colonized, where those of European descent outnumber Indigenous peoples, and where consistent large exports of food are sourced.²⁴ These Neo-Europes include places like the United States, Canada, Argentina, Chile, the Azores, Australia, and New Zealand.

These certainly are not the geographic limits of imperialism, but they are the finest examples of colonial success and European migration. These locations share obvious similarities, some of which include a likeness of latitude (thirty to forty degrees north or south of the equator), comparable oceanic winds, a familiar climate, and a biogeographical landscape that paralleled that of western Europe. Therefore, their environmental similarity to Europe proved their cause of success according to Crosby. Interpreting the past in this sense takes agency from human causes and places it in the unmovable innate structures of

²³ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-6.

the planet. Places colonized or attempted to be colonized by Europeans (Greenland, the Middle East, Central America, Africa), were too environmentally dissimilar from Europe to succeed as Neo-Europes. Therefore, they were exploited solely for resources and often retained large Indigenous or mixed-racial populations compared to areas that were successfully colonized.

The second main historical question of the book is set in aiming to answer *what* specific environmental factors were similar to Europe. This is what the majority of the book sets about discussing. From analyzing the Norse and their early colonization attempts of North America to understanding the evolution of European weeds, diseases, and animals, to a case study of ecological imperialism in New Zealand, Crosby concludes that the particular factors that led to European success were a perfect “portmanteau biota.” Of this, he concludes that the “success of the portmanteau biota and of its dominant member, the European human, was a team effort by organisms that evolved in client and cooperation over a long time.”²⁵ The specific evolutionary history of the Neo-Europes, whether from Indigenous migration, oceanic wind patterns, or any other factor, offered European invaders (both human and biological) a land without serious competition. Consequently, this allowed the animals, ills, plants, and people of Europe to spread without check, thus establishing the “Neo-Europes.” The book radically expands views of the reality of colonial power, the agency of geography in history, and the role of Indigenous peoples in the macrohistorical record.

Ecological Imperialism dialogues with previous United States environmental historiography in both its scope and approach. However, it also incorporates elements entirely unto itself. Like Turner’s “Frontier Thesis” and Webb’s *The Great Frontier*, the work holds a consistent theme of globalization and colonization or expansion. In this way, all three scholars understand the importance of the interconnected reality of environmental history, especially when it is applied to a large

²⁵ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 293.

geographic scope. Additionally, expansion, or in Webb and Crosby's cases, colonization, feature prominently as the medium by which environmental change occurs outside of Europe. Crosby for the most part spends the bulk of his writing from the Eurocentric perspective of expansion in a similar fashion to Webb and Turner.²⁶

The most striking difference between the works is their methodology. It is here that Crosby has more in common with Craven's *Soil Exhaustion*.²⁷ Crosby builds significantly upon the interdisciplinary approach of statistics, agricultural science, botany, geography, zoology, and anthropology, put forth by the combined scholars. By incorporating this method as a new scale, Crosby improves where the other two shy away from detailing ahistorical topics. For him, humanity and its expansion have irreparably damaged the natural ecosystem of the planet and his tone in the book reflects this ideology. Between his work in *The Columbian Exchange* and *Ecological Imperialism*, what is most significant is a shift in the historical agency. It is here where Crosby's work stands as a sentinel in the historiography of environmental history. Before, even among environmental historians, there seemed to be an anthropocentric vision of the historical agency. *Ecological Imperialism* made ecocentric agency more mainstream, albeit with a distinctive postcolonial flair.

In light of Crosby's illustrious record, it is only natural to consider the potential biases within his work. For *Ecological Imperialism*, questions of Crosby's objectivity exist in his qualifications in completing dispassionate and accurate research of the environment. These are due to his potential bias and lack of certain standardized training. On a personal level, Crosby was something of an environmental radical during the movement's birth in the mid-twentieth century. Frequently, he was known to be staunchly anti-colonial, anti-Vietnam War, and was often found

²⁶ Webb.

²⁷ Craven.

supporting progressive causes.²⁸ There are more than a few “loaded” and biased adjectives which color the books, particularly concerning Western colonialists. Crosby’s research was possibly tainted by his taste for progressive politics, thus favoring post-colonial, pro-environmental narratives with little consideration for alternatives to his arguments or ideology. There is also the question of the author’s credentials in this quasi-scientific work. While a decorated historian and professor at the University of Texas, Austin, Crosby had little to no scientific or social scientific training. The book and its method, of course, rely heavily upon research from both fields and Crosby was self-taught in these disciplines.²⁹ While it is certainly commendable, it is hardly the professional qualification for most scholarships.

For all of its strengths, the book’s unorthodox approach has earned it some obvious criticism. It remains to be seen if some of them are accurate as more environmental historians continue Crosby’s approach. The first of the obvious criticisms deals more with methodology than content. The book eschews the traditional historical method in favor of the multidisciplinary approach. While there is no shortage of historiographical research and serious analysis, some traditionalists may find this unbefitting to the historical debate. Likewise, one can aptly critique such a sweeping metanarrative of which Crosby suggests in the book. While modern historians overspecialize their work to a fault, this book goes to the opposite extreme by beginning with the breakup of Pangea two hundred million years ago and ending with modern times. Quite a swath of time for a three hundred-page book.

Still, others may justly suggest the content of the work is misleading. For one, the book seems to take away human agency from the historical equation and falls into a kind of environmental determinism where humans have little action in determining their destinies. An assumption that continually goes unnamed in the

²⁸ Jeffery L. Meikle, “Biographical Memoirs: Alfred W. Crosby,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 163, no. 1 (March 2019): 88, 92.

²⁹ Meikle, 89.

book is its reliance on environmental stability and universality. This is perhaps most obvious when Crosby mentions the virality of specific pathogens like smallpox and syphilis. It is logical really, and perhaps Crosby can be forgiven, for assuming pathogenic spread and virality is a static normative value. In reality, epidemiology teaches otherwise. Viruses, in their choice of hosts, infections, and lethality, can significantly change throughout generations and human populations. Crosby relies on an unnamed epidemiological assumption in most of his virologic points. By this, he uses general knowledge and statistics about illness and applies those findings retroactively to specific historical cases of disease. This is partially problematic, but it is difficult to see a realistic alternative. Lastly, the book overwhelmingly deals with generalizations and mainly discusses British imperialism and its effects. While it includes brief discussions of Argentina and Chile, which were colonized by Spain, Crosby predominantly examines British Neo-European colonies. Perhaps the book's title should be *British Ecological Imperialism*, or should, at the very least, have included this caveat in its thesis.

The work is far from the traditional textual analysis of written primary sources and secondary literature. The book's very nature is multidisciplinary. Despite this innovative approach, its strongest benefits serve by the same token as its strongest weaknesses. In other words, the lack of a strict method, while useful for understanding the interconnected world, is notoriously difficult to analyze for soundness. Additionally, the "large-scale" approach to the past does not help answer historical questions that are, by their very nature, anthropocentric. For example, environmental history alone cannot explain the ideology of German anti-Semitism and the Holocaust as public policy. Likewise, historians using an environmental methodology cannot fully attempt to understand why the United States Constitution has been the longest enduring written constitution in history. These are specific, choice, and idea-driven histories. These drawbacks certainly should not discourage experimenting with the method,

but scholars should be well advised to consider the type of historical question they mean to answer.

As always, no methodological approach is perfect, and particular historical questions often require particular means. For questions regarding environmental history, historians need to remember that its methodical assumptions are subject to examining the particular biogeographical limits and resources of a region, not necessarily specific intellectual or personal choices. By understanding this biogeographical dynamic though, historians can more clearly contextualize a specific interpretation on the broader groundwork laid out by the environment.

After Ecological Imperialism: “The Crosby Effect” in United States Historiography

Environmental historiography’s turn towards ecological agency and interconnectivity, postcolonialism, and globalization, remains the dominant trend in the field today. This turn is what I term the “Crosby Effect” in the larger environmental historiographical literature. Many scholars in United States literature apply the concept of the Crosby Effect to particular historical developments. By interpreting the past vis-a-vis the lens of postcolonialism and ecocentrism, historians in the United States, perhaps unknowingly, participate in the paradigm shift started by Crosby.

Few books in United States environmental history are as shattering as Mark Fiege’s *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (2012).³⁰ This work reinterprets United States history in a completely new light arguing that no event in the history of the nation can be viewed apart from an innate connection to the natural world. Its use of the term *nature* is at times overly broad. However, it does speak to one of the fundamental issues at the core of modern environmental historiography, and a key tenet of the Crosby Effect: ecocentric

³⁰ Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012).

interconnectivity.³¹ Fiege recognizes this interconnectivity as it relates to human society writing, “Whatever form nature takes, peoples have arranged their societies, economies, and governments [toward it]...if nature has been intrinsic to social relationships, economics, and government, then it also has been intrinsic to the ideas of people who create those systems.”³²

Rather than offer a grandiose sweeping narrative of United States history, Fiege selects several “case study” events in which the environmental influence of nature is most pronounced. These include the idea of nature in the founding era, the Civil War, the environment, atomic warfare, and environmental ideas.³³ In this way, *The Republic of Nature* spans multiple events and historical fields including labor history, women’s history, intellectual history, and Indigenous history. Perhaps the strongest influences of the Crosby Effect are found through its embrace of postcolonial Indigenous history, and its general emphasis upon the almost transcendent ecocentric agency given to traditional historical events in the United States.³⁴ While the book does utilize the term “nature” in an overly generalized way, this does not discount the fact that it is a prime example of larger post-Crosby narratives incorporating essential themes found in *Ecological Imperialism*.

No mention of modern environmental historiography is complete without mentioning some of William Cronon’s work. Much of Cronon’s writings seem significantly influenced by the thought and practice of history as described by Crosby. In *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1992), Cronon explores the dynamic relationship between the burgeoning city of Chicago and the natural resources of the American West.³⁵ The book does

³¹ “Ecocentric interconnectivity” refers to the inherent interconnectivity within natural ecologies between the organisms and their environment.

³² Fiege, 10.

³³ Ibid., ix–9.

³⁴ Ibid., 23–56.

³⁵ William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1992).

not simply subscribe to the idea of studying unit concepts in nature, such as soil, cattle, or water; rather, it synthesizes them into an enviro-centered narrative. Cronon ultimately argues that the system of growth exemplified by early Chicago is the system by which most cities in the United States interact with the natural world. A universal theme in much of Cronon's work, including both *Nature's Metropolis* and his 1996 intellectual-environmental history, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, is the historical conception of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism in the past.³⁶ Particularly, Cronon is captivated with the idea of human ecology and understanding the place of nature in the human mind. This builds upon Crosby's generalized narrative of history, which approaches the past through an interconnected, globalized lens. By examining the meaning of place and nature in all of human culture and the natural world, Cronon sees a similar interconnected interpretation.

A standard in United States environmental historiography in recent years is Carolyn Merchant's *American Environmental History: An Introduction* (2007).³⁷ Similar to Fiege's text, this work provides a comprehensive interpretation of United States history through the lens of nature. Many specific themes, such as the making of race, class, and gender, occur as their formation relates towards the natural world. Like Crosby's work, it makes plentiful use of a variety of sources ranging from court documents to climate data. Its most obvious development in the vein of the Crosby Effect occurs in its discussion on globalization and the natural world. European imperialism was the prime catalyst of globalization in the modern age, and *Ecological Imperialism* intricately describes the natural networks of global connectivity. Therefore, any discussion of globalization and environmental

³⁶ William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1996).

³⁷ Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History: An Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

history, such as Merchant's research, owes historiographical gratitude to Crosby.

By its very nature, environmental history is interdisciplinary as it seeks to manufacture an approach to scholarship. One of the finest recent examples of this in American history is Thomas Andrews' *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (2008). Following Crosby's approach of explaining physical processes, the work explains in detail the formation of the key environmental item of the book: coal.³⁸ Andrews also exemplifies how animals played an essential role in the actual labor conditions of the colliers.³⁹ Until recently, the role of animals and how they have shaped human activities has largely been a study confined to anthropology and behavioral science. Crosby also goes to great lengths to analyze the role of animals in his history, which historians did not acknowledge prior to his work. Lastly, a prominent theme that runs through the book is the idea of studying landscapes, which echoes Crosby's entire landscape analysis of Neo-Europes. Demonstrating the Crosby Effect, Andrews writes, "I attempt...to advance our understanding of how working people have experienced and transformed the natural world, as well as how they have been transformed by it."⁴⁰ *Killing for Coal* seeks to grapple with the question at the crux of human-natural interaction: the mutual influences of humans upon nature, and more tellingly, that of nature upon humans.

Several works speak to the influence Crosby has had on racially-specific approaches to environmental history. Both Thomas Dunlap's 1997 article, "Remaking the Land: The Acclimatization Movement and Anglo Ideas of Nature," and Virginia DeJohn Anderson's *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (2004) describe a particularly

³⁸ Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

³⁹ Ibid., 130–135.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 16.

British imperial slant.⁴¹ The latter was praised by Crosby himself after its publication where he wrote, “I recommend this book to all students of American colonial history and especially to those focusing on the sad tale of the relationship of the original and the new settlers.”⁴² As its title implies, *Creatures of Empire* examines the methods by which animals, particularly livestock from the Old World, transformed the lands that would become the United States.⁴³ This is a theme directly borrowed from Crosby’s evaluation of animals as invaders in the “Neo-Europes.” Dunlap’s article is more intellectual and represents a balance of an intellectual and environmental method. It examines the extent to which British colonists went to familiarize their colonies with native species to, so to speak, “tame” them. Both rely heavily on traditional primary sources and depart from the interdisciplinary approach.

Furthermore, Crosby influenced the rise of postcolonial and environmental scholarship with a certain bend towards Indigenous history. Shepard Krech’s *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999) rejects the common narrative of Native Americans as non-entities in the historical or ecological record before 1492.⁴⁴ This thesis is formulated on the premise of which Crosby’s *Ecological Imperialism* may be slighted: “they [other scholars] victimize Indians when they strip them of all agency in their lives except when their actions fit the image of the Ecological Indian.”⁴⁵ To Krech, historians have situated “the Indian” as an environmental

⁴¹ Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (New York: Oxford Press, 2004); Thomas R. Dunlap, “Remaking the Land: The Acclimatization Movement and Anglo Ideas of Nature,” *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (June 1997): 303–319.

⁴² Alfred W. Crosby, “Review of the Book ‘Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America by Virginia DeJohn Anderson,” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (October 2005): 1158–1159.

⁴³ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁴ Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

⁴⁵ Krech III, 216.

model of non-intervention into the environment for too long. Instead of this modernized constructed image of the “ecological” Indian, he argues that Native peoples managed the land far more anthropocentrically and directly than historical memory normally allows for. The book aligns with Crosby in its general increase of environmental agency towards Indigenous peoples.

Lastly, *Pre-Columbian Water Management: Ideology, Ritual, and Power* (2006), dually takes the Indigenous perspective while courting with the environmental deterministic perspective.⁴⁶ At the very least, it speaks less of how pre-Columbian Indigenous peoples influenced watercourses, but how particular environments determined their water systems. In other words, it is a narrative of environmental adaptation married to Native culture. Whether from the British or Indigenous perspective, *The Ecological Indian* and *Pre-Columbian Water Management* displays an innate thematic approach to environmental history narrated by race and postcolonial analysis. Moreover, Hannah Holleman’s 2017 article, “De-Naturalizing Ecological Disaster: Colonialism, Racism, and the Global Dust Bowl of the 1930s,” analyzes the man-made ecological disaster through a postcolonial and racial lens.⁴⁷ The work suggests that colonially wrought capitalism was the driving force of the Dust Bowl, leading to a rift between nature and society. Here, the work echoes Crosby’s postcolonial ethos more so than its ecocentric one.

Two areas of scholarship deserve special recognition on their own as they lie on the peripheries of standard historical understanding. Both have received heavy criticism from the historical community and other fields alike, yet their influence and contributions to environmental history cannot be overstated. They are the works of Jared Diamond and the subfield of “Big

⁴⁶ Lisa J. Lucero and Barbara W. Fash, *Precolonian Water Management: Ideology, Ritual, and Power* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Hannah Holleman, “De-Naturalizing Ecological Disaster: Colonialism, Racism, and the Global Dust Bowl of the 1930s,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 1 (2017): 234–260.

History.”⁴⁸ More transdisciplinary than Crosby ever ventured, Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1997) provides a materialist paradigm to interpreting the past.⁴⁹ Drawing on anthropology, evolutionary biology, botany, zoology, and history, Diamond’s thesis is not only compelling but enthrallingly provocative. He creates a materialist-environmental interpretive framework of human development along many of the same biogeographical lines as Crosby.⁵⁰ When considering what factors allowed the West to reach its great powers, Diamond argues the basis is technological, principally materialistic. The question then becomes: which factors allowed the West to attain global hegemony? The answer is remarkably similar to *Ecological Imperialism*. Yet, it is more nuanced than Crosby’s, including discussions of positive feedback loops, and a more comprehensive repudiation of European moral and intellectual superiority. Diamond argues favorable geography allowed the West to rise to unrivaled historical power.

Finally, something should be said of the subfield of “Big History.” In many ways, this contemporary field is the successor of the early modern field of natural history. Pioneered by David Christen, the subfield has attracted the astrophysicist and environmental historian alike. While the field is not directly tied to Crosby, it too analyzes the past through extraordinarily large-scale and interdisciplinary approaches. Whereas *Ecological Imperialism* begins with a discussion of Pangea, Big History’s scope extends to the origin of the universe. It constantly pushes the boundaries between the humanities and hard sciences as demonstrated by

⁴⁸ Big History: This subfield is an interdisciplinary field that attempts to incorporate the history of the entire universe, earth, and humanity into a coherent narrative. It builds upon the physical sciences as much as the social sciences and humanities. It is generally considered a form of history.

⁴⁹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1997; repr., New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2017).

⁵⁰ Robert P. Clark, “Book Review: *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*,” *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 203–205.

Dagomar Degroot's Historical Climatology project.⁵¹ This fascinating project attempts to uncover the general climate of the planet by examining ship logs from past centuries to better understand climate change. However, in recent years it has expanded to include scholars from multiple fields, dramatically expanding its scope of research. While both Diamond's work and Big History are controversial, to say the least. They owe much of their intellectual prowess to the legacy of Crosby.

Conclusion

Ecological Imperialism's greatest effect was its reimagining of United States environmental historiography. Much like intellectual history, environmental history is something of a history of fundamentals, that is, the study of the premises and foundations upon which other histories are built. Both are relatively slow-changing, offer a tenacity to subconsciously influence human agency, and are built upon interconnected themes. What was the new framework of interpretation that Crosby reimagined? It suggests that we have been doing history wrong in part all along by utilizing only traditional historical approaches. Likewise, Crosby incorporated this approach into his work to prove the arch connects and encapsulates various themes of the environmental approach. Before *Ecological Imperialism*, much of environmental historiography emphasized ideas such as environmental determinism, Eurocentrism, and anthropocentrism. Crosby shifted the underpinning philosophical and methodological historical discourse of the subfield. By synthesizing the continuous tradition before it, the impact of Crosby's work resulted in a more intrinsic approach to examining human-environment relations. No longer would the environmental historian simply examine the impact of man upon nature, but of nature upon man. Coupled with the

⁵¹ "The Papers of Thomas Jefferson and the Record of Past Climate Change," Historical Climatology, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.historicalclimatology.com/>.

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postcolonial motif prominent in his work, Crosby bridged the practice and philosophy of his craft between two eras: the industrial and intrinsic conceptions of nature. After its publication, United States environmental historiography transformed. Thanks to *Ecological Imperialism* and its “Crosby Effect,” environmental history enjoys a prominent and growing place among United States historiography.

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History in the Making

Barbara Johns: A Lasting Legacy in National Statuary

By Hannah Knight

On December 21, 2020, construction workers removed a statue honoring one of the most iconic figures of the history of the Confederacy, Robert E. Lee (1807–1870), from the United States Capitol. The removal of the statue follows the most recent trend surrounding the discussion of who is to be honored in the United States. The removal of Lee’s statue is a sign of a significant shift in the current culture as the United States moves to recognize previously unmentioned figures of the early Civil Rights era. The participants of the Civil Rights Movement came from various backgrounds, yet one of the key groups that enacted a significant amount of social change was students. As emphasized by social activist James Baldwin (1924–1987), “[t]he great significance of the present student generation is that it is through them that the point of view or the subjugated is finally and inexorably being expressed.”¹ Though James Baldwin was referring to college-age individuals, he was correct that students were part of the driving force of the Civil Rights Movement, and significantly, it was a

¹ Baldwin, James, “They Can’t Turn Back,” Historyisaweapon.com, 1960. Accessed May 15, 2021.
<https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/baldwincantturnback.html#:~:text=On%20February%201%2C%201960%2C%20four%20students%20from%20North%20Carolina%20A.&text=In%201960%2C%20the%20writer%20James,idea,lism%20of%20the%20younger%20generation.>

student from the 1950s that was chosen to replace Robert E. Lee's statue.

On April 23, 1951, sixteen-year-old Barbara Johns (1935–1991) led a student body of over four hundred students in a walkout to protest the inequalities that existed within the school system of Prince Edward County, Virginia. Despite the walkout contributing to the monumental case of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 US 483 (1954), Barbara Johns remained unmentioned in the pages of history textbooks. Many still lack an understanding of the events surrounding that day which is why she is still relatively unknown outside of academic literature. While several explanations are offered to explain the lack of substantial acknowledgment in academic literature, the examination of the current social norms presents the clearest explanation. Both her race, gender, and patterns of racism and sexism undoubtedly contributed to her obscurity. The recent decision to replace the statue of General Robert E. Lee with Barbara Johns reintroduces her tale to the United States.

Almost sixty years before the walkout, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 US 537 (1896) established the standard of segregation and the concept of “separate but equal.”² However, the conditions of these public places for African Americans, such as schools, that existed within the Jim Crow South were far from equal. Like many schools in Farmville, Virginia, Barbara Johns' high school, Robert Russa Moton High School, bore the signs of inequality. L. Francis Griffin Sr. (1917–1980), a Civil Rights leader, stated that the school buildings for African American students were of poor construction due to the use of inferior building materials, sometimes gaining the nickname “tar paper buildings.”³ John Stokes (b.1931), one of the student leaders who worked with Barbara Johns during the

² “*Plessy v. Ferguson* 1896,” ourdocuments.gov, accessed March 25, 2021. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=52>.

³ L. Francis Griffin Sr., “Historic Walkout of Virginia Students Recalled,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 29, 1979, https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=nIIIAAAIIBAJ&sjid=V_UFAAAIIBAJ&pg=980%2C3198886.

walkout, later recalled the conditions of his high school: “The buildings, the shacks themselves, well to tell you frankly I used to catch colds in them. They were drafty and they were cold. If you sat around the stove you were too warm and if you sat away from it you were too cold.”⁴ In sharp contrast, white schools had indoor facilities, heating systems, and were properly supplied, among many other privileges. Despite the parents who attempted to address these concerns with the school board, problems such as overcrowding, lack of equipment, and poor facilities continued to exist.⁵

Before April 23, 1951, Barbara Johns would not have stood out from any of her classmates. A diligent student, she cared for her younger siblings daily as her mom worked as a clerk and her father worked in the family’s tobacco field.⁶ Two pinnacle events disrupted her normal routine and set her on the path to lead a massive student walkout. One involved a conversation with her teacher, Miss Davenport. After Miss Davenport listened to her complaints regarding the disparities between the colored and white schools, Barbara Johns later recounted, “[s]he paused for a few moments and said, ‘Why don’t you do something about it?’”⁷ The second pivotal moment came later when, after missing her bus one day, she witnessed a white-only school bus go by her only partially filled.⁸ With this experience and the words of her teacher as her

⁴ Bob Smith, “They Closed Their Schools: Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1951–1964,” in *A Little Child Shall Lead Them: A Documentary Account of the Struggle for School Desegregation in Prince Edward County, Virginia*, ed. Brian J. Daugherty and Brian Grogan (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019): 40.

⁵ “Barbara Johns leads Prince Edward County student walkout,” Digital SNCC Gateway, July 14, 2020, <https://snccdigital.org/events/barbara-johns-leads-prince-edward-county-student-walkout/>.

⁶ Barbara Johns, “Recollections,” in *A Little Child Shall Lead Them: A Documentary Account of the Struggle for School Desegregation in Prince Edward County, Virginia*, ed. Brian J. Daugherty and Brian Grogan (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), 43–44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

motivation, Barbara Johns began to approach a few students to take action against these inequalities.

Working with John Stokes, his sister, Carrie, and a couple of other student leaders, Barbara Johns walked into Robert Russa Moton High School's auditorium on April 23, 1951, and convinced the entire student body to walk out of the school for the next couple of weeks. Barbara Johns and her classmates risked several consequences through their persistence. Barbara Johns herself risked the possibility of expulsion and threats that ultimately resulted in her move to another high school during her last year. In retaliation for her participation in the walkout, stores in her family's community no longer gave credit to her family, causing a financial burden on them.⁹ Despite the consequences, the persistence of Barbara Johns and her classmates eventually caught the attention of the state and Civil Rights leaders.

The strike to protest for improved school conditions quickly transitioned into a fight to desegregate public education. The court case *Dorothy E. Davis, et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia*, 347 US 483 (1951), named for the first student listed in the case, was not the first, nor would it be the last, in the fight to end segregation in the public school system. However, *Dorothy E. Davis v. County* was entirely student-driven. As momentous as this case was, and despite the support of well-known Civil Rights lawyers such as Spottswood Robinson III (1916–1998) and Oliver Hill (1907–2007), the court ruled against the students. The United States District Court stated that though the county needed to address the inequalities that existed in the school, they condoned the legality of Section 140 of Virginia's Constitution that mandated the segregation of schools. Furthermore, the court stated that the federal courts had yet to outlaw segregation throughout the country, and they were to follow

⁹ "Brown v. Board at 65: Joan Johns Cobbs Remembers the Day Her Sister Led a Student Protest That Went on to Change the Course of American History," The74million.org, May 14, 2019, <https://www.the74million.org/article/brown-v-board-at-65-joan-johns-cobbs-remembers-the-day-her-sister-led-a-student-protest-that-went-on-to-change-the-course-of-american-history/>.

the federal government's example.¹⁰ Initially defeated, *Dorothy E. Davis v. County* became one of the cases combined to make the momentous court case *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Chief Justice Earl Warren (1891–1974) of the Supreme Court stated, “[w]e conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place.”¹¹ Three years after Barbara Johns led her fellow students in a walkout, the federal government outlawed segregation in schools.

Barbara Johns and the walkout of Robert Russa Moton High School launched a series of pinnacle moments of the Civil Rights Movement, from *Brown v. Board of Education* to Rosa Parks’ (1913–2005) bus ride, the Freedom Rides, the Greensboro sit-ins, and countless others. Nevertheless, only *Brown v. Board of Education* is mentioned in the numerous history textbooks students read about the Civil Rights Movement; little is remembered of the sixteen-year-old girl who led a school walkout.

The broader context of women’s history helps to explain why Johns was omitted from public memory. In the decade before the walkout, World War II opened the doors of opportunity for many women in the United States. Working women increased from clerical to industrial fields, and consequently, their wages increased.¹² As World War II ended, so too did the job opportunities for women. The decade of the 1950s instilled new social expectations for women, one being the expectation of returning to the home. Working women were again confined to jobs deemed socially acceptable, such as secretaries and salesclerks. In her own account of her participation during the

¹⁰ Armistead M. Dobie, Sterling Hutcheson, and Albert V. Bryan, “The Prince Edward County, Virginia Case Decision,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 21, no. 4 (1952): 528–529.

¹¹ Chief Justice Earl Warren, “Opinion of the Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*,” *Schools: Studies in Education* 4, no. 2 (2007): 23.

¹² Mary M. Schweitzer, “World War II and Female Labor Force Participation Rates,” *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 1 (1980): 90, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2120427>.

Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks spoke of her time as secretary of the Montgomery branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She recalled, “I remember I would be working hard trying to get articles out for Mr. Nixon, sending letters, and going to meetings, and he would just laugh. He used to say. ‘Women don’t need to be nowhere but in the kitchen.’”¹³

After World War II, popular belief expected women to return to their homes, where their responsibilities and influence would not extend beyond their doorways. Girls, learning from the example set by their mothers, learned their place in a patriarchal, racially segregated society. African American women faced more harsh criticism than most because of their intersectionality of race and gender identity. Constantly being upheld to the “ideal womanhood” that was based on white women, African American women were criticized when they took job positions, specifically leadership roles, even if they were supporting their families.¹⁴ When Barbara Johns led a student walkout in a time when female political leaders were often overlooked she challenged the institution of the Jim Crow era’s social norms for African American women.

In 1958, women only accounted for thirty-eight percent of college attendees nationwide.¹⁵ Women in the political field did not fare any better, especially women of color. Shirley Anita Chisholm (1924–2005), the first African American congresswoman, was not elected until 1968 (well after the first

¹³ Rosa Parks with Jim Haskins, *My Story* (New York: Penguin Putnam Books, 1992), 82.

¹⁴ Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2011), 51–53.

¹⁵ “Postwar Gender Roles and Women in American Politics,” History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Historian, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/WIC/Historical-Essays/Changing-Guard/Identity/>.

white woman).¹⁶ The Civil Rights Movement became a political, social, and cultural battlefield. Even though women were very much a part of the struggle, the societal expectations at the time only allowed a few to gain notoriety. Barbara Johns' participation in the *Dorothy E. Davis v. County* court case contributed to the eventual end of school segregation. However, in many ways, her gender prevented any real form of public recognition compared to male Civil Rights activists.

The case surrounding the Robert Russa Moton High School strike would not bear Barbara Johns as the lead plaintiff. The walkout at Robert Russa Moton High was organized and led by teenagers, with sixteen-year-old Barbara Johns at the lead, yet in the eyes of the law, Barbara Johns and her classmates lacked real legal power because of their race, age, and for the female participants, their gender. In the complaint filed against the Prince Edward County School Board on May 23, 1951, Barbara Johns and her classmates were classified as "infants."¹⁷ Lacking the ability to file on their own, the focus of the case then shifted to the adults in the room, in essence, away from Barbara Johns' role in the case. Though the teenage culture was on the rise in the United States, the phrase "children should be seen and not heard" was still very present in the culture of the age.¹⁸ The discrimination of Jim Crow laws, gender roles, and age forced Barbara Johns' role to take a backseat in the discussion surrounding the desegregation of schools for nearly seventy years. In the words of historians Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob in *Telling the Truth About History*, "Historical research on women's lives revealed

¹⁶ "Postwar Gender Roles and Women in American Politics."

¹⁷ "Complaint Against the Prince Edward County School Board of Virginia," National Archives Catalog, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/279098>.

¹⁸ Joanne McCarthy, "The old saying that children should be seen but not heard was a dangerous one for children," *Newcastle Herald*, June 20, 2018, <https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/5478088/wilson-case-proves-how-far-weve-come/>. The phrase first used by John Mirk, an English priest in the fifteenth century.

differences which threw into sharp relief just how gender-specific was the male ideal that had dominated Western letters since the Greeks.”¹⁹ After nearly seventy years, Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob reveal the greatest contributing factor to Johns’ reappearance in academic literature.

Occurring within the last couple of decades, revisionist histories have forced a reevaluation of the national historical narratives. Rather than a complete rewriting of the narrative, revisionists have worked to create a more inclusive history. In addition to these efforts, the real significant shift concerning Barbara Johns took place on December 21, 2020. The removal of the statue that honored General Robert E. Lee from the United States Capitol will be replaced by a statue of Barbara Johns, as decided by Virginia state officials.²⁰ Virginia’s Governor, Ralph Northam, stated that the decision was “an ‘important step forward for our commonwealth and our country.’”²¹ The recent Me Too and Black Lives Matter movements only serve as a reminder of the lack of public recognition for women of color. Part of the recent decisions to remove monuments honoring Confederate members shows a major cultural and social shift in the wake of these movements.

For a nation that is often personified by the female form, such as Miss Columbia, Lady Liberty, and Lady of Justice, when it comes to the representation of women, especially women of color in public memorials, there is much to be desired. Over five thousand statues exist within the United States that honor figures from history, yet women only account for approximately ten

¹⁹ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 153.

²⁰ Isis Davis-Marks, “Statue of Civil Rights Activist Barbara Rose Johns Will Replace U.S. Capitol’s Likeness of Robert E. Lee,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 23, 2020, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/workers-remove-robert-e-lee-statue-us-capitol-building-180976612/>.

²¹ Bryan Pietsch, “Robert E. Lee Statue is Removed From U.S. Capitol,” *The New York Times*, December 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/21/us/robert-e-lee-statue-us-capitol.html>.

percent of its subjects. When it comes to monuments and national parks, that number is significantly lower.²² Barbara Johns' statue is only one of the many attempts to highlight the real women of history and correct the male-dominated narrative that exists in the country. In 2019, the Monumental Women's Campaign worked to include statues honoring Sojourner Truth (1797–1883), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), and Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) in Central Park, New York. Finally succeeding on August 26, 2020, the only representation of women in the iconic park up until 2020 were statues of fictional characters like Alice in Wonderland and Mother Goose.²³

This pivotal cultural and social shift in the United States, represented by the statue of Barbara Johns, has not been without its challenges. The removal of the statue of Robert E. Lee in the United States Capitol is not the first time the public recognition of Lee has been called into question. In Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, the local city council decided to take out a statue of the former Confederate general in addition to a statue honoring fellow Confederate, Stonewall Jackson (1824–1863), located near the courthouse district. This decision was fought by local citizens, who filed a lawsuit and held a rally that ultimately led to the death of a counter-protester of the rally, Heather Heyer (1985–2017). Only in 2021 was the matter legally settled when the Virginia State Supreme Court ruled in favor of the city council's decision to remove the statues.²⁴

²² Shachar Peled, "Where are the women? New Efforts to give them just due on monuments, street names," CNN, March 8, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/08/us/womens-monument-project-trnd/index.html>.

²³ Robbyn McFadden, "Monumental women: Breaking the bronze ceiling," CBSNews, May 26, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/monumental-women-breaking-the-bronze-ceiling/>.

²⁴ Allyson Waller, "Charlottesville Can Remove Confederate Statues, High Court Rules," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/01/us/charlottesville-confederate-statues.html> 01.

The reexamination of monuments within the United States is in part a desire to recognize previously unknown individuals but it is also connected to the “cancel culture” that has arisen from the Me Too and the Black Lives Matter movements. By definition, canceling someone “means to stop giving support to that person.”²⁵ Celebrities and other well-known figures currently face the possibility of being “canceled” (or boycotted) due to behavior no longer seen as acceptable, whether it be inappropriate remarks towards a person or group of people, discriminatory actions or comments, exploitation, or sexual assault and abuse. In the same sense, many historical figures are being re-examined for their actions as new information is discovered. It is through this reexamination that public memorials, dedicated to figures like Robert E. Lee, are being reconsidered. Lee is not the only figure whose monument has been removed or is being considered for removal. Representations of figures such as Stonewall Jackson, Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), and even Andrew Jacksons’ (1767–1845) image on the twenty-dollar bill, have been reevaluated in light of their treatment towards minority groups and pro-slavery views. Current reevaluation and historical revisionism have opened opportunities for more unknown figures to be publicly recognized, as in the case of Barbara Johns. However, these debates have left historians divided. Figures such as Robert E. Lee undoubtedly shaped the course of history, yet now, the question before historians and educators is how to address their roles in history.

The effects of the current age of revisionist history and reevaluation of the country’s monuments have rippled throughout academic literature. Historians have rediscovered important individuals who contributed to life-altering events, such as the Civil Rights Movement, and still, many more are waiting to be recognized. In light of the recent Me Too and Black Lives Matter

²⁵ “What It Means to Get ‘Canceled,’” Merriam-Webster.com, January 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/cancel-culture-words-were-watching>.

movements, Barbara Johns' statue has done more than reintroduce her struggles to end school desegregation and racial inequality. Her statue represents a major cultural shift toward inclusivity in the United States narrative as the nation works to draw attention to more women, particularly women of color, in United States history.

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How Museums Have Adapted to Life during COVID-19

By Erika Kelley

In late 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was made aware of several cases of pneumonia with unknown causes centered in Wuhan, China.¹ On February 11, 2020, the WHO announced the official name for the new illness, novel coronavirus-2019, otherwise known as COVID-19.² COVID-19 eventually spread and was officially declared a pandemic by the WHO on March 11, 2020.³ The response to the virus drastically changed how the entire world functioned and forced everyone to adapt to living life and operating online.

This article focuses on how four museums have been affected by COVID-19, how they have adapted to the changes since the pandemic, and how the staff adjusted. The staff adjustments include their adaptations to working online, how operations have changed, and how they plan to function in the future when COVID-19 regulations and guidelines are lifted. Specifically, using information from interviews with museum staff

¹ “Pneumonia of Unknown Cause – China,” World Health Organization, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.who.int/csr/don/05-january-2020-pneumonia-of-unknown-cause-china/en/>.

² “About COVID-19,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed April 12, 2021, [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cdcreponse/about-COVID-19.html#:~:text=Coronavirus%20disease%202019%20\(COVID,%2C%20in%20December%202019.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cdcreponse/about-COVID-19.html#:~:text=Coronavirus%20disease%202019%20(COVID,%2C%20in%20December%202019.)

³ “Rolling Updates on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19),” World Health Organization, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>.

members from four different institutions, this article will explore how the California-based Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art has adapted to COVID-19 and compare their effort to three other institutions: the J. Paul Getty Museum (California), the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East (Massachusetts), and the British Museum (London).

While information concerning COVID-19's severity had been circulating since January 2020, the WHO officially declared the outbreak a global pandemic on March 11, 2020.⁴ Before the WHO's announcement, the Wuhan government in China began implementing a variety of different safety measures as early as January 23, 2020, to combat the spread of COVID-19: an area-based home quarantine, the closure of all public transportation, enforced cancellation of large gatherings, and government-provided food and medical supplies for the people.⁵

The United States announced that the federal government would take a "back-up" role concerning COVID-19, with then-President Donald Trump saying, "we're a backup. Remember, we're a backup. We're the greatest backup that ever existed for the states."⁶ This effectively placed primary responsibility for containing and combating the virus on state governments rather than the federal government.⁷ These laws and restrictions varied greatly between all 50 states due to the different governing bodies that supervised them. Moreover, other countries, such as England,

⁴ Domenico Cucinotta, and Maurizio Vanelli, "WHO Declares COVID-19 a Pandemic," *Acta Biomed* 91, no.1 (2020), doi:[10.23750/abm.v91i1.9397](https://doi.org/10.23750/abm.v91i1.9397).

⁵ Wei Liu, Xiao-Guang Yue, and Paul B. Tchounwou, "Response to the COVID-19 Epidemic: The Chinese Experience and Implications for Other Countries," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 7 (2020), doi [10.3390/ijerph17072304](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072304).

⁶ Deborah Birx, Anthony Fauci, Stephan Hahn, Mike Pence, and Donald Trump, "Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing," TrumpWhiteHouse, April 4, 2020, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-members-coronavirus-task-force-press-briefing-19/>.

⁷ Ibid.

each responded differently to the pandemic. Unlike America, the British central government took a more prominent role in how the country handled COVID-19. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson specifically said that the government had to step in and ask people to stay home for 12 weeks initially, as quarantining was crucial for saving “literally thousands of lives” and “defeating the virus.”⁸

California, Museums, and COVID-19

On March 19, 2020, eight days after the official WHO declaration, California’s governor, Gavin Newsom, ordered a two-week stay-at-home order for the entire state and population of California.⁹ Newsom’s executive order stated that the enactment of this stay-at-home mandate was due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 in California. Furthermore, the gubernatorial order stated that the mandate’s goals were “to preserve the public health and safety, and ensure the healthcare delivery system is capable of serving all, and prioritizing those at the highest risk and vulnerability.”¹⁰ There were originally sixteen different sectors excluded from this stay-at-home order ranging from emergency services to grocery store workers to dam workers. These professional sectors became known as “essential services” because the California government ensured that the state would continue to operate and run smoothly

⁸ Boris Johnson, “Prime Minister’s statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 19 March 2020,” Prime Minister’s Office, March 19, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-19-march-2020>.

⁹ “Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19),” World Health Organization, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>; “Governor Gavin Newsom Issues Stay at Home Order,” CA.gov, March 19, 2020, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/19/governor-gavin-newsom-issues-stay-at-home-order/>.

¹⁰ “Executive Order N-33-20 of March 19, 2020,” Executive Department State of California, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.19.20-attested-EO-N-33-20-COVID-19-HEALTH-ORDER.pdf>.

if these positions stayed open.¹¹ In contrast, the designation of everything not in the sixteen specified sectors became monikered “nonessential services,” and thousands of different businesses ranging from restaurants to schools were closed with no definite reopening date.

These two weeks, however, turned into months as the COVID-19 situation did not improve. As of March 2021, California has been on a stay-at-home order for over a year now with slight variations to what can be open and what cannot.¹² These updated regulations and guidelines came with the installation of Governor Newsom’s COVID-19 tier system that dictated what industries could open based on the county’s COVID-19 statistics.¹³

Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art (RAFFMA)

San Bernardino County, the location of the Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art (RAFFMA), is currently in the moderate (orange) tier, allowing businesses to begin operating with modifications depending on the business type.¹⁴ While many other institutions have announced or are in the process of announcing reopening dates, RAFFMA is one museum that has yet to return to “normal” operations since the pandemic began. Thus, its doors continue to be closed to the general public.

¹¹ “Identifying Critical Infrastructure During COVID-19,” Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19>.

¹² Richard Procter, “Remember when? Timeline marks key events in California’s year-long pandemic grind,” Cal Matters, March 4, 2021, <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2021/03/timeline-california-pandemic-year-key-points/>.

¹³ “Governor Newsom Unveils Blueprint for a Safer Economy, a Statewide, Stringent and Slow Plan for Living with COVID-19,” CA.gov, August 28, 2020, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/08/28/governor-newsom-unveils-blueprint-for-a-safer-economy-a-statewide-stringent-and-slow-plan-for-living-with-covid-19/>.

¹⁴ “Blueprint for a Safer Economy,” California For All, April 28th, 2021, <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>.

RAFFMA is a small art museum located on the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) campus. RAFFMA first opened its doors in 1996 and was granted accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums in 2008.¹⁵ The American Alliance of Museums “offers a pathway of standards-based assessments and recognition programs” that ensure museums and institutions are operating at the highest quality regarding professionalism and public needs.¹⁶ RAFFMA’s accreditation means that it has met and continues to meet these standards and is professionally operating at a high level of excellence.

RAFFMA is an art museum that usually has two to three art exhibitions on display at a time; as of March 2020, the museum is currently displaying two on-site. The two exhibits are the “Personal to Political: Celebrating the Africa American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press” and RAFFMA’s permanent display which features an ancient Egyptian artifact exhibit entitled “Journey to the Beyond: Ancient Egyptians in the Pursuit of Eternity.”¹⁷ Another exhibition annually shown at RAFFMA is The Masters of Fine Arts Student Exhibition which is usually displayed at the end of each semester.¹⁸ RAFFMA does more than just display exhibits, however. Over the years, RAFFMA has consistently been the site for several different academic lectures ranging from topics revolving around art and history and activities like book signings

¹⁵ “About Us,” CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/engage/about-us>.

¹⁶ “Accreditation & Excellence Programs,” American Alliance of Museums, January 25, 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/>.

¹⁷ “Personal to Political,” CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/view/personal-political>; “Journey to the Beyond,” CSUSB, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/view/journey-beyond>.

¹⁸ “MFA Exhibitions,” CSUSB, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/view/mfa-exhibitions>.

or calligraphy classes.¹⁹ In addition to lectures, RAFFMA has also developed several annual events like *RAFFMA-ween* or its *Kid's Discover Egypt* summer camp, which is a more community-based program that encourages participation from all age levels.²⁰

RAFFMA's staff includes Eva Kirsh, the director; John Fleeman, the exhibition designer; Michael Beckly, the exhibition preparator; Miranda Canseco, the marketing, membership, and engagement coordinator; Diego Irigoyen, the education and collections coordinator; Laura Muñoz, RAFFMA's graphic designer; Bryan Kraemer, the resident Egyptologist; and several student assistants.²¹ Each staff member is a unique part of RAFFMA and is integral in ensuring the museum runs smoothly for all their guests to enjoy.

Due to its location, RAFFMA must adhere to both California's guidelines and regulations and also CSUSB's guidelines. This duality in policy meant that when the university decided to close to the public, RAFFMA also followed suit. CSUSB, with guidance from the California State University Chancellor's Office, federal, state, and local health officials, announced that both campuses, San Bernardino and Palm Desert, would temporarily suspend all non-essential on-campus operations as of March 20, 2020.²²

Like California, CSUSB allowed essential campus functions to remain open, including services like the Obershaw Den Food Pantry and the Student Health Services. RAFFMA was not considered to be one of the "essential campus functions" and was closed to the public like the rest of the campus. However,

¹⁹ "Event Archive," CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/events/event-archive>.

²⁰ "Kid's Discover Egypt Workshop," CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/events/kids-discover-egypt-workshop>.

²¹ "Meet Our Team," CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/about/meet-our-team>.

²² "March 17th - Campus Operations Update," California State University San Bernardino, https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/M_Coronavirus-Campus-Operations-Update_20200317.pdf.

rather than wait for the mandated closure on March 20, the RAFFMA staff decided that March 13 would be their last day physically working at the museum and the museum was officially closed to the public.²³

It has been more than a year since RAFFMA closed its doors to the public, but this has not stopped the team from working together to bring RAFFMA to life virtually. Almost immediately after it closed to the public, RAFFMA and its team worked to create entertaining and exciting events that the student body and community could attend from the safety of their own homes. One of the first things RAFFMA's staff did in the wake of the pandemic was the creation of the *RAFFMA@Home* initiative.²⁴ The initiative's ultimate goal was to continue to "create relevant and meaningful cultural experiences" for the community while still keeping everyone safe.²⁵ These experiences included visual audio tours of RAFFMA's past and present exhibitions, watching past recordings of lectures and events hosted by RAFFMA, and creating fun activities and coloring pages that could easily be completed by any age level. All of RAFFMA's hard work and dedication for their *RAFFMA @ Home* initiation did not go unnoticed by the university. In 2020, RAFFMA's staff was awarded CSUSB's President's Team Achievement Award.²⁶ This award was given to RAFFMA as they exhibited a great sense of collaboration, innovation, responsiveness, service, and teamwork when faced with adversity.

²³ Diego Irigoyen (Education and Collections Coordinator at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, March 18, 2021. Due to the changing nature of COVID-19, the museum staff were eventually allowed to go back to the museum and work on-site. During this time, the museum was not open to the public and only select staff members were able to physically be at the museum.

²⁴ "RAFFMA @ Home," CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/raffma>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Recognition," CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/human-resources/current-employees/recognition>.

Like many other businesses and institutions, RAFFMA began using video conference platforms like Zoom when holding lectures, events and conducting meetings.²⁷ This shift to online or virtual meetings also meant that RAFFMA did not have to completely shut out the public and could continue to educate them. In the year that RAFFMA has been closed, they have held dozens of events and lectures, ranging from an online symposium, featuring both international and national speakers, to an “Intro to Hieroglyphs” workshop.²⁸

Since RAFFMA’s events have been held online, they have also allowed people from all over the world to attend them. Most, if not all, of the past lectures and activities that RAFFMA hosted before the pandemic were physically held at the museum on campus. This limited the number of people able to come to those that were physically able to travel to the museum. With the use of Zoom, RAFFMA was no longer unreachable to people living on the East Coast or even internationally, which is seen most clearly in their most recent event that had 340 attendees registered with some watching all the way from Egypt and Italy.²⁹ Anyone who hears about an event that RAFFMA is hosting can now attend, assuming they have the necessary equipment needed to attend virtually. This online format has allowed RAFFMA to hold lectures via Zoom and to develop more of their online content.

In addition to having events on Zoom, RAFFMA has utilized YouTube and the YouTube Premier feature for several of their events, allowing people without Zoom to attend RAFFMA’s events and return to them at any time.³⁰ RAFFMA also started developing new content altogether during the pandemic with one

²⁷ “Events,” CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/events>.

²⁸ “Event Archive,” CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/events/event-archive>.

²⁹ Miranda Canseco (Marketing, Membership, and Engagement Coordinator at RAFFMA), email message to author, April 15, 2021.

³⁰ “RAFFMAcsusb,” YouTube, accessed April 12, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZoEer_SRgAybO7FHHCGgMA.

example being the *Art Hour Podcast* that started during the Fall 2020 semester. This podcast gave RAFFMA a new platform where they could talk about art and connect with the community even more. The RAFFMA student assistants host this series where they are joined weekly by various guests; the focus of each episode varies greatly from misconceptions about ancient Egypt to common stereotypes in art careers.³¹

Eventually, California lessened its COVID-19 restrictions which meant more people could return to working “on-site”; this was extended to the CSUSB campus.³² While most of the previous guidelines and regulations were still in place, some of CSUSB’s and RAFFMA’s staff were allowed to come back to campus to work. The number of people allowed on campus and in RAFFMA was minimal, and they all had to follow stringent regulations and guidelines. Nevertheless, the RAFFMA team continued to make the museum function as efficiently and effectively as possible given the circumstances.³³ The work that they have been doing on campus has been incredibly educational and beneficial to the community.

While the mandated closures limited on-campus activity, RAFFMA workers continued to switch out exhibits once some restrictions were lifted in May 2020, to share new artifacts and pieces with the public virtually.³⁴ Part of RAFFMA’s on-campus work involved taking pictures or videos of what was on display in

³¹ “RAFFMAcsusb,”

³² “Governor Newsom Provides Update on California's Progress Toward Stage 2 Reopening,” CA.gov, May 4, 2020, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/05/04/governor-newsom-provides-update-on-californias-progress-toward-stage-2-reopening/>.

³³ “CSUSB On-Campus COVID-19 Health and Safety Requirements For Staff and Management,” California State University San Bernardino, https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/M_Coronavirus%20Information_HS4Staff_20200820.pdf.

³⁴ Sophia Bollag, “New California coronavirus rules will let more counties reopen, Gavin Newsom says,” *The Sacramento Bee*, May 18, 2020, <https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article242818586.html>.

the museum that would later be turned into virtual tours. When RAFFMA closed to the public, the exhibit “Golden West? Jan Sawka’s California Dream” was being displayed. This exhibit, however, was only on loan to RAFFMA, so eventually, the staff had to go back to the museum and ship the contents of the exhibition to the next museum displaying it. Once the Jan Sawka exhibit was disassembled, RAFFMA was able to prepare their next exhibit, “Festival de Calaveras,” to be displayed in October 2020.³⁵ This event took place during a time where California’s stay-at-home order was not as strict, so community members were able to sign-up to decorate a Calavera provided by RAFFMA, which would then be auctioned off as a way to raise money for scholarships.³⁶ The museum was still closed to the general public at the time of the event, but RAFFMA was able to organize a safe drop-off/pick-up procedure that followed all of the state’s guidelines, which is how they were able to continue engaging with the community.

RAFFMA staff then dismantled the “Festival de Calaveras” exhibit and replaced it with the “Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press” that they displayed from February 2021 to April 2021 in recognition of Black History Month.³⁷ While it might seem strange to set up multiple exhibits while the museum was still closed to the general public, RAFFMA did not let the closures stop the public from seeing what they displayed. Once the Calaveras had been returned to the museum, RAFFMA made YouTube videos displaying each

³⁵ “Festival de Calaveras”, *RAFFMA*, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/events/festival-de-calaveras>.

³⁶ “Governor Newsom Unveils Blueprint for a Safer Economy, a Statewide, Stringent and Slow Plan for Living with COVID-19,” CA.gov, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/08/28/governor-newsom-unveils-blueprint-for-a-safer-economy-a-statewide-stringent-and-slow-plan-for-living-with-covid-19/>.

³⁷ “Personal to Political,” CSUSB, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.csusb.edu/raffma/visit/view/personal-political>.

of the Calaveras individually, and community members were able to view the art created for this event virtually.³⁸

RAFFMA successfully created virtual tours of both the “Golden West? Jan Sawka’s California Dream” exhibit as well as the “Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press.”³⁹ These virtual tours allowed not only local community members, but anyone in the world to visit the museum and view the exhibit on display. Several videos, like the ones taken for the “Festival de Calaveras” event, were even uploaded to RAFFMA’s YouTube channel so that the community could view them for years to come.⁴⁰

Moreover, the RAFFMA team took on the daunting task of digitizing a large portion of their Egyptian artifacts by turning them into virtual 3-D objects, some of which have now been made available to the public.⁴¹ This undertaking was a time-consuming and laborious task that the staff is still working on perfecting.⁴² The ultimate goal of this project is to have a 3-D virtual tour that people can go through and actually “hold” and inspect thousands-of-years-old objects, which guests cannot do in a regular museum setting. This virtual tour, like the others, also allows people from all over the world to “visit” RAFFMA and see their collections “first-hand,” something they might never have been able to do before. In addition to these 3-D objects, RAFFMA also spotlighted certain artifacts from their collections and made videos discussing them in detail.

³⁸ RAFFMA “Festival de Calaveras” YouTube, November 12, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLaQehzPsRqnDDlnYdsJbLPLtptvMq-KEV>.

³⁹ RAFFMA Golden West virtual tour link: <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=BvL4CA1L5eE&mIs=1>; RAFFMA Personal to Political tour link: <https://rocket.csusb.edu/raffma/>.

⁴⁰ “RAFFMAcsusb,”

⁴¹ RAFFMA 3-D objects: <https://sketchfab.com/raffmacsusb>.

⁴² This is a task that I have personally been involved with as a student assistant working at RAFFMA.

While the RAFFMA team's completed work has been nothing short of incredible, it does not reflect the actual sentiment that the RAFFMA staff had surrounding the pandemic and the closures. Like many others, RAFFMA's staff was utterly shocked by the campus and museum closing. Miranda Canseco, the marketing, membership, and engagement coordinator at RAFFMA, says that her "initial reaction was disbelief. It was hard to wrap my head around that this was a reality and how long this would be for. We were all sent home to work with the thought that we would be back in 2 weeks max."⁴³ But they were able to quickly shift their focus to how they could bring the museum online. While the shift to operating the museum virtually came suddenly, Diego Irigoyen, RAFFMA's education and collections coordinator, felt fine with the switch happening saying:

I had, prior to working at the museum, a lot of experience with media management and content creation so my thought was, we'll do that [operating virtually] if we can't have people at the museum. We can focus our attention on that and I felt comfortable with that so I wasn't necessarily too worried.⁴⁴

This optimism, however, was not a sentiment that all his coworkers shared. John Fleeman, RAFFMA's exhibition designer, says that:

I hated this idea. I hated this idea, not because I didn't think it was a good idea. I think that we did it well and there are some things that are positive. But in the beginning my initial response was this is my nightmare... The one thing I really enjoy about my

⁴³ Miranda Canseco (Marketing, Membership, and Engagement Coordinator at RAFFMA), email message to author, April 15, 2021.

⁴⁴ Diego Irigoyen (Education and Collections Coordinator at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, March 18, 2021.

job is the creative collaboration that you have with the artists and curators, staff, the student assistants, and being able to lead a team and learn things from them and teach them—and being able to create that thing in the real physical world and see the impact it has on people.⁴⁵

The cancellations and closures upset Fleeman because they completely changed RAFFMA. Fleeman says that “instead of making things, we were canceling things. We went from a think, build, create, share to cancel, cancel, cancel” which is the opposite of what RAFFMA fostered and encouraged for the community.⁴⁶

RAFFMA’s director, Eva Kirsch, fell somewhat between the two sentiments, saying that while she and RAFFMA were already looking into developing their digital content and fostering these skills, they just were not prepared for the suddenness of the shift and how much time it would take to do it successfully.⁴⁷ In contrast, the team has since been able to overcome the initial drawbacks COVID-19 produced. After a year of virtual operations, the RAFFMA team has worked together to overcome the challenges that the pandemic created. For Fleeman, this manifested in actually going out and researching how other museums were operating in states where museums were allowed to remain open and bringing that information back to better prepare himself for designing in a post-COVID-19 world in the future.⁴⁸ For all of the staff, overcoming these challenges also included fostering new skills, ranging from interviewing artists to learning how to use 3-D equipment, and taking on new roles they were unaccustomed to at their original jobs at the museum. Ultimately, the COVID-19

⁴⁵ John Fleeman (Exhibition Designer at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, April 1, 2021.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Eva Kirsch (Museum Director at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, April 6, 2021.

⁴⁸ John Fleeman (Exhibition Designer at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, April 1, 2021.

pandemic took a toll on the RAFFMA employees, but they were able to overcome the initial setbacks and prosper in their wake.

The Getty Museums

Another museum that has had to adapt to the California COVID-19 closures is colloquially known as the Getty. The founder of the Getty was J. Paul Getty (1892–1976), a businessman, who viewed art as a “civilizing influence in society” and wanted to make it more accessible to the public.⁴⁹ Starting in 1948, Getty gave pieces of his personal art collection to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art until 1954, when the J. Paul Getty Museum opened officially.⁵⁰

Since then, the Getty has evolved into a larger institution that features the Getty Villa, the Getty Center, the Getty Conservation Institute, the Getty Foundation, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the Getty Research Institute, all of which are “dedicated to the presentation, conservation, and interpretation of the world’s artistic legacy.”⁵¹ As the general public’s concern for COVID-19 began to grow, Elizabeth Escamilla, the Getty’s assistant director for education and public programs, recalls that the Getty had started to make plans for how to operate safely. However, those plans quickly changed as COVID-19 became increasingly more severe, and Escamilla says that “it went from making those kinds of decisions to shutting down.”⁵²

As the Getty transitioned to being virtual, Escamilla states that there were many initial drawbacks but the main two were the general transition to a virtual medium and questions on how to involve the general public:

⁴⁹ “History of Getty,” About The Getty, accessed April 12, 2021, <http://www.getty.edu/about/whowere/history.html>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ “Resources for Visual Art and Cultural Heritage,” Getty, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.getty.edu/about/>.

⁵² Elizabeth Escamilla (Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the Getty) in discussion with the author, April 8, 2021.

The transition to figuring out how to do a job that has been primarily an onsite physical job in a very specific place to taking that experience and figuring out how to make it a virtual experience with the same sort of level of engagement and quality and how to set up the physical equipment with laptops and printers and screens and how to do that and how to lay eggs with all of our other colleagues in order to produce something that was actually consumable by the public whether we're talking K-12 students, teachers, the general public, art enthusiasts. The external side, audience side, especially with K-12 students is how do you outreach to that audience when they may not have the technology either the Wi-Fi capacity or the equipment, the tools, in order to engage with the museum.⁵³

This concern for the everyday museum-goer is especially prevalent for Escamilla. The Getty has many K-12 student visitors that attend Title-1 schools, which means over fifty percent of the student population is low-income, and engaging in virtual programs is challenging for them as many of the students might not have access to the equipment needed to participate.⁵⁴

To overcome these drawbacks, the Getty launched a variety of different programs throughout the closure, like the *Getty Virtual Art Explorations*.⁵⁵ This program better prepared the Getty to run virtual events and make the experience better or “special” for the audience, but ultimately “there was a significant learning curve.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Elizabeth Escamilla (Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the Getty) in discussion with the author, April 8, 2021.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Press Release,” J. Paul Getty Trust Newsroom, August 27, 2020, <http://news.getty.edu/getty-brings-art-education-into-virtual-classroom.htm>.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Escamilla (Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the Getty) in discussion with the author, April 8, 2021.

In addition to the pilot, the Getty has also begun using video conference software like Zoom to host lectures, webinars, and newly created conversation-based activities. Examples of these activities include *Art Break* and *Getty Get Together*, which foster the audience's connection with the Getty and art even when they cannot physically be there.⁵⁷ In addition to Zoom, the Getty has also created several social media challenges and has even recreated ancient plays, making them available online for the general public to view at their convenience.⁵⁸

The Getty has also strived, and succeeded in, keeping all of their program free, which Escamilla sees as a “way to keep Getty fans sort of engaged with us during this stay at home.”⁵⁹ Escamilla says that the Getty has also been collaborating with other Los Angeles-based organizations, thinking about the larger community during these trying times, and has been working together “to help spotlight the work that they [the Los Angeles-based organizations] do,” which has encouraged engagement and involvement with Getty and the larger Los Angeles community.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, it is not just the local community that has been “visiting” the Getty while it has been closed. Like RAFFMA, the Getty's lectures and other virtual content have also been appealing to international audiences and communities. In fact, the Getty has now begun considering time differences and when the best time for the whole world would be, not just the local community, when scheduling their events. While their virtual content has been their primary focus, the Getty has been planning for reopening since they closed. This process is not entirely new to them since they have closed and reopened many of their institutions before.⁶¹ Escamilla says that they have a plan for how

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Escamilla (Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the Getty) in discussion with the author, April 8, 2021.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

every aspect of the Getty museums, whether it be ticketing or parking, will operate once they reopen.

Moreover, she indicated that they plan on testing in a “pre-opening” period dedicated to ensuring that the institution is safe for the public and follows California’s regulations and guidelines.⁶² Escamilla also says that “there is no way that we will go back to only being onsite” and that they will incorporate and continue to use the virtual content they have created once the museum reopens.⁶³ Ultimately, both RAFFMA and the Getty had very similar experiences to what operating was like during the COVID-19 pandemic and what they plan on doing once they reopen.

Massachusetts, London, and COVID-19

California and its museums were not the only ones affected by the COVID-19 closures. With the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments passed new guidelines and regulations on how to deal with the virus. The Massachusetts state government and the British government were some of these agencies that passed guidelines and regulations that affected how museums operated. While this is not a comprehensive analysis of how all museums in Massachusetts and England operated during the COVID-19 closures, this section will illustrate how different museums adapted to COVID-19 and compare them to how museums in California operated during this time.

Massachusetts: The Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East (HMANE)

Similar to how California responded, on March 10, 2020, Massachusetts’ Governor and lieutenant Governor, Charlie Baker and Karyn Polito, declared a state of emergency in

⁶² Elizabeth Escamilla (Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the Getty) in discussion with the author, April 8, 2021.

⁶³ Ibid.

Massachusetts.⁶⁴ While this state of emergency allowed certain industries to stay open, museums were not. This meant that the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East (HMANE) and its sister museums (the Harvard Museum of Natural History, the Peabody Museum of Archeology & Ethnology, and the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments) all had to close their doors to the public in March 2020.⁶⁵

The HMANE is one of four different museums housed on the Harvard campus in Massachusetts. This museum was initially founded in 1889 as the Harvard Semitic Museum, and its main goal was to be “a teaching tool to study the ancient histories and cultures of people who spoke Semitic languages, among the Israelites, Moabites, Arbas, Babylonians, and Phoenicians.”⁶⁶ The museum’s name was later changed in 2020 to more accurately reflect the diversity seen in the museum’s collections.⁶⁷ Since the location of this museum is on a university campus, it has to follow state and college COVID-19 regulations and guidelines, much like RAFFMA. This meant that when Harvard announced that the campus was closing in late March, the HMANE simultaneously closed its door to the public.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Charlie Baker and Karyn Polito, “Declaration of a State of Emergency to Respond to COVID-19,” March 10, 2020, <https://www.mass.gov/news/declaration-of-a-state-of-emergency-to-respond-to-covid-19>.

⁶⁵ Juan Siliezar, “Harvard Art Museums Closing to Public amid COVID-19 Spread,” *Harvard Gazette*, March 20, 2020, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/03/harvard-art-museums-closing-to-public-amid-covid-19-spread/>. For more information on the HMANE’s sister museums please visit: <https://hmsc.harvard.edu/fourmuseums>.

⁶⁶ “Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East,” Harvard University, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://hmane.harvard.edu/>.

⁶⁷ “A New Name for the Semitic Museum,” *Harvard Gazette*, April 15, 2020, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/04/a-new-name-for-the-semitic-museum/>.

⁶⁸ “COVID-19 – Moving Classes Online, Other Updates,” Covid-19 Information, January 17, 2021, <https://www.harvard.edu/coronavirus/covid-19-moving-classes-online-other-updates/>.

Before this closure, however, the four museums worked very similarly to RAFFMA as they all held different lectures, events, gave tours, and had a multitude of activities that the community could attend and enjoy.⁶⁹ In addition to this, the museum had several classrooms and faculty offices attached to it which meant that a typical day at the museum could include several students walking throughout it in addition to other guests and staff members.⁷⁰ When the information regarding COVID-19 first began circulating, the HMANE had several talks about what safety precautions they could take to operate safely.

However, Gregory Adam Middleton, the HMANE's museums coordinator, says that it was almost impossible to do so because the information came in so rapidly and changed so quickly.⁷¹ Middleton says that the official last day the museum was open to the public was March 13, 2020, but the week leading up to that day showed a visible change in the number of people visiting the museum whether it be guests, students, or faculty.⁷² Like RAFFMA and the Getty, Middleton says that there were many initial drawbacks to the museum closing. For the HMANE, these drawbacks manifested in the fact that there was an unfinished exhibit sitting in the museum. Anxiety naturally crept over the museum's staff as they inevitably began questioning the overall security of the museum, the faculty offices, and who would have access to the building.⁷³

Unlike RAFFMA, the HMANE had already started developing its online content before the COVID-19 pandemic as Middleton states:

⁶⁹ "Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East," Harvard University, accessed April 12, 2021, https://hmane.harvard.edu/calendar/past_events.

⁷⁰ Gregory Adam Middleton (Museum Coordinator at HMANE) in discussion with the author, March 18, 2021.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

We have a lot of digital assets, and [we had] started that process years ago. A few years ago, we got into the 3-D scanning game relatively early with a very old, ancient scanner. It's actually a turntable so you would sit an object on it and turn and use lasers and draw all the vertices and scan. So, we lucked out really on having a lot of digital assets. We had started moving a lot of our archives to cloud storage instead of hard drives. So, just by accident we almost had a lot of things that we could use.⁷⁴

Like RAFFMA, the HMANE made their virtual tour and digital objects available to the public upon completion.⁷⁵ Since they began digitizing sooner than RAFFMA, they were better prepared, and it was not as steep of a learning curve for the Harvard museum staff.

In addition to the digital content, HMANE and its sister museums also made several changes to ensure that the community stayed together and engaged with them. According to Middleton, along with moving their lectures and webinars to Zoom, they also started using and embracing platforms like Skype, YouTube, and Google Group.⁷⁶ Like RAFFMA, HMANE also created coloring pages and started a podcast as an alternative way to ensure that the community stayed engaged with the museum and the content they were producing.⁷⁷ Regarding how the museum will run when it is safe to do so, Middleton contends that there are no current plans as there is so much variability that comes with it. As of now, Middleton says that there is no set day as to when even the staff can come back to work, though they hope sometime in the

⁷⁴ Gregory Adam Middleton (Museum Coordinator at HMANE) in discussion with the author, March 18, 2021.

⁷⁵ HMANE virtual tour link: <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=bS17YNKCggy&referrer=https://hmane.harvard.edu>; HMANE 3-D object link: <https://sketchfab.com/hmane/collections>.

⁷⁶ Gregory Adam Middleton (Museum Coordinator at HMANE) in discussion with the author, March 18, 2021.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

summer, it ultimately depends on when they receive permission from the campus.⁷⁸ He does say that he believes that, when the museums reopen, they will continue to use and incorporate the digital content they made like the digital objects, virtual tours, the podcast, and coloring pages. Nonetheless, Middleton says that the museum wants to retain and continue to use some of the museum's on-site pre-COVID features on special occasions like the possible use of the exhibit's touch screens, which would encourage more hands-on learning and engagement.⁷⁹

The British Museum

It was not just American museums that had to adapt and change during the COVID-19 pandemic. The British Museum, said to be the first national public museum with its doors opening in 1759, is visited by thousands of people each year and houses thousands of objects and artifacts from all corners of the Earth.⁸⁰ Unlike RAFFMA or HMANE, the British Museum, like the Getty, is not connected to any university campuses. Nonetheless, it still must adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines and regulations set by the British Parliament. This meant that when Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the stay-at-home order on March 23, 2020, and closed all non-essential business, the British Museum had to close its doors to the public as well.⁸¹ However, the British Museum has already begun taking precautions before this point.

Stuart Frost, the head of interpretation and volunteers, says that “in the run-up to lockdown we did stop some activities where

⁷⁸ Gregory Adam Middleton (Museum Coordinator at HMANE) in discussion with the author, March 18, 2021.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ “The British Museum Story,” the British Museum, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story>.

⁸¹ “Prime Minister’s Statement on Coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 March 2020,” GOV.UK, March 23, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020>.

there was a risk of transmission through touch.”⁸² The museum indeed closed to the public on March 18, 2020, and staff began working from home at that point.⁸³ Frost also points out that, unfortunately, the closure caused the furlough of many staff members between April and September of 2020.⁸⁴ In addition to reduced staff, the museum also suffered “the loss of income from visitor donation, ticket sales, shop sales, and the cafes and restaurants” and the added stress and uncertainty that these financial problems brought.⁸⁵

Unlike the other museums mentioned, the British Museum reopened on August 27, 2020, but it was “the ground-floor only with a one-way route, reduced capacity and social distancing.”⁸⁶ However, this reopening was short-lived as the museum was forced to close and reopen several more times between August and December 16, 2020, when the museum was officially “closed again as the UK went back into lockdown.”⁸⁷ While the museum has operated onsite in some capacity, Frost says that “effectively the Museum has become the website,” which has encouraged the staff to use social media and other virtual outlets to engage with both the local and international communities.⁸⁸ Frost believes that while holding online events is important during the pandemic, they do not have the same “magic” that on-site events possess because the audience does not get the same engaging experience.⁸⁹

It has since been confirmed that museums can reopen in May 2021 in England, and Frost says that the British Museum plans on originally reopening with a “one-way route and social

⁸² Stuart Frost (Head of Interpretation and Volunteers), email message to author, March 23, 2021.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

distancing measures.”⁹⁰ However, the museum will “remove the one-way route as soon as it is possible to do so, that way people can go back to visiting the museum in the manner of their choosing” and begin hosting on-site events, hopefully, by the winter of 2021.⁹¹ While the museum is excited to return to normal, Frost says that they will most likely “continue to run events online as well as onsite to have a greater impact and reach. It’ll be a mixed model. If we just go back to what we did before the pandemic, it will be a missed opportunity to improve.”⁹²

How the British Museum dealt with COVID-19 varies slightly from the museums located in the United States; however, they still share many similarities. Like RAFFMA, the Getty, and HMANE, the British Museum closed to the public in response to the COVID-19 pandemics and had to learn how to operate virtually for some time. They all seemed to have taken advantage of virtual programming, which ultimately allowed them to reach more people worldwide. They also all had to learn how to reopen and operate safely under the new COVID-19 guidelines, but some of them have had more opportunities to practice these new operations depending on their local governments.

⁹⁰ Stuart Frost (Head of Interpretation and Volunteers at the British Museum), email message to author, March 23, 2021.

⁹¹ Ibid..

⁹² Ibid.

Conclusion

While most museums were able to successfully adapt to the pandemic's closures, there were still many obstacles that the COVID-19 lockdowns exacerbated and highlighted. Almost every person interviewed at some point said that one of the most challenging parts about being online was the lack of communication and interaction with their coworkers and the public. Irigoyen, RAFFMA's education and collections coordinator, states that one of his favorite parts about working in a museum was talking and the social interactions between himself, the public, and his coworkers.⁹³ Frost, the British Museum's head of interpretation and volunteers, echoes this sentiment by stating that staff working from home miss the social interaction and the chats in the office.⁹⁴ At the same time, Kirsch, RAFFMA's director, takes this feeling a step further in saying that she genuinely feels isolated from her staff, other people, and even the objects in the collections themselves.⁹⁵ Canseco, RAFFMA's marketing, membership, and engagement coordinator, specifically points out the "disconnect from their older audience" who are not as technologically literate and many of whom are unable to attend the online events.⁹⁶

Kirsch also points out that not every museum or institution could survive the closures, saying that some of them have gone

⁹³ Diego Irigoyen (Education and Collections Coordinator at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, March 18, 2021

⁹⁴ Stuart Frost (Head of Interpretation and Volunteers at the British Museum), email message to author, March 23, 2021.

⁹⁵ Eva Kirsch (Museum Director at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, April 6, 2021.

⁹⁶ Miranda Canseco (Marketing, Membership, and Engagement Coordinator at RAFFMA), email message to author, April 15, 2021.

“dormant” or closed their doors permanently.⁹⁷ These closures, in turn, are prompting a dramatic shift in how museums operate, what happens with their collections, and the very nature or definition of a museum.⁹⁸ Kirsch does note that these changes have been a long time coming and have essentially been ignored with the idea that ignorance is bliss; the COVID-19 pandemic just made the pre-COVID-19 issues more apparent and accelerated the consequences of it.⁹⁹ Specifically, in their 2021 *TrendsWatch*, the American Alliance of Museums cited preexisting and present financial issues that museums face as well as the inequality seen in the communities museums serve in regards to wealth, power, and race.¹⁰⁰ The American Alliance of Museums uses this report to highlight some of the challenges or issues that have persisted within United States society, how museums have contributed to these issues, and potential ways museums can respond or change to better address them.¹⁰¹

However, Fleeman, RAFFMA’s Exhibition Designer, points out that the problems that COVID-19 produced do not stop with the museum and its staff. According to Fleeman, while

⁹⁷ “Crowdsourcing a Database of Permanent Museum Closings”, The American Alliance of Museums, January 8, 2021, <https://www.aam-us.org/2021/01/08/crowdsourcing-a-database-of-permanent-museum-closings/>. The American Alliance of Museums has put together a spreadsheet of museums that have closed recently. Not all of these museums cite COVID-19 as the reason for closing, but a large majority of them do. To view the spreadsheet, visit: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17u5ik2rBoGzGnCF5yUdpcL0WVj6DDSPWKpVLWtB-wTw/edit#gid=1582367238>.

⁹⁸ Eva Kirsch (Museum Director at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, April 6, 2021.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ For more information on the PDF of the 2021 and past *TrendsWatch*, visit: <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/center-for-the-future-of-museums/trendswatch-navigating-a-disrupted-future/>; “Center for the Future of Museums - Navigating a Disrupted Future,” The American Alliance of Museums, accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/center-for-the-future-of-museums/trendswatch-navigating-a-disrupted-future/>.

¹⁰¹ “Center for the Future of Museums - Navigating a Disrupted Future.”

COVID-19 has brought some positive changes, it is selfish to only think about how the closures affected the museums and not focus on the larger communities that relied on the museum's visitors like the "restaurants, cafes, bookstores, the shops," and the employees that work there.¹⁰² Many of the larger-scale museums will recover and open again, but community-based organizations and institutions will forever be changed and might never recover from the pandemic. Escamilla, Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the Getty, also echoes this sentiment, saying that now the museums and the world will be "reopening to a public that has gone through a mass amount of trauma that will be extremely difficult to process and move on from."¹⁰³ While museums like RAFFMA, the Getty, HMANE, and the British Museum have been able to survive and operate virtually, the toll that the closures and the pandemic have taken on its staff and their community is still unknown and the consequences are still yet to be determined.

Ultimately, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed how museums around the world operate. The old way of educating and entertaining guests in person was no longer a viable option, forcing museum staff to adapt and learn a new way of operating. These four museums all had to embrace and create virtual content as it was the only way they could continue to engage with the community. While working from home and operating their business virtually gave them time to develop their new content and foster new skills, it ultimately brought about many challenges. There were various learning curves, internal issues like finances or staffing, and external issues facing the larger community that affected how many museums operate and function. Beyond that, as Kirsh points out, the COVID-19 closures highlighted some very serious dangers that museums face in the era of COVID-19 that

¹⁰² John Fleeman (Exhibition Designer at RAFFMA) in discussion with the author, April 1, 2021.

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Escamilla (Assistant Director for Education and Public Programs at the Getty) in discussion with the author, April 8, 2021.

have existed long before the virus and that these issues will continue to persist if not taken care of effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic completely changed how museums like RAFFMA, the Getty, HMANE, and the British Museum operate both on-site and regarding their staffs' work, but they have been able to overcome these changes and will most likely continue to evolve and improve their institutions long after COVID-19 poses a threat to in-person meetings.

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- _____. “Governor Newsom Provides Update on California's Progress Toward Stage 2 Reopening.” CA.gov. May 4, 2020. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/05/04/governor-newsom-provides-update-on-californias-progress-toward-stage-2-reopening/>.

Author Bio

Erika Kelley is a third-year undergraduate student at California State University, San Bernardino. She is majoring in Public History and minoring in Anthropology. After graduating, Erika hopes to continue her education by obtaining a master's degree. She enjoys learning about ancient civilizations and museum studies. In her free time, she enjoys being outside in nature and visiting different museums and botanical gardens with her friends and family. Erika would like to thank her family for supporting her and her endeavors. She would also like to thank the journal editors and the rest of the team for all their hard work and dedication.



Notes from the Archives

World War II Photographic Essay: Inherited Private Memories of World War II through Family Photographs

By Brittany Mondragon, Cecelia Smith, Jacquelyne R. Anton, and Sarah West

While we sit here writing this, we are nearing the 80th anniversary of the United States' entry into World War II on December 8, 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan. As German political philosopher Jan-Werner Müller notes, "memory and power can only be fully understood if domestic and international, social scientific, historical and ethical perspectives are brought together."¹ Therefore, as the inaugural class for the Master of Arts in History program at California State University, San Bernardino, we are attempting to contribute to the existing narrative of World War II with our personal family histories. These familial histories provide perspectives that challenge the previously established narratives offered in the collective memory of the United States. This photographic essay will document the stories of family members whose private memory of the wartime era is not often brought to light beyond statistical numbers, thus, humanizing the soldiers we often dismiss, reify, or demonize.

¹ Jan-Werner Müller, *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge, 2011), 35.

Like many historians before us, we understand that the photographs provided in this photographic essay are only a small contribution to the historiography of World War II. As stated by Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, “Historians cannot capture the fullness of past experience, any more than individual memories can.”² Nonetheless, we believe these personal stories and private memories have the potential to contribute, and possibly disrupt, our collective understanding of the war. Considering that many World War II veterans have since departed, documenting their stories is more pertinent than ever. We hope to inspire others to uncover their own family histories, seeing that, as leading China historian Rana Mitter writes, “The topic of memory has become a mainstay of historical analysis in recent decades, especially memory relating to wars.”³

² Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 234.

³ Rana Mitter, *China’s Good War: How World War II is Shaping a New Nationalism* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), 16.

ALFEO (AL) RALPH ANGELLOTTI
(SEPTEMBER 3, 1922–FEBRUARY 13, 2017)⁴

As remembered by his granddaughter Sarah West



Alfeo Angellotti (Al) was the son of Francisco and Sestilia Angellotti. He served in the United States Army from March 17, 1943, till December 9, 1945. He earned two Overseas Service Bars, the American Campaign Medal, the European Duct Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, and the Purple Heart Medal. He talked about the war sparingly, but he agreed to do an interview with me, his granddaughter, the year before he died. Because of this interview, I can share the small pieces of this story that I have, for which I am forever grateful.

⁴ The photographs of and regarding Alfeo Angellotti were provided by his granddaughter, Sarah West.

Notes from the Archives

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)			
SERIAL NUMBER N. 114		ORDER NUMBER 12576	
NAME (Last, first, middle) ALFEO RALPH ANGELLOTTI			
PLACE OF BIRTH (City, State, and Country) 1031-N FRANKLIN ST. CHICAGO, COOK, ILL.			
THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL			
DATE OF BIRTH SEPT. 3, 1922			
CITY, STATE, AND COUNTRY OF BIRTH CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, CHICAGO, ILL.			
NAME OF EMPLOYER (If any) MR. FRANK ANGELLOTTI, 1031-N FRANKLIN, ST. ILL.			
NAME OF EMPLOYER (If any) S.H. SMITH CO.			
ADDRESS (If any) 3037 CARROL, ST. CHICAGO, COOK, ILL.			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE			
ED. S. S. FORM 1 (Revised 5-1-40) (over) 410-51020-3			

“There was about 3 of my buddies, the only thing you could join at that time being underage was the air force, but I needed permission from my father. And he blew up the storm, he almost ran me out of the house, he didn’t want that, he was in the war, he didn’t want me to join, he said you take your chances with the draft.”⁵

⁵ Alfeo Angellotti, interview by Sarah West, July 29, 2016, personal interview.



This photograph was taken somewhere in Northern France, where Al first landed. “After weeks of moving from town to town, we found some French women held up in a house, they wanted to wash our clothes and bathe us, but I didn’t let them.”⁶ This quote was from a story my grandfather often shared, making sure to give my grandmother a side-eye while smirking at the same time.

⁶ Alfeo Angellotti, interview by Sarah West, July 29, 2016, personal interview.

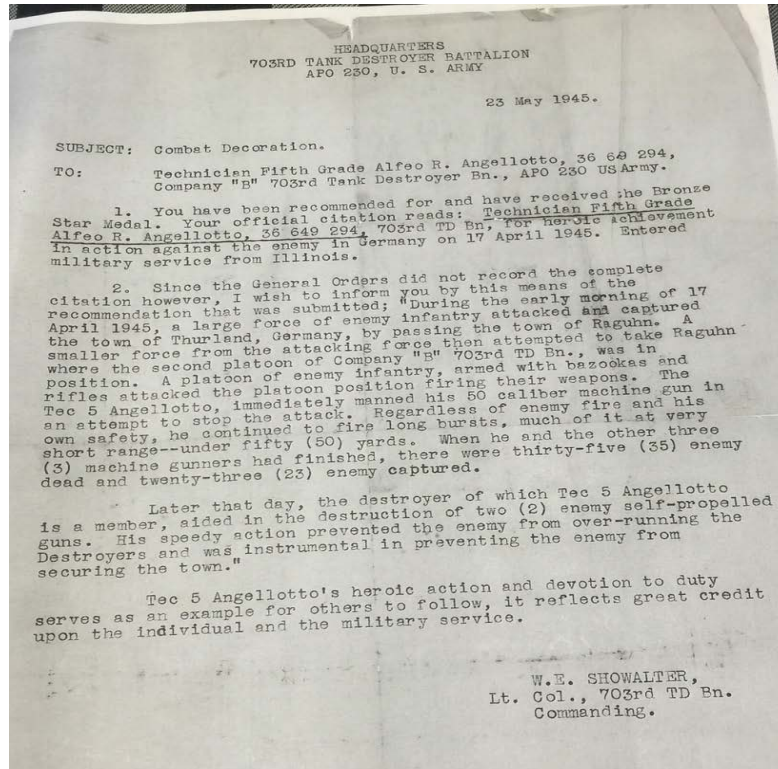


Al trained initially as a map reader and radioman for the 653rd Tank Destroyer Battalion. Al considered the men he served with his brothers; he often spoke about the balance between the bonds that were struck with these men and the struggle to continue the fight. So many of them perished along the way.



“I was a radioman and my driver got hit, and it so happened he got killed, and I was lucky cause I had the periscope up, and anyway, I took over. I took over as driver from then on out, after ‘the bulge.’ It was pretty rough, but beyond that, we come out pretty good.”⁷

⁷ Alfeo Angellotti, interview by Sarah West, July 29, 2016, personal interview.



Al was eventually transferred to the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, where he fought in the Battle of the Bulge from December 16, 1944, to January 25, 1945. In this battalion, he received his Bronze Star Medal with the act of bravery that is detailed above; he was also wounded in this particular account.



After Germany surrendered, Al's company was assigned to evacuate an internment camp. "The only thing I knew about it was in the Stars and Stripes and what they tell us. It was hard to believe that, that these people kill all these people, burn them up, let them all die; I've never seen that. Awful. And that was it. When you hear about it, it's different than when you see it; when you see something like that, you don't forget about it. And that's what happened."⁸

⁸ Alfeo Angellotti, interview by Sarah West, July 29, 2016, personal interview.

**ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
HONORABLE DISCHARGE**

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL ANGELLOTTI ALFEO R		2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 36 649 294	3. GRADE TEC 5	4. ARM OF SERVICE ARMED	5. COMPONENT AUS
6. ORGANIZATION CO B 703RD TD BN		7. DATE OF SEPARATION 9 DEC 45	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION CAMP GRANT ILL		
9. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE BOUGHT 718 N ADA ST CHICAGO ILL		10. DATE OF BIRTH 3 SEP 22	11. PLACE OF BIRTH CHICAGO ILL		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE BOUGHT SEE # 9		13. COLOR EYES GREY	14. COLOR HAIR BROWN	15. HEIGHT 5 10	16. WEIGHT 158
17. NO. DEPEND.		18. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. MACHINE OPR 5-13.000			
MILITARY HISTORY					
19. DATE OF INDUCTION 10 MAR 43		20. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 17 MAR 43		21. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE CAMP GRANT ILL	
22. SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA X		23. COUNTRY AND STATE 141 COOK CO ILL		24. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE 1031 N FRANKLIN CHICAGO ILL	
25. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. TANK DRIVER 736		26. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND NO. (I.e., ability, division and marksmanship badge, etc.) SS W/MG MM W/CARBINE RIFLE			
27. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS NORTHERN FRANCE ARDENNES RHINELAND CENTRAL EUROPE					
28. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS 2 OVERSEAS SERVICE BARS AMERICAN CAMPAIGN MEDAL EUROPEAN AFRICAN-MIDDLE EASTERN THEATER RIBBON W/4 BRONZE BATTLE STARS GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL WORLD WAR 2 VICTORY MEDAL PURPLE HEART MEDAL GO 62 HQ 3RD*					
29. WOUNDS IN ACTION WOUNDED IN ACTION IN GERMANY, 17 APR 45					
30. SMALLPOX IM		31. TETANUS ST		32. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN 24 AUG 44 ETO 1 SEP 44	
33. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE 1 5 15		34. HIGHEST GRADE HELD TEC 5		35. DATE OF ARRIVAL 22 NOV 45 USA 1 DEC 45	
36. PRIOR SERVICE NONE					
37. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION CONV OF GOVT RR 1-1 (DEMOBILIZATION) AR 615-365 DATED 15 DEC 44					
38. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED NONE					
39. PAY DATA YOU 17121					
40. LONGEVITY (YRS AND MONTHS) 2 9 0		41. MONTHLY PAY 300		42. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER 150.84 G F DOLEBEAR CAPT FD	
43. INSURANCE NOTICE 31 DEC 45 31 JAN 46 6.50					
44. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED ASR SCORE (2 SEP 45) 73 ERC FROM 10 MAR 43 TO 16 MAR 43 *ARMED DIV DTD 17 MAY 45 BRONZE STAR MEDAL GO 63 HQ 3RD AD DTD 17 MAY 45					
45. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED Alfredo R. Angellotti					
46. SIGNATURE OF PERSON AT THE TIME OF SEPARATION (signature) ELLA L WRIGHT 1ST LT AC					

Al was honorably discharged on December 9, 1945, after the demobilization of his unit. From there he returned to his home in Chicago, Illinois where he married the love of his life and worked to put the war behind him.

DENSVIL NATHENAL KEASTER

(MAY 11, 1916–JULY 16, 1984)⁹

*As remembered by his granddaughter, Brittany Mondragon, and
family*



Densvil Nathenal Keaster was the son of John Powell Keaster and Nora Leona Cato (Chickasaw member). He served as a Corporal for the United States Marine Corps on the Pacific Front from January 10, 1942, to February 4, 1944, and from December 20, 1944, to November 9, 1945. This photograph was most likely taken at his hometown in Clay Township, Dunklin County, Missouri.

⁹ The photographs of Densvil Nathenal Keaster were provided by the Miller family and his granddaughter, Brittany Mondragon.

SERIAL NUMBER 1457	1. NAME (Print) DENSVIL NACHENAL KEASTER		ORDER NUMBER 4163
2. ADDRESS (Print) RTAD #1 LILBOURN New Madrid Mo.			
3. TELEPHONE	4. AGE IN YEARS 24	5. DATE OF BIRTH May 11 1916	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mr. J. P. Keaster		8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Father	
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON RTAD #1 Lilbourn New Madrid Mo.			
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME J. P. Keaster			
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Lt. Bocha Ville Mo.			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. 9-FOUR 1 16-17128 Densvil Keaster			

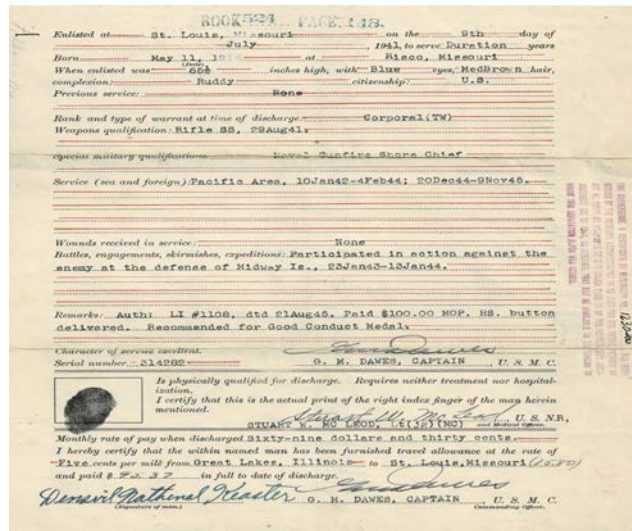
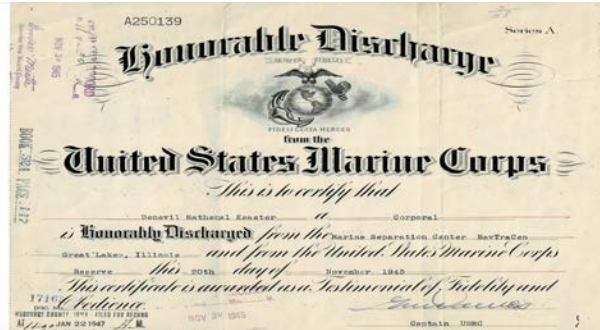
Pictured above is Densvil's draft card. His order number was 4163.



This photograph of Densvil was taken at Midway Island Base sometime between December 1944 and November 1945. A handwritten note to his wife on the back reads, "Your 'Hubby', the fellow that loves you so much, honey." In an interview with my mom, his daughter, she stated: "I remember him sitting in his chair smoking his pipe. Every time he would start to talk about it [Midway], he would stop suddenly and get teary."¹⁰

¹⁰ Debra Linnea Miller (Keaster), interview by Brittany Mondragon, March 5, 2021, personal interview.

Notes from the Archives



Densvil enlisted in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 9, 1941, and was honorably discharged after the war. The document notes that he “participated in action against the enemy at the defense of Midway Is., 23Jan43-13Jan44” and received a “monthly rate of pay when discharged Sixty-nine dollars and thirty cents.”

MARIAN LOUISE (NÉE ANDERSON) KEASTER

(AUGUST 6, 1923–MAY 18, 2006)¹¹

*As remembered by her granddaughter, Brittany Mondragon, and
family*



Marian Louise (née Anderson) Keaster, second woman sitting on the right, was the daughter of Swedish immigrants Joseph Axel Anderson and Ida Josephine Nelson. She served as a first-class hospital assistant nurse at Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, California during World War II. The photo was taken at a restaurant/bar in San Diego during a “ladies’ night.” Other women are unknown.

¹¹ The photographs of Marian Louise (née Anderson) Keaster were provided by the Miller family and her granddaughter, Brittany Mondragon.

Notes from the Archives

14-619

NAVY FORM 601
JULY 1943

Issued honorable service button
USNR, San Diego, California
7 July 1944
E. H. DICKINSON, Captain (MC) USNR

Certificate of Discharge
UNDER HONORABLE CONDITIONS
UNITED STATES NAVAL SERVICE

This is to certify that Marian Louise ANDERSON
(Name in full)

762 79 20 Hospital Apprentice, first class United States Navy, V10
(Service number) (Rating - do not abbreviate) (Naval Reserve)

has this day been discharged from U. S. NAVAL HOSPITAL
(City or organization)

and the U. S. Naval Service with GOOD discharge under
(Character of discharge)

satisfactory conditions.
Dated this 7th day of July, 1944, at San Diego, California

DOC. NO. 17446
WOODSBURY COUNTY, IOWA - FILED FOR RECORD
At Des Moines JAN 22 1947
G. H. DAHL, Recorder
By E. H. Dickinson
E. H. DICKINSON, Captain (MC) USNR
Executive Officer of Discharged Personnel
By direction of the C. O. U. S. N.
Commanding.

BOOK 521 PAGE 130

Reason for discharge Physical Disability - 100% - Article D-3106

Authority for discharge (if for reason other than expiration of enlistment) Doers 1st Para 66 TIT 100/
719 of 23 March 1943

Enlisted as A.S. on 23 Aug 1943 at Des Moines, Iowa recommended for reenlistment.

Born on 5 August 1923 at Sioux City, Iowa

Qualifications ++

Rating held A.S. 1 7626; Rate, V-10 USNR

Certificates

Service schools completed

Special duties for which qualified

Service (vessels and stations served on) USNTS, (MC) Bronx, New York; USNR, Oakland, California;
USNR, San Diego, California

Rating at discharge V-10 USNR Adm. 1 7626 Service No. 762 79 20

Final average 3.5

Marital status Single

DESCRIPTIVE LIST

Height 5 ft. 6 1/2 in. Weight 147 lb. Eyes Hazel

Hair Brown Complexion Fair Personal marks, etc. ANT: S. 1/2 right;
M neck; M chest, FOOT: PM 1 u m; PM A buttock; PM r thoracic.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I have examined the man herein named and find that he:

Is not physically qualified for reenlistment.

Does not require treatment or hospitalization.

I CERTIFY that this is the pedal print of the right index finger of the ab man herein named.

Monthly rate of pay when discharged SIXTY SIX DOLLARS AND NO CENTS

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the man herein named has been furnished travel allowance at the rate of FIVE cents per mile from SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA to HOUSTON CITY, TEXAS and paid 8.15 x 22 in full to date of discharge. TTF/44 (S) 0363.40

Total net service for pay purposes PAID \$100.00 77/44

(Signature of man) E. H. DICKINSON, Captain (MC) USNR
E. H. DICKINSON, Captain (MC) USNR
Executive Officer of Discharged Personnel

Marian Louise (née Anderson) Keaster enlisted in Des Moines, Iowa on August 23, 1943. She was honorably discharged for a physical disability on July 7, 1944. The above document notes that she received a “monthly rate of pay when discharged Sixty-six dollars and no cents.”



Densvil Nathenal Keaster and Marian Louise (née Anderson) Keaster are pictured reuniting and celebrating the end of the war in San Diego with their car behind them.

DONALD GEORGE MILLER

(JULY 31, 1919– OCTOBER 4, 1970)¹²

*As remembered by his granddaughter, Brittany Mondragon, and
family*



Donald George Miller was the son of James Miller and Iva Hughes. He served in the Air Force division of the United States Army during the war. This photograph was taken at a barrack or base, but the exact location is unknown.

¹² The photographs of Donald George Miller were provided by the Miller family and his granddaughter, Brittany Mondragon.

SERIAL NUMBER 78	1. NAME (Print) MARSHAL 51-099-01 Donald George Miller (First) (Middle) (Last)			ORDER NUMBER 147
2. ADDRESS (Print) R.F.D. # 2 Culver Marshall Indiana (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)				
3. TELEPHONE 217 (Exchange) (Number)	4. AGE IN YEARS 21 (Date of Birth) July 31, 1919 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Culver Indiana (Town or county) (State or country)	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.	
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Donald Miller (Mr., Mrs., Miss) (First) (Middle) (Last)			8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Wife	
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON R.F.D. #2 Culver Marshall Indiana (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)				
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Kenneth Miller				
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 812 Obispo Street Culver Marshall Indiana (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)				
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.				
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. FORM 1 (over) 16-17105  <i>Donald George Miller</i> (Register's signature)				

Pictured above is Donald George Miller's draft card. His order number was 147.



In this photograph, Donald George Miller and Imogene Lavina (née Overmyer) Miller are pictured reuniting and celebrating the end of the war in their hometown in Culver, Indiana.

HOBART LAY (HL) HOPKINS
(MARCH 20, 1921–JUNE 4, 1990)¹³

As remembered by his daughter, Cecelia Smith, and the Hopkins family



Hobart Lay Hopkins was the son of Hobart Allen Hopkins and Maggie Brown Hopkins. Born in Nashville, Tennessee, the family moved to Detroit, Michigan. He enlisted in the army in 1942 and served in the United States Army Air Force Services.

¹³ The photographs of Hobart Lay Hopkins and all were provided by the Hopkins family and his daughter, Cecelia Smith.

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REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after February 17, 1897 and on or before December 31, 1921)

SERIAL NUMBER 1762	1. NAME (Print) HOBART LAY HOPKINS	ORDER NUMBER 11.666
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 4707 MCKINLEY DETROIT WAYNE MICH. <small>(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)</small>		
3. MAILING ADDRESS SAME <small>(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If none insert word none)</small>		
4. TELEPHONE TY 6-0818	5. AGE IN YEARS 20 DATE OF BIRTH 3 20 1921 <small>(Month) (Day) (Year)</small>	6. PLACE OF BIRTH NASHVILLE TENN. <small>(Town or city) (State or country)</small>
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS MRS MAGGIE HOPKINS 4707 MCKINLEY		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS GRENNAN BAKERY		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 1250 1 ST ST. DETROIT WAYNE MICH. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE Hobart Lay Hopkins		

D. S. S. Form 1 ☆ GPO 16-21635-2

Pictured above is the registration card for Hobart Lay Hopkins in 1942. His order number was 11,666.



Hobart Lay Hopkins (seated) in 1942 with an unnamed soldier.

Notes from the Archives



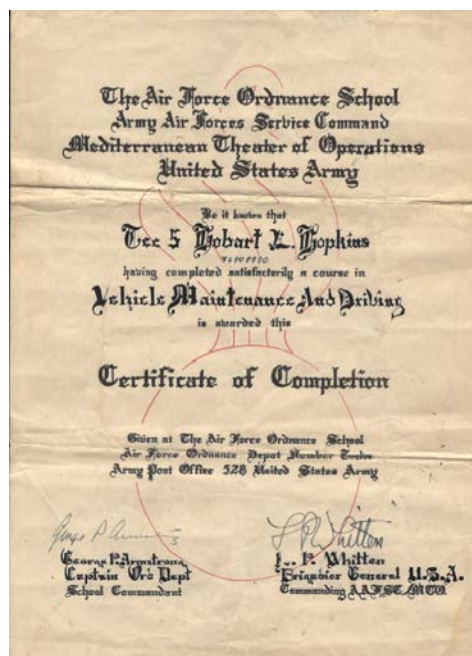
Friends of Hobart Lay Hopkins stationed in the Aleutian Islands.
Top row: Dorsey E. Wood, unknown soldier, Alfred Heather.
Bottom row: Columbus Dean, Joseph Russell Hughes.¹⁴

¹⁴ Photograph of Russell Hughes courtesy of Daphne M. Howard.




Company : K, 9th QM Training Regiment
Camp Lee, Virginia, 1942
Hobart Lay Hopkins, 2nd row, 10th from the right

As a child, it was a game for me to see how quickly I (Cecelia Smith) could find my dad in the picture on the previous page. It is quite automatic now; I can point him out immediately each and every time I look at the photograph.



Certificate of Completion, The Air Force Ordnance School, Army Air Forces Service Command, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, United States Army for Hobart Lay Hopkins.



"The Singing Soldier"
"The Army Musical Couple"

JAMES O. WILLIS, "The Singing Soldier," tenor, reader.
ELLA LEIGH PICKETT WILLIS, at the piano and organ.

Here are some facts about their program of Entertainment:
Before the War "The Singing Soldier" had studied at the Albany State College, Atlanta University, Chicago Musical College, and with several private teachers.

At the Organ

Ella Leigh Pickett Willis studied at Storer Teachers College, Chicago Musical College, and with many private teachers. She served as Church Choir Organist in various cities before the war. Was Church Choir Organist in Chicago, Illinois, for five years.

New with an Honorable Discharge from the United States Army after 3½ years of service, "The Singing Soldier," with the other part of "The Army Musical Couple," are ready to bring to you a full program of good wholesome entertainment.

This talented, versatile couple presents a Variety Concert of Tenor Solos, Dramatic Readings, Skits, Piano and Organ Solos.

"The Singing Soldier" served the Army with Special Service Division units. He was a chaplain's assistant, and a director of camp music. Because of his ability as a singer, dramatic reader, speaker, music director, and as a master of ceremonies, he was classified an Entertainment Specialist by the Army.

For her war effort work Ella Leigh Pickett Willis was a typist, librarian assistant, chapel organist, and the accompanist for "The Singing Soldier," and the musical groups under his direction.

Together these musicians appeared on more than 700 programs and concerts. These were heard by many thousands of service men and women in camps, chapels, Red Cross hospital Auditoriums, service clubs, "chow halls," USO clubs, and "bivouac areas."


If you want the best in entertainment for your next program let us bring our Variety Musical Concert. We can give a full hour, half hour, or a quarter hour of entertainment. We gladly send you written recommendations from military and civilian groups about past programs.

At the Piano

Their motto today is the same as it was yesterday during the war.
"Together We Serve GOD, Our Country, and Our Fellowman with Musical Inspiration."

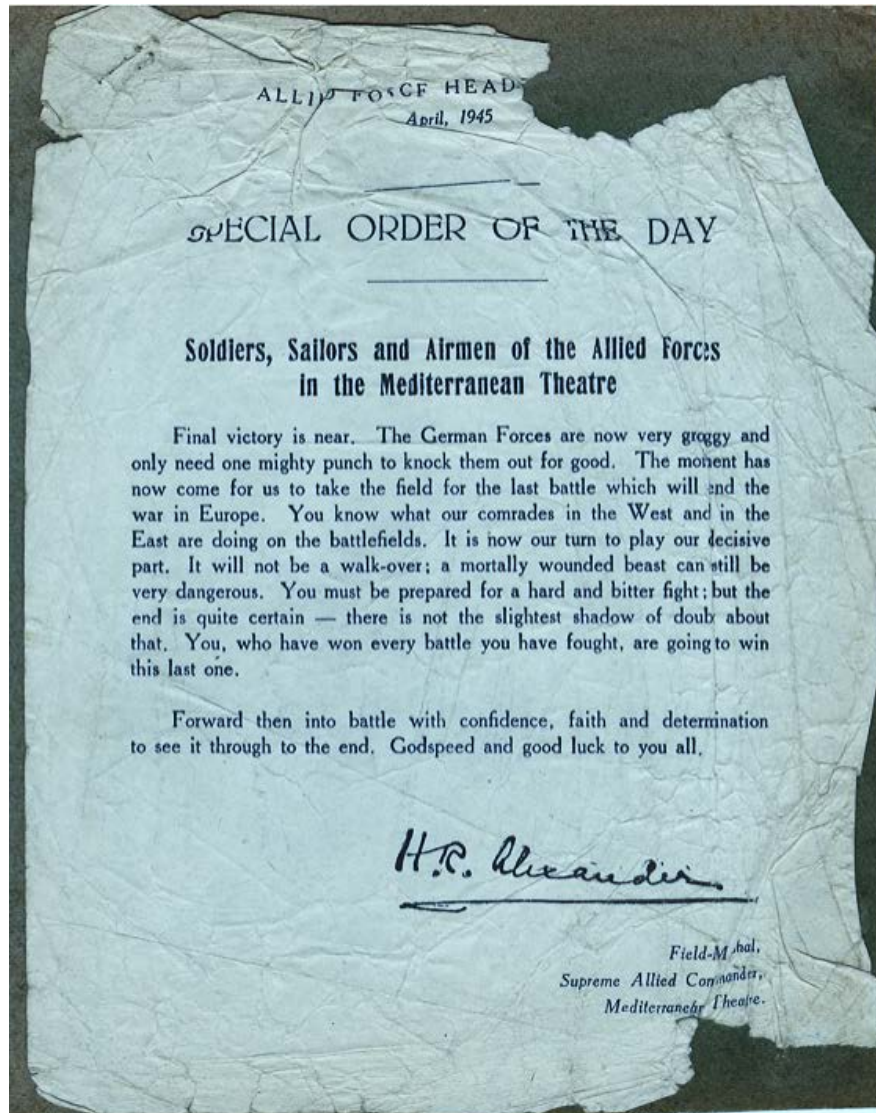
Our terms are in keeping with whatever is best for your next open date. Please write us for price, terms, or other information.

James Oliver Willis
"The Singing Soldier"



Entertainment for the Troops

All of my father's siblings were musicians. He played the tuba, but he was also honored to play taps for fallen soldiers.



Special Order of the Day, April 1945. The end was near.



For a third-grade show-and-tell, I asked my dad what each of these medals and patches meant. He patiently explained each one and waited while I clumsily drew them. This notebook paper itself is fifty years old.

Notes from the Archives

Army of the United States
SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

1. LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE NAME, SUFFIX
HOBART, ROBERT L.
2. GRADE
PVT
3. DATE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE
13 JUN 42
4. DATE OF SEPARATION
6 DEC 45
5. DATE OF REENTRY
6 DEC 45
6. PLACE OF BIRTH
CAMP ATTERBURY INDIANA
7. GRADE
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11. GRADE
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100. GRADE
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MILITARY EDUCATION
1. NAME OF SCHOOL—GRADE OR EQUIVALENT—DEGREE—DEGREE
ARMY ORDNANCE AIR FORCE SCHOOL ROME ITALY - AUTOMOTIVE MECHANICS 6 YRS

CIVILIAN EDUCATION
2. NAME OF SCHOOL—GRADE OR EQUIVALENT—DEGREE—DEGREE
CASS TECH HIGH SCH DETROIT MICHIGAN
ACADEMIC

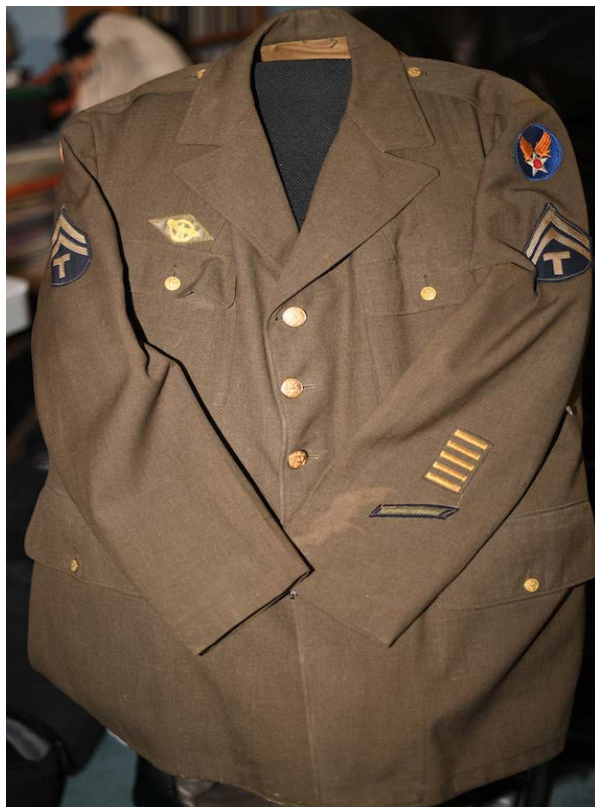
CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS
3. TITLE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER—INDUSTRY—OCCUPATION
MUSICIAN, INSTRUMENTAL
PLAYED 1ST TUBA IN A 40 PCE TUBA NYA CONCERT ORCHESTRA. ALSO PLAYED
IN A 25 PCE AMERICAN LEGION MARCHING BAND.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
4. NAME
NONE

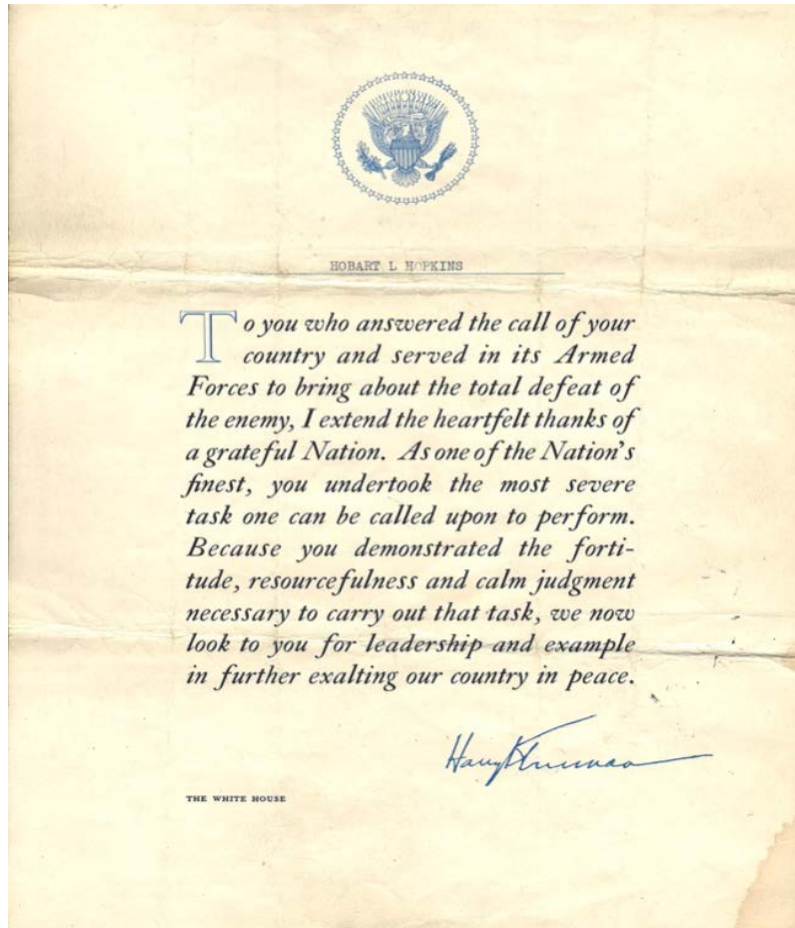
SIGNATURE OF PERSON WHO SUBMITTED
K W CROOK 1ST LT AC

Separation Qualification Papers.

The document denotes Hobart's musical experience. He was first Tuba in a forty piece concert orchestra and he played in a twenty-five piece American Legion Marching Band.



Pictured above is a dress jacket that belonged to Hobart Lay Hopkins. The upper patch on the left shoulder is known as the “Hap Arnold Wings” patch, denoting his position in the United States Army Air Force Service.



Letter of appreciation from President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972).



Left: Hobart Lay Hopkins, standing to the left with an unknown soldier, at the Colosseum in Rome, Italy. Approximately 1943.
Right: Cecelia Smith, his daughter, in 2008 standing in the same spot as her father.

When I first started working in 1982, I told my dad that I wanted to take him back to Italy to see the Colosseum again, this time as a tourist, without the atmosphere of war. He always just smiled. I'm not sure if he really wanted to go back there. Some sixty-five years later, I made the trip to Italy without him but was able to stand in nearly the same spot that he did. It was an honor to walk the same path, in the same footsteps in which my dad walked.

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Author Bios

Brittany Mondragon is a graduate student at California State University San Bernardino, earning a Master of Arts degree in History. Backed with a master's degree in Geographic Information Systems from the University of Redlands, Brittany concentrates on issues revolving around environmental history, empire, and colonialism, and commodity and trade histories. She has a particular passion for Trans-Atlantic and Caribbean history in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Upon graduation, she plans to teach at the community college level and begin pursuing a doctoral degree in history. She currently works at Mt. San Jacinto Community College under the Professional Development department. Apart from scholarly pursuits, Brittany enjoys devoting her extra time to hiking, painting artwork, and gardening. She would like to thank Dr. Jeremy Murray and the editors on her pieces for all their support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the editing process.



Notes from the Archives

Cecelia M. Smith was born and raised in Los Angeles County and attended Howard University after high school. She relocated to San Bernardino County as an adult and resumed her pursuit for higher education at Chaffey College, eventually obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in History at California State University at San Bernardino in 2013. After a hiatus, she returned to CSUSB and enrolled in the inaugural class of the Master of Arts in History program. Her focus is on African-American Women's history. She plans on graduating in 2022, and engaging in further research and writing. She retired from the City of Los Angeles as a dispatcher for the police department after 35 ½ years of service. Cecelia is a breast cancer survivor, the mother of two children, Alycia and Cameron, and currently resides in Fontana with her husband, Lydell, and dog, Ruckus.



Sarah West is a graduate student in the inaugural Master of Arts in History program at California State University, San Bernardino. Her main interests and areas of focus are the Civil War and Reconstruction era in United States history. Following graduation, Sarah intends to pursue a doctoral degree in order to follow her dreams of becoming a college professor and reading old documents in the archives. She is committed to the continued research into the correlation between racism and classism in the American South. Outside of the classroom Sarah slings T-shirts at rock concerts, participates in historical reenactment and volunteers at a Pit Bull rescue.



Jacquelyne R. Anton is a student in California State University San Bernardino's Master of Arts in History program. Her research interests lie in race and ethnicity in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, specifically in New Mexico. Upon graduation, Jacquelyne will go on to get a doctoral degree in history and become a college professor where she will further her research. Jacquelyne is passionate about issues such as gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, mental health, and racial inequality.

History in the Making

Travels through History

California's Guiding Lights: A Lighthouse Journey Along the Coast

By Cecelia Smith

California's coastline stretches 3427 miles and has some of the most diverse scenery that one can experience.¹ The drive from its southernmost city, Imperial Beach in San Diego County, to the city at its northern border, Crescent City in Del Norte County, is over 850 miles and can take as many as two to three days to traverse. Travelling along Highway 1, also known as the Pacific Coast Highway, reveals any number of quaint towns situated at the edge of pristine beaches, habitats for elephant seals, sea lions, and otters, and the enormity of towering ancient redwoods. The winding highway offers astonishing views of craggy, black rock formations repeatedly assailed by voluminous crashing waves. Famous beaches, such as Huntington, Venice, and Half Moon Bay, host hundreds of imitation-rubber-clad bodies, challenging the waters, oftentimes regardless of the weather or the condition of the surf. This is the dichotomy of California's coastline: its beauty and

¹ "Shorelines.Pdf," NOAA Office for Coastal Management, accessed December 16, 2020, <https://coast.noaa.gov/data/docs/states/shorelines.pdf>. This data is from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Shoreline mileage of the outer coast includes offshore islands, sounds, bays, rivers, and creeks to the head of the tidewater or to a point where tidal waters narrow to a width of 100 feet. A second method for measuring comes from the Congressional Research Service and calculates the coastline to be 840 miles. Due to the placement of several lighthouses, the NOAA data is used.

treachery, its sandy beaches and rocky terrain, its quiet giants and hostile wildlife.

There are numerous places of interest for tourists and residents alike to visit on the western edge of California, but perhaps the most intriguing are the lesser-known detours to the lighthouses along its coast. The development of a system of lighthouses stretching along the coastline paralleled the growth of California's economy, beginning with the Gold Rush at Sutter's Mill in 1848. However, as the economy grew, their usefulness diminished as it became cost-prohibitive to maintain the structures as they were designed. Damage from earthquakes, automation, and superior maritime technology ensured the slow and continued demise of these pharoses. While the growth of California's economy was ultimately boosted by this infrastructure, it was time and the rise of technology that decisively set about the decline of the lighthouses.

The image of these buildings stirs up strong symbolism. Standing between the two opposing forces of nature, land, and sea, the structures evoke underlying emotions. The images of iconic lighthouses are illustrated in art pieces, branded on documents, and reproduced on cups, key chains, and knickknacks. Maine, Florida, Connecticut, Washington, and Rhode Island are some of the states that have featured lighthouses on their license plates, perhaps attempting to convey any number of symbolic meanings, including safety and strength.²

There is also a bit of a romantic aura surrounding these structures that garners attention. The sounds and smells of the ocean, the gentle clamor of seagulls, or the far-off bellowing of a passing whale all converge to offer an impression of an adventurous life for a lighthouse keeper. It summons a postcard picture of a tall, columnar structure, plastered against a messy sky, moored to a rugged coastline, with white picket fences that line a pathway directed towards its entrance, and rows of smaller

² Ray Jones, *Lighthouse Encyclopaedia: The Definitive Reference* (New Kingstown: Globe Pequot, 2017).

buildings standing like sentries. This image of a lighthouse is that of a classic, New England-style building, and it is replicated in a variety of structures, from faux restaurant facades to office spaces in storage facilities.

The allure of the lighthouse has even infiltrated the gaming world; lighthouses are mentioned in the popular Japanese anime game Pokémon, which has several lighthouse stages and even an entire episode called Mystery of the Lighthouse.³ It is perhaps an homage to the island of Japan, itself home to sixty-seven historical, functioning, and actively used lighthouses.⁴

But lighthouses also serve as testaments to loneliness as they force isolation from society in what might seem to be an endless confinement. Movies such as *The Monster of Piedras Blancas* (1959) or *The Lighthouse* (2019) reinforce the idea of mystery but also present an image of horror, and insanity from living a life of solitude.⁵ There are many examples of movies and literature, as well as commercial advertisements, that feature these structures, but notice that it is always the tall, slender, elegant lighthouse that is showcased, not a squat, concrete, or skeletal structure, as this would not fit the perception.⁶

³ “The Official Pokémon Website | Pokemon.Com | Explore the World of Pokémon,” accessed December 19, 2020, <https://www.pokemon.com/us/>.

⁴ “Historical Lighthouses of Japan,” Tokokai, accessed December 19, 2020, <https://www.tokokai.org/en/historical-lighthouses-japan/>.

⁵ *The Monster of Piedras Blancas*, directed by Irvin Berwick (Hollywood, CA: Vanwick Productions, 1959); *The Lighthouse*, directed by Robert Eggers (New York: A24 Films, 2019).

⁶ Some examples of the use of these tall, slender lighthouses for companies and commercial advertisements include mixed martial arts and fitness facilities, insurance companies, photo studios, and Macy’s department store. See, “Lighthouse - The Perfect Gift Brings People Together | Macy’s,” YouTube, 2:10, December 5, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TgqEjOz9zs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TgqEjOz9zs;); Safe Passage Urns, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://safepassageurns.com>.

California's History: The Coastline and the Economy

Before statehood was granted in 1850, the California territory had been home to numerous Indigenous people (also known as Native Californians), explored by Europeans, colonized by the Spanish, and occupied by Mexico.⁷ Russia even maintained Fort Ross, located approximately three hours north of San Francisco, in the early nineteenth century as a Russian-American settlement. It was the site of California's first windmills and shipbuilding facilities.⁸ Ultimately, Mexico ceded California to the United States after the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, on February 2, 1848.⁹

There were numerous ways to approach, explore, or move around the California territory, including crossing the land by the burgeoning railway system, wagons, horseback, or even walking. The ocean was also a viable means of transportation. Of course, there was an exchange of goods and commodities before California procured statehood, so this is not to imply that there had not been some type of economic activity occurring. Ladened vessels often brought people and supplies to the region's missions. Contact between the Indigenous peoples, Spain, Mexico, and China, saw the trading of animal furs, whaling products, lumber, and various other essentials. Sea otters, for example, whose pelts were extremely valuable, were nearly exhausted, all in the name of the fur trade.

⁷ "List of Federally-Recognized Tribes in CA | Links and Resources," Indian Health Service: The Federal Health Program for American Indians and Alaska Natives, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.ihs.gov/california/index.cfm/tribal-consultation/resources-for-tribal-leaders/links-and-resources/list-of-federally-recognized-tribes-in-ca/?mobileFormat=0>.

⁸ "Fort Ross SHP: A Russian Fort by the Sea," California Department of Parks and Recreation, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.parks.ca.gov/>.

⁹ "Our Documents - Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)," www.ourdocuments.gov, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=26>.

Because there was trade, there had also been a large amount of maritime activity before California's statehood, however, there are no records of designated lighthouses that guided those ships. Perhaps there was only little sailing at night, or large fires were lit on the shorelines, but it is unclear how or if the coasts were illuminated during this pre-statehood era. Problematic were the waters of the Pacific Ocean which saw numerous shipwrecks, loss of life, and the destruction of merchandise. As the population grew, maritime activity increased. It would be necessary to properly define the California coastline if commerce and travel were to be successful, and at this point, the new American government stepped in.

Long before the first lighthouse was lit on the West Coast, captains' ship logs detailed the treacherous journeys they faced when sailing to California. In 1775, on the ship, *The Santiago*, Captain Heceta (1743–1807) discovered cloudy weather and dense fog rendered his travels unsafe.¹⁰ Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832–1918), whose writings provide detailed accounts of California's history, reported it in the following manner: “re-entering the California waters on the 21st, the weather being cloudy, little was learned of the coast. Passing Cape Mendocino during the night of the 25th, he wished to enter San Francisco, but a dense fog rendered it unsafe to make the attempt, though he sighted the Farallones.”¹¹ This minor entry also confirms that, at this point in time and place, the contours of the coastline were not completely known; without visibility, Captain Heceta would not be able to maneuver these waters safely.

Other ships did not bear such luck. On the jagged coast off Point Montara near the San Francisco Bay, there were nearly ninety shipwrecks by the mid-nineteenth century. In 1868 a Pacific

¹⁰ “Heceta House: A History and Architectural Survey,” accessed April 30, 2021, <http://npshistory.com/publications/usfs/region/6/siuslaw/heceta-house/sec1-1.htm>.

¹¹ Hubert Howe Bancroft, “The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft,” The Online Books Page (San Francisco, late nineteenth century), accessed December 16, 2020, <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/metabook?id=worksbancroft>.

mail steamship, the *Colorado*, carrying hundreds of passengers, wrecked along a rocky edge, and an outcry grew to install a fog signal.¹² There are long, detailed lists and stories of shipwrecks along the coast that depict various reasons for their demise, including stormy weather, fog, and groundings.¹³ Even today several beaches have remnants of rusting iron, or eroding wooden ships accessible to visitors; divers, too, are able to seek out the last resting places of many of these vessels.

According to the *Encyclopedia of Civil War Shipwrecks*, California was vital to the Union effort in the war, supplying gold to help fuel the Union economy.¹⁴ This is an important detail to consider, specifically because it denotes the growing influence of California as a state. Safe passage was critical to California as well as to the entirety of the United States, which ensured that the economy and lighthouse infrastructure found themselves on equal footing.

Lists of the wrecks of these vessels, including passenger indexes and details of cargo attest to how important the efforts were to light the coastline. There cannot be a blanket statement that indicates lighthouses ensured there were no more shipwrecks. It can, however, be concluded that lighthouses were a definite factor in guiding many more ships safely to harbor.

In 1848 the establishment of eight lighthouses along the West Coast was authorized by the Department of Commerce, and after the California coastline was surveyed, eventual placement of the first group of lights was approved.¹⁵ Secretary of the Treasury

¹² Betty S. Veronico, *Lighthouses of the Bay Area*, Images of America (San Francisco: Arcadia Pub, 2008).

¹³ California State Lands Commission, *California Shipwrecks*, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.slc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/AnnieESmale.pdf>.

¹⁴ W. Craig Gaines, *Encyclopedia of Civil War Shipwrecks* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Dennis Noble, "California Naval History: A Brief History of U.S. Coast Guard Operations in California," accessed December 16, 2020, <http://www.militarymuseum.org/USCGinCA.html>.

Alexander Hamilton (1755/57–1804) was the first superintendent of lighthouses, and responsible for the maintenance of lighthouses, buoys, and other aids to navigation. The United States Lighthouse Service was created under the direction of the Department of Commerce, and in 1939, it consolidated its duties with that of the Coast Guard.¹⁶

Lighthouse History, Structure, and Lighting

Lighthouses have been in existence since antiquity. The Lighthouse of Alexandria, also known as the Pharos of Alexandria, was built during the reign of Ptolemy II (280–247 BCE). It was documented as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.¹⁷ Even during those ancient times, there were a variety of structures that comprised these beacons, and various methods to light the way, one of which included building fires that burned whale oil or kerosene. Often, they were primitive structures, but as technology progressed, so too did the lighthouse design, never straying far from the original intent.

Planning the design and placement of a lighthouse structure is dependent upon a multitude of factors. The structures can be categorized by the construction method, shape, building materials, or even foundation types, for example, terrestrial or aquatic. There are many materials used for building, including wood, masonry, concrete, cast iron, and skeletal structures.

The paint designs used on lighthouse towers are effective in identifying locations along the coast. No two towers are painted in the same manner. Sometimes diagonal stripes, diamonds, or spirals, all called daymarks, were painted down the body of the tower, or a different color of paint was used on the top of the lighthouse. Even if two structures had the same black diagonal

¹⁶ “Consolidation of the Lighthouse Service with the Coast Guard: July 1, 1939,” *Naval History Blog*, July 1, 2012, <https://www.navalhistory.org/2012/07/01/consolidation-of-the-lighthouse-service-with-the-coast-guard-july-1-1939>.

¹⁷ Veronico.

stripes, there was still something different about them to visually distinguish one from the other. None of the lighthouses on the West Coast today have painted stripes, but they all have different shapes and signals to distinguish them from each other.

In addition to lighthouses, lightships, including one in the San Francisco Bay, were set afloat in the waters as an alternative to the land structures when it was not feasible to build a lighthouse. They were a convenient form of light as they were moveable from one station to the other. Light Vessel (LV) 70 was the first lightship called *San Francisco* and was stationed 8.6 miles west of the Golden Gate Bridge, marking the main shipping channel into the San Francisco Bay.¹⁸ Foghorns were also installed at some locations where visibility was severely restricted. These devices sound hazard warnings for vessels on the seas or advise of rocky coastlines when the fog is extreme enough to inhibit the light from lighthouses.

Perhaps the most important technology developed for lighthouses was the light itself. Oftentimes the quality was insufficient and the need for a better application arose. Whereas fires may have lit the way during antiquity, glass lenses, incandescent bulbs, and electricity eventually became the mechanics used in these structures.

The Fresnel lens, designed by Augustin-Jean Fresnel (1788–1827) and completed in 1822, was a major step forward in lighthouse lighting technology. The lens itself is a beautifully constructed device, composed of hundreds of pieces of glass that is lit up from within, for example, by burning whale oil. The placement of the glass pieces in a barrel shape intensifies candlepower and focuses a beam of light that can be broadcast miles out into the ocean; timing mechanisms ensure the light can flash in a variety of combinations, helping to distinguish one lighthouse from the other. Varying sizes of the lenses are called orders. They range from a first order lens to an eighth order. One of the largest first order lenses stood ten to twelve feet tall,

¹⁸ Veronico.

measured more than six feet in diameter (interior), and was made of more than one thousand glass prisms weighing as much as 12,800 pounds. It used four to five wicks and burned more than twenty-six ounces of fuel an hour. It was visible for more than twenty nautical miles.¹⁹



Figure 1. Third order Fresnel lens from the Point San Luis Lighthouse. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.²⁰

Lighthouse Keepers

The lighthouse keepers have distinct duties, those of which offer no romance or mystery. Structures attached to the lighthouse, or built alongside, are usually homes for the lighthouse keeper. Some

¹⁹ Veronico.

²⁰ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

facilities allowed for the keeper and his entire family to reside, including his small children, and some facilities could house several families. Oftentimes there was a head keeper and an assistant, but depending on the duties at a particular lighthouse there could be several assistant keepers.

Normally thought of as a masculine job, visitors to lighthouses across America are often surprised to learn that there were many women lighthouse keepers. Women took over after the death of a spouse, and they were expected to perform their duties without any exceptions. It was also the lighthouse keeper's job to maintain the actual structure, buildings, and also assist with any rescues from shipwrecks that occurred in the vicinity. In a review of the book, *Women Who Kept the Lights: An Illustrated History of Female Lighthouse Keepers*, historian Janet L. Coryell writes that,

Many served after husbands or fathers had died in service, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century. The job was lonely, dangerous and exhausting. Male or female, the lighthouse keeper had to be a good housekeeper, cleaning the lenses, maintaining the supplies of fuel and refueling reservoirs, ensuring that the light and fog horn or bell were always functioning, particularly during stormy weather when they were most needed and most dangerously maintained.²¹

The first female lighthouse keeper on record is Hannah Thomas, who took over a Massachusetts lighthouse in 1775 after her husband left to fight with the colonial army. She maintained two lights, even surviving a skirmish between a British warship and the militia who were protecting the lighthouse station.²²

²¹ Janet L. Coryell, *Michigan Historical Review* 20, no. 2 (1994): 212-13. Accessed June 3, 2021. [doi:10.2307/20173472](https://doi.org/10.2307/20173472).

²² Patricia Majher, *Ladies of the Lights: Michigan Women in the U. S. Lighthouse Service* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

In 1855 and 1856, the California coast was becoming illuminated. Ten lighthouses came online in those two years, two more than were first authorized. Noting the placement of the lighthouses, it is easy to determine which areas in the ocean were the most detrimental for ships, and which ports were important and beneficial for the economy.

The Lighthouses

Alcatraz Island Light – The First of the California Lighthouses

San Francisco is known for many things, especially earthquakes and fires, but perhaps its fog maintains the most consistently ominous infamy. Chuante Howard, a former student at the University of San Francisco, described it in the following manner: “It is like a rolling grey carpet that simply consumes everything and comes over the city like a giant wave.”²³ Imagine an 1850s San Francisco with less of the city illuminated, and one can easily understand the necessity for a lighthouse to light the way for ships through the dangerous waters.

The importance of placing a lighthouse in the San Francisco Bay was recognized by the sheer volume of maritime activity generated by the gold rush at Sutter’s Mill. Therefore, Alcatraz Island Light became the first lighthouse on the California coast, erected in 1853. The lighthouse was not lit until 1854 after a new Fresnel lens was installed. A fixed, third-order lens powered by whale oil, was lit by head keeper Michael Cassin for the first time on June 1, 1854. The beam could be seen for up to nineteen miles.²⁴

The journey to the infamous Alcatraz Island is a tourist boat ride across approximately one mile of, at most times, choppy waters. In the distance looms the famous Golden Gate Bridge,

²³ Chuante Howard (former student, University of San Francisco), in discussion with the author, December 2020.

²⁴ Veronico.

which itself was completed in 1937; its rust-orange hue often shrouded in fog. Visitors disembark from crowded boats and can begin the hike to the top of the hill where the current lighthouse sits.

Alcatraz Island was initially used as a military facility and prison, designated so by President Millard Fillmore (1800–1874) in 1850.²⁵ The initial lighthouse was a short tower protruding from the center of the roof of the keeper's house, but when the federal penitentiary was ultimately built to replace the military facility, it was determined that a new tower should also replace the older structure. The new tower soared to eighty-four feet and the old keeper's residence was demolished. The new lighthouse's Fresnel lens was lit in 1909.

After earthquakes, fires, a stint as a federal prison, and finally a Native American occupation, the facility was in ruins and scheduled for demolition.²⁶ Alcatraz Island was eventually turned over to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, a group that maintains and refurbishes the facility. The Alcatraz lighthouse is not open to the public, but private tours can be arranged, and visitors can stand right next to the tower itself. Several buildings are in ruins across the island, but the prison facility is open for tours.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Alcatraz Island Occupation (1969-1971)," *A Radical Guide* (blog), accessed January 2, 2021, <https://www.radical-guide.com/listing/alcatraz-island-occupation-1969-1971/>. Native American occupation occurred between 1969-1971 when 89 American Indians who called themselves Indians of All Tribes (IOAT) occupied the island under the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868).



Figure 2. The lighthouse on the Island of Alcatraz. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.²⁷

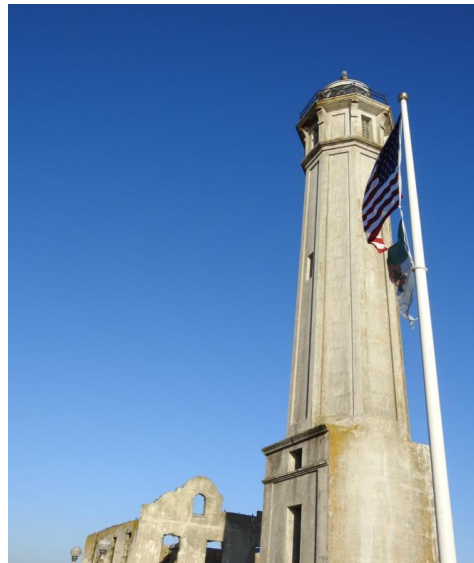


Figure 3. Alcatraz Light up close (San Francisco, CA). This structure was lit in 1909. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.²⁸

²⁷ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

²⁸ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

To underscore the importance of the San Francisco Bay, Alcatraz is not the only lighthouse. Lime Point and Fort Point are two smaller structures to the north and south ends of the narrowest opening of the Bay. Mile Rocks Lighthouse is just about a mile outside the entrance, while Southampton Shoal, East Brother, and Carquinez Strait are all further inland. The Relief Lightship, WLV 605, was decommissioned and remains anchored in the harbor, used now as a floating classroom. Farallon Island Lighthouse is about thirty miles west of the San Francisco Bay and is located on the tallest of the group of islands in this area of the ocean.

Point Bonita Lighthouse

Marking an entrance to the San Francisco Bay, Point Bonita Lighthouse was founded in 1853, but not lit until 1855. Its original lighthouse was a fifty-six-foot conical brick tower situated 260 feet above sea level. Alongside the tower was a one-and-a-half-story brick and stone cottage. But as with the lighthouse in San Diego (Old Point Loma), the fog hovered over the structure, most often rendering it useless. A different location was selected, however, there were still problems securing the structure and providing better access. In 1876, Chinese workmen responsible for the Sierra tunnels of the Transcontinental Railroad were brought in to dig a 118-foot tunnel, by hand, through the rock that would eventually lead out to the tip of Point Bonita.²⁹

Today, visitors still access the lighthouse by walking through the tunnel. They then must cross a small suspension bridge, which had been built over a chasm that had developed from erosion and earthquake damage, separating the lighthouse from the land. Point Bonita was the last manned lighthouse on the California coast.³⁰

²⁹ Kraig Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends," accessed December 29, 2020, <https://www.lighthousefriends.com/>.

³⁰ Ibid.



Figure 4. Point Bonita Light (San Francisco, CA). First lit in 1855. Courtesy of Daphne M. Howard.³¹

Point Loma Lighthouse (Old and New)

The southern portion of California also required an establishment of lights, as its stretch of coastline featured jagged rocks and natural bays. Difficulties abounded with the development of San Diego as a port city, however, after the passage of time, San Diego became the most important city on the southern border. In 1855, prescient visionaries saw the importance of the location, and San Diego was awarded a lighthouse.³²

Today there are two lighthouses in San Diego: Old Point Loma and New Point Loma. Old Point Loma was lit in 1855, some 422 feet above sea level.³³ The lighthouse was styled as a house with the tower centered towards the middle. There were several outbuildings alongside the main house. Unfortunately, the location selected was a veritable disaster. Fog and low clouds often

³¹ Photograph courtesy of Daphne M. Howard.

³² Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends."

³³ "The Lighthouses of Point Loma - Cabrillo National Monument," US National Park Service, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/cabr/learn/historyculture/the-lighthouses-of-point-loma.htm>.

obscured the light causing it to be mostly ineffective. The decision was made to establish a new lighthouse much lower towards the ocean. The second structure is an iron skeleton that sits on a bluff just below the location of the original house. The new light was lit in 1891.³⁴

Unique to San Diego, both lighthouses remain. The old lighthouse has been refurbished and is accessible to visitors. Walking up a short hill one can see the inside of the lighthouse just as it was 166 years ago. The view is spectacular from this point. The Old Point Loma Lighthouse, though not functional, sits on its bluff above the New Point Loma Lighthouse, almost as a keeper watching over its charge.



Figure 5. Point Loma Lighthouse (old) in San Diego, California. Constructed with a lighthouse keeper residence and lighthouse structure protruding from the middle. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.³⁵

³⁴ Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends."

³⁵ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.



Figure 6. The second structure at Point Loma Lighthouse is an iron skeleton that sits on a bluff below the original house. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.³⁶

Battery Point—The Northernmost Lighthouse on the California Coast/St. George’s Reef—The Most Expensive and Difficult to Construct

The ocean is a constant companion to the Pacific Coast Highway near the border of California and Oregon, except for a few miles inland. Coming from inland, on twisting and turning roads that are occasionally hidden amongst giant trees, you arrive at Crescent City, where two lighthouses reside: Battery Point and Saint George’s Reef.

Battery Point Lighthouse was first activated in 1856, one of the ten lighthouses lit during the prolific two-year effort undertaken to build lighthouses. Crescent City is very near ancient redwood forests; lumber ships were the main traffic in the harbor. Perched upon the edge of an isthmus, the lighthouse can be accessed by walking across the narrow stretch of land to reach it. However, attention must be paid to high tides, as visitors can become trapped when the isthmus becomes an island.

³⁶ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.



Figure 7. Battery Point Lighthouse at Crescent City. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.³⁷

The Battery Point coastline is covered with jagged rocks. In addition, six to eight miles off-shore is a submerged volcanic mountain. It was dubbed the “Dragon Rocks” by British explorer George Vancouver (1757–1798) in 1792 due to the obscuring of the rocky area by a thick, smoke-like spray. After the shipwreck of the passenger steamer *Brother Jonathan*, which saw the loss of almost two hundred passengers, the urgency to install a lighthouse grew. Congress appropriated funding and construction began in 1881.³⁸

The major difference between this lighthouse and many others was its location. St. George’s Reef Lighthouse was to be built atop volcanic rock, miles from the coastline, and amid turbulent waters. A ship was moored to the rock to house the construction workers as they worked on the lighthouse.

St. George’s Reef Lighthouse is one of the greatest building feats among American lighthouses. This is due to the volcanic rock

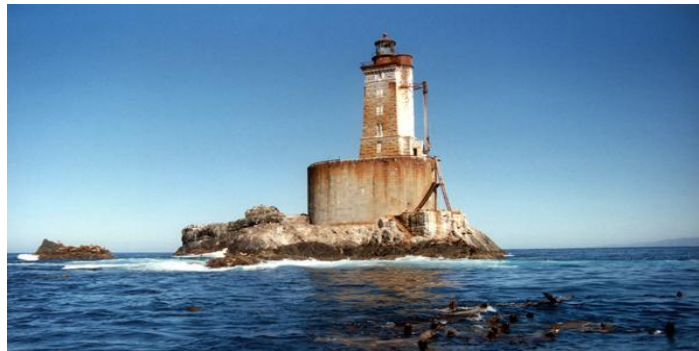
³⁷ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

³⁸ “Legendary Lighthouses: Great Lighthouses,” PBS, accessed December 30, 2020, <http://www.pbs.org/legendarylighthouses/html/calgl.html>.

on which it was constructed, the cost, and the isolation of its keepers. At the end of its construction period, eleven years later in 1892, the total cost for the lighthouse was \$704,633, the equivalent of nearly one hundred million dollars today. It is the most expensive lighthouse ever built.³⁹

The ferocity of the water at this specific point also ensures it is one of the more dangerous places for a lighthouse keeper to live. The winter of 1952 proved to be one of the harshest on record as 160-foot waves swept over the lighthouse. One of the more tragic occurrences to take place in its history happened when three Coast Guardsmen were drowned as a wave capsized their boat as they prepared to leave. Another keeper had to be removed due to a mental breakdown.⁴⁰

This structure is difficult but not impossible to photograph, however, you must have a powerful telephoto lens and be positioned in the right area on a clear day. St. George's Reef was rescued by a preservation society. Their ultimate goal is to provide access to the public. Currently, helicopter flights to the station are available.



*Figure 8. St. George's Reef Lighthouse. Courtesy of Kraig Anderson.*⁴¹

³⁹ "Legendary Lighthouses: Great Lighthouses."

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Photograph courtesy of Kraig Anderson, "California Lighthouses," accessed December 28, 2020, <https://www.lighthousefriends.com/pull-state.asp?state=CA&Submit=Go>.

Piedras Blancas – The Lighthouse with No Top

The lighthouse at Piedras Blancas has an unusual look. It is missing about thirty feet of its top. Piedras Blancas is located near the city of San Simeon, along the central coast of California. The lighthouse is next to an elephant seal sanctuary and on clear days visitors can sometimes catch sight of passing whales. This city became a whaling port, along with lumber, produce, and other goods. Otters frequented the area but were massively hunted for their fur.

Approval for the lighthouse was granted in 1872 and the structure was built and finally lit in 1875.⁴² To visit this lighthouse, you must plan ahead and purchase tickets. The facility is only accessible during specific hours and tours are led by docents. At a parking lot about a mile away from the lighthouse, you are met and led in a caravan onto the property.

The United States Bureau of Land Management owns the property, and the Piedras Blancas Light Station Association was formed to raise money to preserve the structure. They plan to restore the top floors to the lighthouse.

⁴² Jeremy D'Entremont, *The Lighthouse Handbook: West Coast* (Kennebunkport, ME: Cider Mill Press, 2016).



Figure 9. Piedras Blancas Lighthouse. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.⁴³

Pidgeon Point Lighthouse

One of the most picturesque lighthouses along the coastline is Pidgeon Point Lighthouse in Pescadero, California. This lighthouse shares the title of tallest on the West Coast with Point Arena Lighthouse. Both structures have 115-foot towers. It originally contained a first order Fresnel lens made up of 1,008 separate prisms. The four ranch-style houses that now sit on the property were built by the Coast Guard in 1960 after the original buildings were torn down. The four structures today are leased to American Youth Hostels, Inc., for use as economical, dormitory-style accommodations. The facility was transferred to the authority of the California State Parks and Peninsula Open Space Trust in 2004, and funds are being raised for restoration purposes.⁴⁴

⁴³ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

⁴⁴ Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends."



Figure 10. Pidgeon Point Lighthouse. One of the tallest remaining on the West Coast, it is located in the area of Half Moon Bay. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.⁴⁵

Santa Cruz Light – Santa Cruz Breakwater Light – The Last Built

The Santa Cruz Light and the Santa Cruz Breakwater light are approximately two miles apart. The first to be built was the Santa Cruz Light which was authorized in 1852 but not begun until after the Civil War (1861–1865) due to disputes over land ownership. It was finally lit in 1870 with a fifth order Fresnel lens and a lard-oil lamp.⁴⁶ This lighthouse sits in Monterey Bay which had become a busy port for ships taking on loads of redwood and other agricultural products in the nineteenth century. The lighthouse has been refurbished and was dedicated as the Mark Abbott Memorial Lighthouse, in honor of a surfer who lost his life in this area. The facility was repurposed as a surfing museum.⁴⁷

The Santa Cruz Breakwater Light was the last official lighthouse to be constructed along the coast and sits at the edge of Santa Cruz harbor. The spot had been the site of other styles of lighthouses, including a box structure, a cylinder nicknamed “the

⁴⁵ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

⁴⁶ Anderson, “California Lighthouses.”

⁴⁷ Anderson, “Lighthouse Friends.”

water heater,” and finally a simple pipe before it was replaced by the current structure. It was completed in 1964 and refurbished in 2002. This lighthouse is also known as the Walton Lighthouse, due to major donations from Charles Walton of Los Gatos, and dedicated to his brother, Derek, a merchant marine lost at sea during World War II.⁴⁸



Figure 11. Santa Cruz Light. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Anderson, “California Lighthouses.”

⁴⁹ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.



Figure 12. Santa Cruz Breakwater Light. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.⁵⁰



Figure 13. The Lighthouse at Point San Luis. This structure is a tower built next to the actual keeper's Victorian, two-story residence. A narrow stairway leads to the top where the fourth order Fresnel lens was mounted. The light was first lit in 1870. This lighthouse sits on Pacific Gas and Electric Company property which operates the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Generating Facility.⁵¹ Visitors must take a tram to get to the lighthouse. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

⁵⁰ Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

⁵¹ Anderson, "California Lighthouses." Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.



Figure 14. Point Fermin Light (San Pedro, CA). First lit in 1874. The lighthouse guards the harbor at San Pedro. The original facility had a chicken coop. The lighthouse is surrounded by a beautiful park, accessible to the public. It is maintained by the City of Los Angeles but managed by the Point Fermin Historical Society. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.⁵²



Figure 15. Anacapa Light (Channel Islands, CA). First lit in 1912. Visitors to Anacapa Light must take a boat ride to the islands. It is approximately twelve miles off the coast of California, and the boat ride takes an hour. The islands have been designated as Channel Islands National Park. Courtesy of Cecelia Smith.⁵³

⁵² Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends." Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

⁵³ Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends." Photograph courtesy of Cecelia Smith.

The Demise of the Lighthouse

The demise of lighthouses occurred for a variety of reasons, including the passage of time, natural disasters, and the progression of technology. Corrosion from saltwater and destabilization from earthquakes are natural nemeses that saw numerous lighthouses crumble.

An example was the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. This event struck on April 18, 1906, at 5:12 a.m., the three keepers at Point Arena Lighthouse and their families were forced outside when the house they occupied began to break apart. A black bear charged towards the group as one of the keepers ran back inside to grab a rifle. He managed to kill the bear, but they were left without a residence and had to make do with temporary shelter. The keepers wrote in the station's logbook:

A heavy blow came quick and heavy, accompanied by a heavy report. The tower quivered for a few seconds, went far over to the north, came back, and then swung north again, repeating this several times. Immediately after came rapid and violent vibrations rendering the tower apart, the sections grinding and grating upon each other; while the lenses, reflectors, etc., in the lantern were shaken from their settings and fell in a shower upon the iron floor.⁵⁴

There are other examples of earthquakes destroying or damaging these structures, such as the Mare Island Lighthouse in 1886 and Alcatraz Lighthouse in 1906, both in San Francisco.⁵⁵ The replacement of many of the lighthouses and buildings along

⁵⁴ "Lighthouses@Lighthouse Digest ... Earthquake Wrecks Point Arena Lighthouse," Lighthouse Digest, accessed January 3, 2021, <http://www.lighthousedigest.com/digest/StoryPage.cfm?StoryKey=4473>.

⁵⁵ Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends."

the California coast was due to earthquake damage, going as far back as the late nineteenth century. Some received enough damage to be structurally compromised, while others lost lighthouse towers or other vital parts of the buildings. It was and continues to be costly to refurbish lighthouses, and many times they are left to ruin.⁵⁶ The Fresnel lens would require exceptional expertise to repair, and thus only a few of these beacons remain in service. Often, the lens itself was removed and became an established focal point in nearby museums. Ultimately, time has taken great tolls on many of these structures, seeing some in complete ruin; cracked facades, broken windows, crumbling, or completely rusted away are all part of their degradation.

The development of RADAR (Radio Detection And Ranging) and SONAR (Sound Navigation And Ranging) was a valuable and timely asset. Today's ships and other modes of transportation cannot function without them. A more recent technological advance was the implementation of the Global Positioning System or GPS. It is a satellite-based navigation system consisting nominally of twenty-four satellites. The space-based component of GPS functions 24 hours a day under any conditions. It was originally a military application, run by the United States Department of Defense, but was made available for civilian use in the 1980s.⁵⁷ It is these technological advances that have also rendered many lighthouses mere contingencies. With future technology including remotely operated vehicles, improved artificial intelligence, and autonomous ships, the existence of the

⁵⁶ Christina Caron, "True Cost of Buying a Cheap Lighthouse? That Should be Visible a Mile Away," *New York Times*, August 9, 2017, accessed May 1, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/09/us/buy-a-lighthouse-michigan-maryland.html>.

⁵⁷ "Global Positioning System History," NASA, accessed April 30, 2021, https://www.nasa.gov/directorates/heo/scan/communications/policy/GPS_History.html.

lighthouse is tenuous at best.⁵⁸ They have by no means been shut down completely, for ships do still follow the lights and foghorns. But with the rapid advancement in navigational technology, the hundreds of satellites in the sky, and new computer-aided programs, lighthouses are slowly becoming obsolete and often found in varying states of deterioration.

The lighthouse keeper also became obsolete over time as lighthouses were eventually automated. Most of California's lighthouses were automated in the 1970s, with the earliest, the concrete Santa Barbara Light, automated in 1928.⁵⁹ There is only one lighthouse in the United States that still retains a lighthouse keeper. A law was passed in 1989 that required the Boston Light in the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area to remain manned. It is the oldest continuously used and manned lighthouse in the country built in 1716, pre-dating the Revolutionary War (1775–1783). It has been moved, severely damaged by storms and fires, and blown up by the British, but it was rebuilt by Massachusetts in 1783 and has been a functioning feature ever since.⁶⁰

Photograph a lighthouse from far away and you are likely to capture a gorgeous scene, with what appears to be a flawless building resisting the forces of nature surrounded by blue waters churning and foaming against a dark, rocky coastline. But stand next to many of these structures and you will see the toll that time has taken. Check any listing of lighthouses for California and there are references to those structures that used to be, including places such as Ano Nuevo Light, Ballast Point Light, Humboldt Harbor Light, Mare Island Light, and Point Knox Light. Some of these places can be visited, but the most that visitors would see are

⁵⁸ Shannon Regan, "3 Technologies Transforming the Maritime Industry," Deep Trekker, accessed January 3, 2021, <https://www.deeptrekker.com/news/technologies-transforming-maritime>.

⁵⁹ Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends."

⁶⁰ "Boston Light - Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area."

rusted remnants or concrete moorings. Ballast Point Light, for example, is now the grounds of the Naval Base Point Loma.

Many lighthouse devotees travel all over the country and try to tour every one of these historic buildings. Lighthouse “passport” books from the United States Lighthouse Society allow visitors to obtain a stamp as a record that they have visited these places.⁶¹ As a result of this interest and enthusiasm, lighthouse preservation groups have grown. In 2000, Congress passed the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000 (NHLPA) which allows the United States Coast Guard to declare some historic lighthouses as excess and transfer them, at no cost, to federal agencies, state and local governments, non-profit corporations, educational agencies, and community development organizations.⁶² The groups must be financially stable, able to maintain the historic lighthouse station and must make it available for education, park, recreation, cultural, or historic preservation purposes for the general public.

Oftentimes when visiting these historic lighthouses, the non-profit organizations are attempting to raise money to restore the facility, or at least help maintain its upkeep. Docent-led tours are free or have a low cost for entry, and many of the sites run souvenir shops with images of the lighthouse on cups and keychains, along with a variety of informational books.

Conclusion

California would see the development of infrastructure, in the form of lighthouses, that paralleled the growth of its economy. The lighthouses along California’s Pacific coast would support the exploding maritime activity in its burgeoning ports. Were it not for

⁶¹ “U.S. Lighthouse Society’s Passport Program | US Lighthouse Society,” United States Lighthouse Society, accessed December 29, 2020, <https://uslhs.org/fun/passport-club>.

⁶² “National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act | Maritime Heritage Program,” National Parks Service: US Department of the Interior, accessed December 29, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/maritime/nhlpa/intro.htm>.

these lighthouses and the vigilance of its keepers, the foggy, treacherous waters along the coast would be remarkably difficult to traverse. The maritime activity helped to bring a populace, commerce, ideas, and innovations to and from this state, ultimately creating one of the largest economies on earth.

Today's economy is boosted by, among other things, agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and tourism. California is amongst the leaders of states with touristy destinations. Forward-thinking and progress ensure that it will remain a viable leader in economic growth. Visitors from all over the world come to see its famous attractions, as well as its natural beauty.

There are as many as forty-six (some lists catalog up to fifty) locations for lighthouses, including the thirteen spots around the San Francisco Bay, and seven structures that are no longer in existence.⁶³ There are thirty that are still standing. Some are still functioning and are automated. At least sixteen are available to visitors or can be viewed from a reasonable distance along the coast, and there are a few that have been renovated into bed and breakfast inns, still a viable support for the economy. A planned excursion along the coast and a detour to one of these artifacts would be a fitting homage to the lighthouse infrastructure, as well as honoring the memory of the men, women, and children who sometimes risked their lives in the name of securing the safety of thousands of ocean-bound mariners and passengers.

Visiting the lighthouses along the coast of California is like stepping into the past with both feet planted in the present. Stare at the structure with its rust stains and cracks in the façade, and you consider the havoc that time has wrought. Walk inside the lighthouse or the keeper's home, and you embrace an odd sense of nostalgia. Take the narrow, spiral staircase upward and you feel a kinship with the men and women who trudged these stairs numerous times a day. Consider the spot where a massive, beautiful lens once turned and you are impressed by the brilliance of Augustin-Jean Fresnel. Stand aloft looking outward across the

⁶³ Anderson, "Lighthouse Friends."

water and its beaches and you marvel at the wonderment and exquisite nature of the coastline of California.

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Author Bio

Cecelia M. Smith was born and raised in Los Angeles County and attended Howard University after high school. She relocated to San Bernardino County as an adult and resumed her pursuit for higher education at Chaffey College, eventually obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in History at California State University at San Bernardino in 2013. After a hiatus, she returned to CSUSB and enrolled in the inaugural class of the Master of Arts in History program. Her focus is on African-American Women's history. She plans on graduating in 2022, and engaging in further research and writing. She retired from the City of Los Angeles as a dispatcher for the police department after 35 ½ years of service. Cecelia is a breast cancer survivor, the mother of two children, Alycia and Cameron, and currently resides in Fontana with her husband, Lydell, and dog, Ruckus.



History in the Making

Reviews

The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost Its Treasures

By Fred R. De Leon

“In archaeology, you uncover the unknown. In diplomacy, you cover the known.”

– Thomas R. Pickering, Eighteenth United States Ambassador to the United Nations.¹

In *The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost Its Treasures*, author Justin M. Jacobs, professor of history at the American University and editor of *The Silk Road* journal, delves into the complexities of several archaeological expeditions in China in the early twentieth century. Jacobs relates to the reader how, for two decades, tens of thousands of ancient manuscripts and works of art were taken from northwestern China and deposited in museums abroad. Denunciations about these expeditions are seen as far back as the 1930s, where scholars at a government-funded research organization accused one prominent archaeologist, Marc Aurel Stein (1862-1943), of accomplishing nothing but a “plunder of our cultural artifacts.”² These accusations of “theft” continue in the

¹ “Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship,” Washington State University, accessed May 10, 2021, <https://distinguishedscholarships.wsu.edu/awards/picke>.

² Justin M. Jacobs, *The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost Its Treasures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 4.

present day through the protests of the People's Republic of China (PRC). However, do sources and witnesses of the early twentieth century prove such an unlawful taking of property through coercive or deceptive methods? Using unpublished documents of Western archaeologists and Chinese Confucian-educated officials, Jacobs re-examines many long-held beliefs about the European expeditions in China. He is also able to present many details previously hidden in the unpublished diaries of the participants. The details make for a compelling picture of a nuanced exchange of promises for valuable consideration.

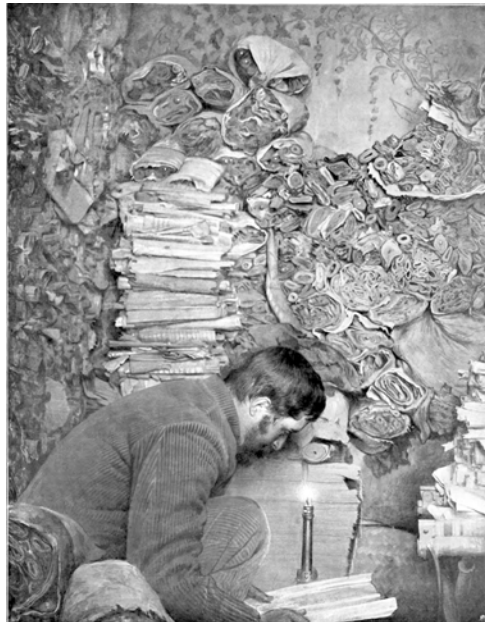


"The Official Far West China Xinjiang Map." Courtesy of Far West China: Exploring Xinjiang and the Silk Road.³

As Jacobs asserts, "from 1895 to 1915, a revolving door of Western explorers and archaeologists undertook expeditions to Xinjiang, where the arid climate of the Taklamakan Desert had managed to preserve the ruins of ancient migrants from India,

³ Permission to reprint with attributions. Image by Far West China, Exploring Xinjiang and the Silk Road, accessed May 6, 2021, <https://www.farwestchina.com/travel/xinjiang-maps>.

Iran, and Central Asia in conditions unparalleled anywhere else in the world outside of Egypt.”⁴ The artifacts and art recovered there are called Gandharan art, the remains of a civilization in Central Asia from the middle of the first millennium BCE to the beginning of the second millennium CE. Gandharan artifacts have Hellenistic influences and contain the “sacred histories of local gods, Buddhist sutras, rules for Manichaean priests, and Christian scripture.”⁵ The provinces of Xinjiang and neighboring Gansu are on China’s western frontier. *Xinjian* literally means “new territory” or “new frontier.”



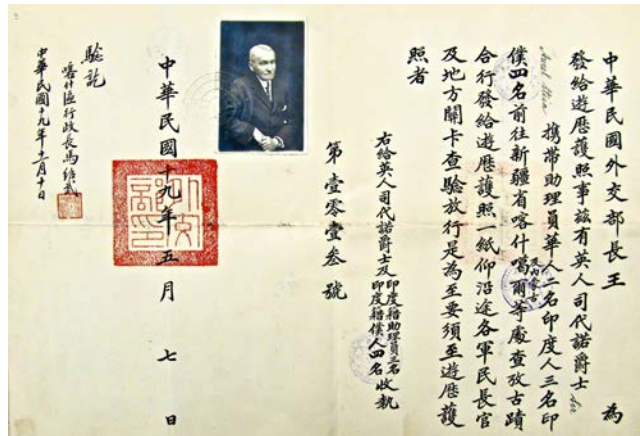
*Photograph of Paul Pelliot inside the Thousand-Buddha Caves, titled “Trois ans dans la haute Asiedated,” dated 1910. Courtesy of Justin Jacobs.*⁶

⁴ Jacobs, 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶ Reprinted with the kind permission of Justin Jacobs. Photograph of Paul Pelliot inside the Thousand-Buddha Caves, titled “Trois ans dans la haute Asiedated,” *L’Illustration* 135 (January-June 1910): 265.

The populations of these provinces tended to be diverse, including a substantial Muslim population. Besides a diverse local population, the provinces were governed by Confucian-educated Qing officials who had tremendous amounts of autonomy in the early twentieth century due to the declining influence of the imperial government in Beijing. Archaeologists like the British Aurel Stein, the Frenchman Paul Pelliot (1878–1945), the German Albert von Le Coq (1860–1930), and the American Ellsworth Huntington (1876–1947) immersed themselves in this frontier world, completely removed from the nationalist paradigm that shapes our world today.



"Passport for Stein's Fourth Expedition to Xinjiang," dated May 1930. Courtesy of the British Academy.⁷

One of the salient characteristics of this frontier territory was the Muslim population's perception of the Gandharan art as a discontinuity of their current culture. Therefore, the local inhabitants viewed the monuments and writings of the heathen "pagan disbelievers" as having little redemptive value and disposed of them through "passive disposal, aggressive

⁷ Reprinted with the kind permission of the British Academy. "Passport for Stein's Fourth Expedition to Xinjiang," Stein Papers, May 1930, Bodleian Library, MS 283.

destruction, or pragmatic transformation.”⁸ The result was that papers would be thrown away as useless, artifacts would be used as toys for children, and antiquities would become manure for fields or reused as material for building new dwellings. This result, of course, was not the fate of anything made of gold or other precious metals. Items such as these were actively sought by the local inhabitants long before the European archaeologists made their way into northwestern China. One Chinese envoy observed how “every time there is a great wind or rain, the locals go out to search for pieces of gold.”⁹ This reality all changed when European archaeologists came into the scene. Quickly the local inhabitants realized that “ancient manuscripts and terra-cotta figures could yield an immediate economic profit.”¹⁰ The local Muslim peasants and shepherds began supplementing their income by selling these items to local middleman merchants who, in turn, would sell them to Westerners.

Archaeologists like Stein realized the economic capital of the exchange and began offering attractive wages for expedition labor with additional monetary incentives for anyone who found the most coveted artifacts.¹¹ However, these same laborers would later supplement those wages by returning to the original site and removing anything that could be sold that their former employer had failed to take away. There was a tremendous economic incentive to cooperate with these foreign archaeologists. To these local inhabitants, the foreigners were “sahibs,” great men. More than an honorific title, an archaeologist’s designation as a sahib carried with it capital expectations. Sahibs were expected to be generous with their money. He was expected to act like a man of wealth and power, and in such a way, it would provide his laborers the honor, i.e., social and political capital, of being proximate to such power. Archaeologists like Stein understood this and acted

⁸ Jacobs, 54.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

accordingly by paying wages many times the daily wages usually paid.

The political capital took the form of an arranged audience with Qing officials. For example, Huntington introduced his hired Muslim servant, Da'ud, to the Manchu governor of Xinjiang and even asked the governor to appoint the servant to a minor post.¹² This arrangement was not an isolated request; other archaeologists such as Stein also sought positions for well-liked servants. This sort of career advancement was *priceless* social and political capital that the inhabitants of northwestern China understood the sahibs brought to the area. Considering what the sahibs were taking (worthless antiquities) the inhabitants agreed to what they shrewdly thought was a beneficial contract.

This local willingness to sell antiquities for financial gain relates to the central theme of Jacobs' book: that there were different types of capital exchanges occurring in northwestern China at the time. Another type of bargained-for exchange that occurred on the Chinese frontier involved "diplomatic capital."¹³ Diplomatic capital is the receipt of costly diplomatic or economic favors from powerful Western states in exchange for freely available objects deemed far less valuable to the relative giver.¹⁴ Local Confucian-educated officials knew of these archaeologists' expeditions and what they were returning to their respective museums. Allowing the archaeologists to proceed relatively unimpeded in their search and removal of antiquities provided these imperial officials a considerable amount of diplomatic capital. The receipt of this diplomatic capital was not necessarily announced or published, but it was not hidden either.

¹² Jacobs, 66.

¹³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁴ Ibid., 32.



“Pan Zuhuan, the magistrate of Shule County, Xinjiang, and Marc Aurel Stein,” dated 1930. Courtesy of the British Academy.¹⁵

Qing officials in Xinjiang and Gansu believed, unlike most local inhabitants, that the Chinese art and antiquities being taken from the area were *precious*, but they did not esteem them as *priceless*.¹⁶ Jacobs accurately describes their calculated assessment of the situation. The precious items were tendered in exchange for the valuable social relationship of befriending educated Western scholars who had the ear, and support, of their respective powerful governments. The political and social capital of having Western scholars visit their provincial capital was a valuable enough asset to allay any concerns the Qing officials may have had. Furthermore, Jacobs describes the Qing officials as understanding that these Western archaeologists were “gentlemen of empire,” like themselves.¹⁷ This class connection was not lost on the Western archaeologists who readily made lasting friendships with several

¹⁵ Reprinted with the kind permission of the British Academy. “Pan Zuhuan, the magistrate of Shule County, Xinjiang, and Marc Aurel Stein,” Stein Papers, 1930, Bodleian Library, MS 21.

¹⁶ Jacobs, 286.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

Qing officials. As “gentlemen of empire,” Qing officials and foreign archaeologists, like Stein, had a firm conviction in their respective empires’ civilizing power.¹⁸

The Qing officials may not have approved of the idea of acquiring antiquities for the benefit of public institutions, but they very much understood the acquisition of antiquities for “cultural accumulation.”¹⁹ Cultured Confucian elites were expected to amass exquisite private collections and assumed other educated elites would do the same. They also keenly understood the reservoir of diplomatic capital these antiquities represented when they gifted them to other elites to curry favor. Western scholars’ insertion into the exchange stream of capital was a simple process considering Qing officials desired personal relationships with foreign powers’ resourceful and cultured agents.²⁰ The quintessential anecdote illustrating all these capital exchanges was the discovery and dissemination of the Dunhuang manuscripts in the twentieth century.



Photograph by M. Aurel Stein titled “Cave library in the Thousand-Buddha Caves near Dunhuang,” dated 1912. Courtesy of Justin M. Jacobs.²¹

¹⁸ Jacobs, 121.

¹⁹ Ibid., 108.

²⁰ Ibid., 149.

²¹ Reprinted with the kind permission of Justin Jacobs. M. Aurel Stein, “Cave library in the Thousand-Buddha Caves near Dunhuang,” 1912, In *Ruins of*

Wang Yuanlu (1849–1931) was an illiterate Daoist caretaker of a derelict temple just opposite the Thousand-Buddha Caves in Dunhuang, in the Gansu Province. He was undertaking restorations of the neglected caves when he noticed a crack in the ceiling of the corridor entranceway of what is now called Cave 16. He broke through the plaster and discovered a hidden “cave library.”²² Initially, Wang began gifting the manuscripts to local Chinese officials, hoping to build social capital and perhaps receive financial capital in the form of donations. Afterward, Wang began selling caches of manuscripts to archaeologists all the while misrepresenting the number of manuscripts left. Needless to say, he sold each cache at a significant markup. Wang was maximizing the potential financial capital of the manuscripts by creating an artificial scarcity. It took two decades for Wang to shrewdly sell forty thousand manuscripts, paintings, and banners to elite buyers including Stein and Pelliot. None of this happened without the knowledge of Qing officials; in fact, they were the recipients of many of these manuscripts. However, the value of capital is fluid, and in the case of diplomatic capital, the value is greatly affected by political changes. Such a political shift happened in 1911.

The Qing Dynasty fell in 1911, and a republic was established the following year. The new republic was the offspring of nationalist sensibilities among a young cadre of elites. New laws were passed, including an order prohibiting the export of antiquities from China.²³ Nevertheless, there was a reluctance among Xinjiang officials to enforce the new antiquities laws. The hesitancy of frontier officials to enforce the new laws was self-evident during Stein’s third expedition of 1913–1915, where he effortlessly exported sixteen thousand pounds of crates packed with the accumulated antiquities of his travels. The transition had only begun, and many Confucian-educated elites still held to the

Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China Volume 2 by M. Aurel Stein, plate 188, London: Macmillan, 1912.

²² Jacobs, 95.

²³ *Ibid.*, 153.

old mindset. Ultimately, what stopped the exportation of artifacts was the political pressure of a young group of Western-educated Chinese intellectuals.

“Young China” was composed of Westernized Chinese scholars whose education was in European and American universities. With a nationalistic perspective and a Western view of artifacts, they sought to forge a new national identity separate from their imperial predecessors. Nationalism required a forging of a new ideology based on a shared patrimony, and antiquities were vital to provide cohesion to the new “imagined community.”²⁴ Archaeological artifacts would now “embody the collective cultural heritage of the Chinese people writ large rather than that of an exclusive Confucian elite.”²⁵ The diplomatic capital value of the artifacts skyrocketed to *priceless*, and when that occurred, there was nothing that Western archaeologists could do to affect an exchange. To eventually force the old guard of Confucian-educated officials to comply, “Young China” created the Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities. The Commission wrote letters to officials and governors demanding oversight of the antiquities law’s expeditions and enforcement. They also used the press to malign Western expeditions and shame provincial officials into action. “Young China” successfully stopped the capital exchange and established a new narrative that accused archaeologists like Stein of “imperialist coercion, personal deceit, and domestic corruption.”²⁶ This accusation was generally inaccurate since “Western archaeologists did not shoot their way into China, nor did they get shot out...they came to China when the Chinese said ‘yes,’ and they left China when the Chinese said ‘no.’”²⁷ Therefore, the perception and value of diplomatic capital forever changed when the Western idea that art and antiquities

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

²⁵ Jacobs, 154.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 278.

were priceless rather than precious was adopted by “Young China.”

The contemporary debates surrounding Western expeditions to China in the early twentieth century represent an unwillingness by Chinese historians to accept the possibility that local officials and inhabitants of northwestern China had agency and priorities very different from the nationalistic values of today’s PRC. Even today, diplomats and representatives of nations still partake in the formation of bargained-for exchanges involving diplomatic capital. For example, in 2019, Italy returned hundreds of illicitly traded sculptures from the Gansu province back to China.²⁸ The return was made in conjunction with Italy’s agreement to join the PRC’s “Belt and Road” initiative. The announcement also coincided with President Xi Jinping’s first visit to Italy. Like the Qing officials of imperial China who sought to obtain diplomatic capital from Western empires by allowing the exchange of artifacts, modern officials allow the return of artifacts when the diplomatic and political capital of such an exchange is valued more than the artifacts themselves. These are the “compensations of plunder.”

²⁸ Julia Hollingsworth, “Italy to Return Hundreds of Cultural Relics Back to China,” CNN Style, March 26, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/italy-china-cultural-relics-intl/index.html>.

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A Comparative Review: *Obeah, Race and Racism: Caribbean Witchcraft in the English Imagination* and *Experiments with Power: Obeah and the Remaking of Religion in Trinidad*

By Brittany Mondragon

Obeah (sometimes spelled Obi, Obia, or Obeya) consists of various facets which makes it impossible to establish a wholly inclusive definition of the practice. At its most basic, Obeah is either labeled as “Caribbean witchcraft” by non-believers or is seen as a justice-making spiritual healing “experiment” or “science” by practitioners.¹ Overall, most scholars who study Obeah concur that it “is a complex and hard-to-define term that has contested West African etymologies.”² While there are several theories for the origins of Obeah and the name itself, most scholars acknowledge that slaves taken from various regions of Africa most likely combined their spiritualism and practices to develop Obeah. Even though there are similarities between Obeah and African-derived religions such as Voodoo, Hoodoo, and Santeria, Obeah is unique because there are no distinct canons, deities, or rituals that are fundamental to the anglophone understanding of religion. Instead, believers practice Obeah individually; each practitioner produces their own distinct personal actions not bound by traditional rituals. Because Obeah does not fit into the Western definition of religion and secular institutions see it as “evil,” many anglophone

¹ Eugenia O’Neal, *Obeah, Race and Racism: Caribbean Witchcraft in the English Imagination* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2020); Brent Crosson, *Experiments with Power: Obeah and the Remaking of Religion in Trinidad* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), xi.

² Crosson, 2.

Caribbean nations continue to criminalize Obeah and its practitioners to this day.³

In 2020, two works were published examining Obeah in the Caribbean. Each took vastly different approaches in methodology. However, both explore how Obeah influences the social, cultural, and political environment of the Caribbean following British colonialism in the eighteenth century and how past representation continues to hold contemporary influence. In *Obeah, Race and Racism: Caribbean Witchcraft in the English Imagination*, Eugenia O'Neal observes the portrayal of Obeah in eighteenth to twentieth-century British literature. Through an abundance of literary sources, O'Neal illustrates how writers' perceptions of the practice influenced ideologies of racial inferiority and justified slavery on the islands. While O'Neal's work focuses exclusively on the British interpretation of Obeah, Brent Crosson's *Experiments with Power: Obeah and the Remaking of Religion in Trinidad* juxtaposes this perspective with a decade's worth of interviews with Caribbean Obeahmen and women, or as they refer to themselves, spiritual workers. Crosson's work is a rich ethnography that examines the criminalization of Obeah starting in the eighteenth century and how modern practitioners continue to endure police brutality and discrimination. More importantly, Crosson reflects on the anglophone definition of religion, challenges what constitutes legitimate religious practices, and examines how belief in spiritual power influences the modern understanding of ecclesiastical and secular law.

According to O'Neal, African magic embarked on a triangular exchange across the Atlantic. African slaves took their beliefs across the ocean, where they evolved on Caribbean plantations, and then journeyed once again across the ocean to Great Britain in the form of travel journals, media coverage, and plantation reports. These works "shaped racial perceptions of blacks in the wider British society that continue to resound [in the Caribbean] today" as Britain's writers, poets, and playwrights

³ Crosson, 3.

tapped into the misconceptions and fears surrounding British and Creole interpretations of Obeah.⁴ These misconceived analyses, in turn, fueled the myth of black inferiority and increased white colonizers' perceived "burden" to civilize the rest of humanity, thus justifying colonial hegemony and slavery.

Following the evolution of Obeah in British writings, O'Neal's text contains several accounts of how Obeah was depicted and interpreted by British and Creole audiences over the past three hundred years, well up to the 1950s. Initially viewed as a satanic threat against Christianity prior to the Enlightenment, Obeah later became an object of ridicule by the British and white Creoles to demonstrate the "credulousness" and "savagery" of black people in the eighteenth century. It later took on a more menacing meaning in plantation owners' minds as Obeah became linked to slave revolts and power struggles in the nineteenth century. British and Creole public, both pro-slavery planters and abolitionists alike, perceived Obeah as evil and used it as grounds for their political agendas. People of color were portrayed as either malevolent beings who could be controlled under slavery or made mildly better. It was believed that whites could slowly introduce these "'savages' and 'brutes' into civility."⁵ These two perspectives on Obeah remained prevalent among Western literature and media up until the mid-twentieth century, and as O'Neal and Crosson both illustrate, these perceptions continue to influence and propagate stereotypes and theories of racial inferiority today. As O'Neal notes, "writers employed Obeah to emphasize Otherness of blacks over and over again, creating an

⁴ O'Neal, 9. Creole refers to an ethnic group that originated in the colonial era of the Caribbean, which resulted in the mixing of European and African cultures and peoples. The term often denotes a person of European, African, or mixed descent that was born and naturalized in the Caribbean rather than from the "mother country," a process known as Creolization. Mulatto (often a derogatory term) refers to a person of mixed descent often African and European or African and native origin.

⁵ Ibid., 29.

enduring image of black people and of black West Indians that, even today, has not been completely eradicated.”⁶

O’Neal convincingly argues that Obeah experienced three different portrayals in British literature following the colonization of the Caribbean. First seen as a devil-worshipping religion, Christians saw the need to convert slaves who practiced African “black magic” to Christianity. Rooted in ideologies of arcane versus divine magic, Christian relics, such as holy water and imbued crosses, fit within the realm of godly divine magic or miracles. In contrast, other charms or fetishes outside of the Christian canon were deemed arcane witchcraft.⁷ Moreover, Christians associated blackness with evil and whiteness with purity and holiness, and thus, perpetuated the stereotype of Africans as credulous, malintent “black demons.”⁸ The evidence throughout the book suggests that “[a]gain and again, writers link the practice to the ‘dark traditions’ of Africa, ‘The Dark Continent,’ and to an uncanny, if not supernatural, knowledge of plants which echoed or evoked the old folktales of bogeymen and wild women” in Europe.⁹

A second portrayal came into fruition after British Parliament passed the Witchcraft Act in 1735. Starting in the eighteenth century, British civilians and colonials mocked slaves for their “savage” practices and used Obeah as another tier to justify slavery.¹⁰ O’Neal examines the works of Jacob Bryant (1715–1804), Edward Long (1734–1813), and other Enlightenment scholars, to write historiography on Obeah. Several eighteenth-century scholars and writers, many of whom never traveled to the Caribbean islands, romanticized Obeah and created a distorted

⁶ O’Neal, 313.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30. Up until the twentieth century in Britain, a fetish referred to a trinket, amulet, or charm sold by charlatans and “buffoonery” priests who claimed the object was imbued with some incantation or spell.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

Westernized understanding of the practice. Obeah practitioners were depicted as old and disfigured men and women who often had darker skin with unkempt hair and teeth, grotesquely amplifying distinctive physical traits. O'Neal argues that these racist representations continued through fiction and non-fiction literature, plays, and later in films, perpetuating contemporary stereotypes. Similarly, Crosson also suggests that "notions that black persons are somehow 'demonic' or that African-identified religion is really diabolical witchcraft have also played a key role in justifying contemporary police shootings" in the Caribbean today.¹¹

Lastly, the third depiction of Obeah spread when it became associated with slave revolts. Jamaican legislation outlawed Obeah after the Tacky Rebellion in 1760, something both O'Neal and Crosson recognize in their works. O'Neal acknowledges that prior to the rebellion, "West Indian planters considered Obeah something of a joke."¹² Obeahmen played a lead role in the Tacky Rebellion by providing slaves with lucky fetishes and anointing them with oils that made them believe they were invulnerable. Through these practices, they set the psychological mindset for slaves to revolt. According to O'Neal and Crosson, plantation owners began to see Obeah as a problem as white anxieties over slave rebellions continued to grow in correlation to burgeoning black populations on the islands. The 1760 Jamaica Act was the first legislation passed in the Caribbean to criminalize black people (not white people) from possessing Obeah fetishes or materials. Almost every other island in the West Indies followed in pursuit. Legislation in the twentieth century continued to reveal their fears of Obeah, as seen in the 1904 Obeah Act passed in the Virgin Islands. Those caught practicing Obeah were sentenced to a maximum of six months in prison, often with hard labor, while the

¹¹ O'Neal, 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 135.

sentencing for the actual Obeahmen or women who provided the fetishes could be up to twelve months.¹³

The latter half of O'Neal's book is an extensive compilation of literary works illustrating how the British depicted Obeah from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century. While the amount of evidence is appreciated and bolsters her argument substantially, the number of sources can be overwhelming, and sometimes the text lacks a thorough analysis of each source. Using what is arguably the most famous Obeah story, the tale of runaway slave Three Fingered Jack, O'Neal provides a comparative analysis of three literary works written by Dr. Benjamin Mosley (1742–1819), William Burdett (1851–1921), and William Earle (1787–1864) and two pro-slavery plays starring the runaway slave. Interestingly, all five tellings of the story depict Jack as a handsome slave, which differs from the typical portrayal of slaves and Obeahmen at the time. Nevertheless, all five works show Jack as a rebel who leads an uprising; sometimes he is the Obeahman, and other times he merely pursues the assistance of one. Moreover, there is a recurring theme in the pro-slavery versions of the tale that depicts male slaves as a threat to white women's virtues throughout the story, reemphasizing white anxieties of interracial relationships. Overall, the retellings of Three Fingered Jack over time depict the colonizer's general fears revolving around Obeah and slaves who might use the practice as a way to rebel against the system.

O'Neal later explores British depictions of African-born slaves versus Caribbean-born Creoles and mulattoes throughout literature. In the minds of plantation owners, creolized slaves born on the islands made better, and more importantly, more "faithful" slaves because those born within the slave system were depicted as more submissive and less threatening than African-born slaves. A prime example is William Hamley's (1815–1893) work in which O'Neal quotes, "in comparing creole blacks with African blacks, Hamley notes that the former 'possesses a slight, a very slight,

¹³ O'Neal, 138–139.

advantage in point of skill and intelligence.”¹⁴ Lastly, she concludes by observing late nineteenth and twentieth-century literature that applied gothic themes like vampirism to Obeah in novels and children’s literature. She looks at various novels, boys’ adventure papers, and penny dreadfuls. Cheaper, more accessible literature like this perpetuated stereotypes about black people amongst the masses. Moreover, O’Neal does not fail to address the insidiousness of including these depictions in children’s works noting that Obeah portrayed in boys’ adventure papers and penny dreadfuls reinforced “their [children’s] perception of their rightful roles in the world vis-a-vis other races.”¹⁵

Overall, these eighteenth to twentieth-century portrayals of Obeah were misleading, distorted, and misinterpreted for the British audience’s entertainment to justify their anxieties. For practitioners though, Obeah was a method of enacting justice for those not protected by the law. While the law protected those who fell within the bounds of citizenship, slaves were excluded from secular protection and enacted a justice system themselves by practicing Obeah. O’Neal notes that the “law and justice system were everything Obeah was not: they symbolized order, white authority and its power.”¹⁶ Crosson explores this concept of power even further in his work, *Experiments with Power: Obeah and the Remaking of Religion in Trinidad*. While O’Neal suggests that British depictions of Obeah still influence racial tensions today, Crosson examines how contemporary secular and ecclesiastical law continues to oppress Obeah practitioners and the subaltern in the present-day Caribbean, specifically Trinidad. Crosson writes, “While the law is an authority charged with protection and justice-making in regnant models of liberal governance and the rule of law, state law continues to inflict grave harm on subaltern persons

¹⁴ O’Neal, 275.

¹⁵ Ibid., 358.

¹⁶ Ibid., 151.

(while often failing to protect them from harm) in modern states.”¹⁷

Drawing from similar observations as O’Neal, Crosson suggests that “obeah is not really what many contemporary Caribbean people seem to think it is. Instead, obeah actually represents African-inspired practices of healing and protection, which were positively valued before their colonial denigration.”¹⁸ The foundation of Crosson’s work walks readers through the murder of a woman known as Arlena (d. 2011) and her two friends at the hands of police brutality during Trinidad’s state of emergency in 2011. The government declared the emergency due to the rise of murders over the past decade. Many Trinidadians attributed these murders possibly to Obeah and saw it as a chance for the island to be rid of “demons” and “spiritual malaise.”¹⁹ Over 108 days, more than seven thousand people were arrested, most of whom were black males residing in impoverished communities.

Yet, it is the death of Arlena that spurred this subaltern community to protest against police brutality in 2011. Driving home in a stranger’s borrowed car, Arlena and her two friends unknowingly drove into a police ambush where police were holding a stake-out for the owner of the car. Recognizing the car, the police shot repeatedly at the passengers not realizing they were not the intended target. Arlena survived the attack, but the police refused to call in medical assistance in hopes of covering their mistake. Arlena passed away right there, and few expected the police to be charged with murder. However, to the surprise of many, the improbable occurred when the police involved in her death were arrested and put on trial. Whispers circulated that it was the work of Obeah to bring justice to Arlena. Even more surprising was when the host of *Crimewatch*, a popular television show in

¹⁷ Crosson, 62.

¹⁸ Ibid., 51. Crosson refers to Obeah as “obeah” in the lower case throughout the text.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1–2.

Trinidad, made the controversial comment that Obeah was to credit for the arrests, sending the country into a frenzy.²⁰

Crosson's ethnography uses the death of Arlena as a case study for the rest of the text, which explores Obeah practitioners' views on their own practices, skills, and beliefs in comparison to common portrayals of Obeah. He does this by interviewing several Obeahmen and women over ten years while living in Trinidad. Interestingly, he admits in the introduction that when he began writing, he intended to prove Obeah is a religion. However, his viewpoint changed drastically after the interviews, where he then began to reevaluate the modern understanding of religion. Contemporary perceptions of religion dictate that religion must possess hierarchical organization, a set canon, specific rituals, and be part of a communal experience. Crosson attributes this understanding to Western hegemony, the anglophone definition of what constitutes religion, and the interjection of imperialist ideologies into colonies.

When such imperialist ideologies are integrated so deeply into a culture, they become invisible and are practiced unconsciously. Working within subaltern studies, Crosson defines this as "Colonial False Consciousness" early in the book.²¹ Unfortunately, he rarely refers to the thought-provoking term in later chapters. Because Obeah falls outside of the progressivist view and cannot "be placed on one side of a racialized and gender divide of modernity and tradition," Obeah has been criminalized, unlike other practices that serve as "the moral foundation for the rule of law and citizenship."²² As Crosson clearly states, "racism goes a long way to explain which assumptions of supernatural power are superstitions and which are patriotic or legally recognized."²³ Through the inclusion and exclusion of certain superstitions viewed as legitimate or not by secular power, stigmas

²⁰ Crosson, 2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

²² *Ibid.*, 47, 235.

²³ *Ibid.*, 11.

of racial inferiority and underdevelopment continue to affect regions influenced by Anglo-colonialist ideologies, specifically affecting subaltern communities.

Moreover, because the anglophone definition of religion is acknowledged everywhere, Obeah practitioners themselves do not see any correlation between Obeah and religion and instead consider Obeah a scientific experiment. Crosson used Arlena's unorthodox burial ceremony and the experiments performed during her wake to explain this concept. Instead of burying her coffin horizontally faceup, Bishop Dawes decided to place the coffin face down in a slightly vertical direction. In an interview with Bishop Dawes, Crosson states that when "Dawes responded that his work was 'not a tradition' but an 'experiment with power' or 'science,' he planted a seed of 'epistemic disconcertment' in me that would root and ramify over my following years of field research in Trinidad."²⁴ While in the traditional, anglophone sense of religion her burial would be viewed as heresy, Bishop Dawes saw it as a justice-making experiment to observe if this unique burial would avenge, or in a scientific view, react to Arlena's death. He hoped to bring justice to Arlena believing that the systemic discrimination existing in secular and ecclesiastical laws would not avenge her untimely death.

Crosson's book is divided into three sections. Part one focuses on how Obeah practitioners responded to the police shooting that resulted in the death of Arlena. By building a new interpretation of Obeah that better reflects spiritual workers' beliefs of the practice, the book sets the groundwork for observing the relationship between religion, violence, and law. According to Crosson, "The colonial persecution of obeah and the 2011 state of emergency's professed exorcism of lower-class black 'thugs' and 'demons' are but two examples of the violence authorized by the moral and racial limits of religion."²⁵ He delves further into the justice-making practices that Obeah entails and seeks to explain

²⁴ Crosson, 70.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

the experimental and ethical thinking that challenges modern concepts of religion and law. Part two continues to explore the limits of religion and how religion systemically undermines the subaltern. Crosson argues that blood sacrifices define the moral constraints of modern religion, noting that beliefs classified as religion (i.e., Hindu, Islam, Christian) no longer acknowledge animal blood sacrifices as part of their doctrine. Additionally, he further explores the individuality behind each Obeah practitioner. Unlike secular identified religions, Obeah is rooted in a crucible of religions, cultures, and ethnic identities at the spiritual worker's discretion to benefit their practice. Crosson concludes in part three by looking at how Obeah practitioners' description of Obeah as a high science experiment challenges the rationality of what constitutes religion and modernity.

While different in methodology and approach, these two books work together to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Obeah in the context of the power and oppression of the subaltern. From eighteenth-century slavery to modern-day police brutality, Caribbean peoples have sought out the problem-solving capabilities of Obeah to bring justice to a world that often ignores them. Both easily accessible reads, these books are both welcoming and timely contributions as they push our understanding of the power struggles and racial tensions that affect Caribbean communities, especially during the wake of the Obeah decriminalization disputes.

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Brittany Mondragon is a graduate student at California State University San Bernardino, earning a Master of Arts degree in History. Backed with a master's degree in Geographic Information Systems from the University of Redlands, Brittany concentrates on issues revolving around environmental history, empire, and colonialism, and commodity and trade histories. She has a particular passion for Trans-Atlantic and Caribbean history in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Upon graduation, she plans to teach at the community college level and begin pursuing a doctoral degree in history. She currently works at Mt. San Jacinto Community College under the Professional Development department. Apart from scholarly pursuits, Brittany enjoys devoting her extra time to hiking, painting artwork, and gardening. She would like to thank Dr. Jeremy Murray and the editors on her pieces for all their support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the editing process.



Book Review: *China's Good War: How World War II is Shaping a New Nationalism*

By Alexander Serrano, Brittany Mondragon, Jacquelyne R. Anton, and Sarah West

Immediately following World War II, China was plunged into devastating internal and external conflicts that lasted until the post–Cold War era (1947–1991). This stunted the development of (and reckoning with) the collective memory of World War II. This conflict was a worldwide phenomenon that affected nearly every corner of the globe. However, the collective memory of the war and the specific use of that memory varies significantly, sometimes conflicting with other domestic and international accounts. Following the end of the war in 1945, many of the countries involved had time to come to terms with the impacts and effects of the war, and the way it was remembered publicly and privately. In contrast, the Chinese Civil War (1927–1949) and the Cold War stripped China of the ability to accurately absorb the traumas of World War II and incorporate it into its national narrative.

Rana Mitter, one of the leading historians on modern China, authored *China's Good War: How World War II is Shaping a New Nationalism*, a critical text that analyzes the changing landscape within Chinese nationalism since 1980. This “new” nationalism is attributed to a reinterpretation of World War II by the Chinese government in Beijing to further legitimize themselves on the current global stage. Mitter’s work contributes a groundbreaking history of China’s use of the World War II wartime legacy to secure its role in the post–1945 international order. Using the framework he calls “circuits of memory,” Mitter observes how collective memory about World War II, also known as the War of Resistance against Japan, shaped and continues to

shape Chinese identity at a national, regional, and local level.¹ China's current revisionist efforts to portray itself as a World War II hero is an attempt "to exercise regional dominance in Asia, with aspiration to a more global reach," and to prove China is a morally righteous nation.²

Mitter begins with a concise summary of the political divide between the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), and the Communists, led by Mao Zedong (1983–1976), who reluctantly combined their forces against Japan during World War II. In a teleconference call for California State University, San Bernardino's "Modern China Lecture Series" on March 2, 2021, Rana Mitter stated that China "was the longest single theater of World War II between 1937 and 1945 starting as a silent Japanese war but ending up, of course, as part of the Asian theater... more than 10 million Chinese civilians and military were killed... [and] 80 to 100 million Chinese became refugees in their own country."³ Following World War II in China, the primary focus turned once again to the decimating civil war that lasted from 1927 to 1949.⁴ After the Communist victory in 1949, the Chinese Community Party (CCP) closely censored and removed any positive attributions of the Nationalist's efforts during World War II. The reality that the Chinese wartime victory belonged to the Nationalist Party during World War II forced the CCP to reckon with the fact that the credit of the wartime victory was not theirs. As Mitter acknowledges, the restrictions regarding the Nationalist's wartime role became more inclusive after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976.

¹ Rana Mitter, *China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), 8.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ Rana Mitter, "CSUSB Modern China Lecture Series, Rana Mitter, China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism," March 2, 2021, CSU San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA, YouTube, 1:02:53. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCaiWfzKs8w&t=725s>.

⁴ While Republican China (1912–1949) was plagued by internal division between the Communists, Nationalists, and collaborationists allied with Japan, the internal conflicts took a back seat during World War II.

The beginning chapters examine this new acceptance of wartime memory, such as the inclusion of Nationalist soldiers' voices under the Communist regime. The revisions began in academia with the ascendancy of Communist leader Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) in 1978. Chinese scholars found themselves in a more liberal environment as compared to the previously censored and politically charged discourse published under Mao Zedong. Under this “relatively unindoctrinated view,” scholars began researching previously forbidden areas of research regarding World War II such as the Nationalists' war efforts, Japanese collaborationists, and even Chiang Kai-shek himself. Mitter illustrates this by comparing works from scholars like Hu Qiaomu (1912–1992) and Huang Meizhen, who expanded previous narratives of the war. Mitter admits that even today the “writing of history and the practice of politics have always been closely intertwined in China.”⁵

Mitter continues by examining China's quest to take its place alongside the heads of the Western world. In the 1980s, China focused on social memory by using the selective curation of museums, the censorship of writers, and a patriotic education as vehicles to shift the narrative of World War II. Mitter explains how these methods aided in creating “a new collective memory of World War II as a way to create a morally weighted narrative about China's role in the global order.”⁶ It was also within these parameters that China adopted the already globally held view of World War II as the “good war,” highlighting the moral value of wartime participation.⁷ This Chinese revisionist tactic continued to

⁵ Mitter, 62.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ Ibid., 124. The “good war” is a term coined by Studs Terkel in *“The Good War”: An American Oral History of World War II*. His “use of the term was layered with irony, since the war had been devastating for so many Americans, and the ‘goodness’ of its overall narrative stood in sharp contrast to the Vietnam War that had followed just two decades later.” Mitter continues to say, “Nonetheless, his account of the ‘good war’ became one of the most prominent

be explored, as it was also portrayed in film and through the internet. Techno-authoritarianism combined with celebrity culture opened up the opportunity to expand this campaign of collective memory into the twenty-first century.

Mitter points out how “Chinese filmmakers have attempted to emulate American film to tell a different story” and goes on to link several films to this assertion in which there are often famous American actors portraying heroes in depictions of wartime China.⁸ Movies such as *Flowers of War* (2012), directed by Yi-Mou Zhang, and *Unbreakable Spirit* (2018), directed by Xiao Feng, had the intentional incorporation of American actors in an attempt to capitalize on celebrity culture within China, but also to garner a global audience for these films to encourage the popularity of China’s World War II narrative in the international world. Alas, the global audience did not receive these films as intended by the filmmakers. *Unbreakable Spirit* was never released in theaters; the film’s release in China was canceled in 2018 and it received a straight-to-download release in the United States in December of that same year. According to a 2016 *Showbiz* article, “[i]t’s not like a lot of people in the world care about that” which explains why the Chinese version of World War II “continues to resist globalization.”⁹ Likewise, *Flowers of War* “did very badly at the US box office,” earning a mere \$48,558 during its first release week in 2012.¹⁰

Continuing with the theme of wartime memory, Mitter dives into the complexities of said memory by comparing wartime identity and regional circuits of memory in two different sites: the Nationalist wartime capital of Chongqing and the Communist capital in northern Yan’an. The Nationalist’s “plan for a wartime capital to be established was part of a wider set of changes in

ways in which personal experience has come to the fore in explaining the wider cultural significance of that and other ears in the Western psyche.”

⁸ Mitter, 151.

⁹ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰ Ibid., 153.

China's political geography, as the Nationalists sought to consolidate what was still only partial control of the country."¹¹ As the seat of the wartime government for the Nationalists and their leader, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the CCP forbade Chongqing's residents from properly expressing their memory of the war after the collapse of the Nationalist's control of mainland China in 1949. Mitter argues that

During the years of Mao's rule, the authorities gave Chongqing little space to remember or mourn its suffering during the war. The cold fact *was* that the narrative of Nationalist resistance provided no ideological ballast for the new socialist state.¹²

Survivors of World War II, China's civil war, and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) did not speak of World War II in public, but rather in private.¹³ However, the 1980s saw a revival of the collective memory of the Nationalist's wartime capital. The CCP allowed more discussions of the war to occur outside their control which enabled the last remaining people of the wartime era to officially share their stories.

A large portion of the book is devoted to the collective memory of Yan'an since the Communist Party's memory has been consistently told since the end of the war unlike that of the Nationalists, the collaborationists, and the everyday people. Nevertheless, Mitter discusses the similarities between the Nationalist's wartime capital and the Communist's wartime capital. Unlike the dominant national narrative, which assumed differences between the two, regional memory revealed striking similarities. Like that of the Nationalists, the government-sanctioned memory for the Communist's wartime capital in Northern Yan'an was one of plenty. Official accounts depicted the

¹¹ Mitter, 172.

¹² Ibid., 177.

¹³ Ibid., 178.

abundance of food and fervent patriotism during the war period and the numerous devotees of the “Yan’an Way.”¹⁴ Additionally, the personal wartime memories of those in Yan’an showed the similarities of everyday experiences to those in Chongqing. In contrast to the government-sanctioned narratives, personal wartime memory revealed that hunger was present in both capitals just as it was present in Henan from 1942 to 1943 due to the famine. Unfortunately for those who experienced the famine during the war, “the official reason for the discomfort about the famine is harder to define; it seems to result from a combination of a depressing story with a little patriotic or nationalistic value, along with uncomfortable reminders of the Great Leap Forward Famine [1958–1961].”¹⁵

The book concludes by arguing that Beijing, the government of China, makes controversial reaches back in time towards the Cairo Conference (1943) to justify its present-day expansions into the South China Sea. This is controversial because the government in China at the time of the Cairo Conference was led by the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-Shek, and not the Communist Party under Mao Zedong, who came to power only after the Chinese Civil War in 1949. Once again, China is using “the rehabilitation of the Nationalist’s war record at home” as a “justification for its own desire for greater influence.”¹⁶ In 2013, China referenced the Cairo Conference to validate its territorial claims on the uninhabitable Senkaku Islands/Diaoyu Islands located in the East China Sea.¹⁷ In 2015, the president of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping, used World War II to insist that China’s contributions to the Allied victory proved China deserved a role in the international order. Therefore, World War II

¹⁴ Mitter, 195. “Yan’an Way” refers to the specific practices in Yan’an during the 1940s that followed the Communist agenda and were perceived to be different from Nationalist Chongqing.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 216–217.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

“was being used, in effect, to create new partnerships, while bolstering myths about old ones” to justify contemporary issues with which China is concerned.¹⁸

Following in line with the historical trend of seeking to be “present at the creation” of the post–World War II international order, “China is engaging in painstaking detail with the existing order so as to recreate it in a recognizable form, but in its own terms—to be present at the re-creation” of the contemporary international global order.¹⁹ Mitter argues that China’s “relatively weak claim to ownership of the international postwar order” was bolstered unexpectedly in 2016 when then-President Donald J. Trump won the presidential election in the United States.²⁰ As the leading champion of the international liberal order, the United States no longer seemed to seek the leadership of it which allowed China an opportunity to “present itself as the savior...in a bid to strengthen the historical and rhetorical substance behind its quest for international legitimacy.”²¹ Through the collective memory of the war, combining both its military and economic power in the region, and a moral position for its claims, China continues to draw upon its wartime legacy to claim that its desired dominance in Asia is valid.

The book closes with an observation of the world’s reaction and acceptance (or lack thereof) of China’s newfound nationalism in its long postwar period. During his March 2021 presentation in California State University, San Bernardino’s “Modern China Lecture Series,” Rana Mitter stated that,

Collective social memory of the Second World War experience in China has shaped in many ways all sorts of aspects of China’s public life in the last 40 years... this is a phenomenon that’s about

¹⁸ Mitter, 232.

¹⁹ Ibid., 11.

²⁰ Ibid., 248.

²¹ Ibid., 249.

propaganda... but it's so much more than that. Part of [the] new nationalism is a marketing ploy and it is about China in the last 40 years under the PRC [People's Republic of China] in the Reform Era. What changed from the 1980s [is that] for the first time in decades they are not talking about a nationalistic discourse involving class. They are talking about one that involves cross-class alliances and also cross-party.²²

In a way never seen before, World War II gave China a unifying struggle and narrative where before (pre-1945) China was plagued by domestic class struggle.

The global community is currently watching the development of China's *new* nationalism. Mitter cautions that as "China becomes more powerful, the world will have to pay more attention to the stories that it wants to tell. Whether we realize it or not we are all living in China's long postwar."²³ As the United States starts to re-enter the global order in 2021 as a leading liberal power, it will be interesting to see how it affects the development of China's new nationalism predicated on heroism, victimhood, and international standing drawn from World War II.

²² Rana Mitter, "CSUSB Modern China Lecture Series, Rana Mitter, China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism," March 2, 2021, CSU San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA, YouTube, 1:02:53. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCaiWfzKs8w&t=725s>.

²³ Mitter, 261.

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Book Review: *Vernacular Industrialism in China: Local Innovation and Translated Technologies in the Making of a Cosmetic Empire, 1900–1940*

By Alexander Serrano

Eugenia Lean's *Vernacular Industrialism in China: Local Innovation and Translated Technologies in the Making of a Cosmetic Empire, 1900–1940* traces the life and activities of a prolific industrialist named Chen Diexian (1879–1940) who was a successful “tinkerer” in a time when the direction of industry in China was uncertain.¹ In brief, “Chen navigated a transitional period around the fall of the Qing [1912], leveraging his classical education to find success in the newly commercial world of letters and the emerging sphere of industrial manufacturing.”² Lean argues that classically educated figures like Chen Diexian utilized and leveraged their literary background to succeed in fields of commerce and industry during Republican China (1912–1949).

The term *vernacular industrialism* comes from the phrase *xiao gongyi*, which, depending on the region and time period in China, means different phrases. In the case of Lean, she interprets

¹ Eugenia Lean, *Vernacular Industrialism in China: Local Innovation and Translated Technologies in the Making of A Cosmetic Empire, 1900–1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 26–30. Lean uses tinkering to describe the monumental importance of Chen's activities. Noted as an entanglement between material and knowledge work, Chen would innovate and improve various crafts rather than create anew. Lean also notes the shifting meaning of “tinker” and “tinkering” over time to have originally meant to improve or repair. The term then expanded to include experimentation and could imply a negative connotation amongst the elite class for its usage amongst the populace. This negative connotation is what the author wishes to exclude in reference to Chen's successful cultivation of literature and material work.

² *Ibid.*, 2.

xiao gongyi as “minor industrial arts.”³ However, Lean does not view Chen’s work as minor, as the translation suggests, but rather monumental. His tinkering with material innovations and in works such as journals, women’s leisure magazines, and literary supplements of daily newspapers are used as a lens to communicate “Chen’s unconventional pursuits in common goods.”⁴ In effect, vernacular industrialism signifies Chinese citizen’s abilities to utilize local workable knowledge by using regional, native materials in an era of industrialization. Using Carlo Ginzburg’s method of microhistory, Lean uses Chen as a case study to challenge the traditional belief that China copied its industry and economic machine from the West during Republican China.⁵

Born to a well-off family in Qiantang (outside Hangzhou, the capital of China’s Zhejiang province) in 1879 with the name Chen Shousong, Chen received a classical education despite his father and uncle dying while he was young.⁶ During Chen’s youth, China was in a post-Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) period that “saw young men blur the boundaries between the worlds of literati officialdom and the realm of merchants.”⁷ After Chen passed his *xiuca*i examination and became a *Xianshi*, a county-level degree holder, in 1893, he gained employment as an assistant to a ranking official in the Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. During this period, Japan rose as an imperial power in Asia, and Chen used this opportunity to develop contacts with Japanese legations to dabble in chemistry. Chen also co-founded an early newspaper, *Daguanbao*, in Hangzhou and began publishing “bamboo-branch

³ Lean, 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵ Microhistory is a genre of history that focuses on small units of research, such as an event, community, individual or settlement.

⁶ Classical education in China during the Imperial Dynasty of the Qing (1644–1912) consisted of Confucian studies and bureaucratic related studies for employment in the government.

⁷ Lean, 39.

poetry” within the newspaper.⁸ When the Qing government abolished the civil service examination in 1905, eliminating this long-standing path to power and prestige, Chen and other elite literati figures turned to different paths of profit. For Chen and those in similar government positions, they used their literary skills to focus heavily on the printing world.⁹

While the literati experienced turmoil within their own government, and externally with Japan’s continued expansion into former Qing territory, some like Chen were able to capitalize on the ever-expanding sphere of influence that Japan exerted over China. Chen used his contacts in the Japanese government to help further his tinkering. While he was unique in the extent to which he tinkered, he was not alone in utilizing the connections he made in his government position. According to Lean, “Chen, too, seemed to appreciate the prestige that would come with associating with the Japanese in Hangzhou.”¹⁰ Other members of the literati were successful in navigating the increasingly delicate political landscape between China and Japan to create profitable enterprises in an unstable time.

Lean traces Chen’s move to Shanghai in 1913 with other migrating officials of the now-defunct Qing dynasty who were in search of employment in the key port cities. Shanghai, at this time, had a thriving print economy that continued to grow, and Chen found himself engaged in more for-profit styles of printing in the city. Using his already growing reputation as a writer from his days in Hangzhou, he was financially successful from newspapers such as the *New Shanghai* in which he wrote fictional fantasies.¹¹ He

⁸ Lean, 55, 57. This style of poetry can be dated to the Tang dynasty (618–907). It was represented by taking an event or moment in an ordinary citizen’s life and creating a form of a verbal image.

⁹ Ibid., 41. One skill that Chen implemented was his usage of the *butterfly*. Like with his adoption of the pseudonym of Diexian or “Butterfly Immortal” in his printed work, the image of the butterfly became a branding tool that will be expanded on later in the text.

¹⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹¹ Ibid., 73.

also expanded into publishing recipes for items of daily use in the home in journals such as the *New Student Journal* and *Ladies' Journal*. For his recipes, he tinkered with existing recipes and used more local ingredients in the hopes of making China a self-sustaining economy. Lean introduces a variety of these daily items such as hair gel, soap, face powder, toilet powder, and face lotion, amongst many more cosmetic items.¹² With these tools, Chen's expansion from literary to material crafts demonstrates an effective and successful application of the tinkering practice, further distancing the term "tinkering" from a traditionally negative connotation.

Continuing his tinkering through the following decades, Chen created an extremely effective foam fire extinguisher. Chen published his manufacturing knowledge of the fire extinguisher as common knowledge or *changshi*.¹³ Chen felt it necessary to gain a patent for his work to ensure the general public had access to his patents in order to use them at home to make their own. One place that Chen published his work was in the newspaper column "Common Knowledge for the Household."¹⁴ As citizens migrated to the cities, population density increased the likelihood of fires that often decimated urban areas before they were put out. He viewed himself as an avid promoter of *xiao gongyi* (minor industrial arts) particularly because these common goods, like the fire extinguisher, were vital to a stronger national industrial power. Lean shows how Chen is a representative of his time, not just in his craftsmanship, but also in his nationalistic sentiments.¹⁵ During the early Republican period, there were strong national movements among the populace; the most influential event being the May

¹² Lean, 95.

¹³ Ibid., 121.

¹⁴ Ibid., 127.

¹⁵ Ibid., 137.

Fourth Movement of 1919.¹⁶ These nationalistic sentiments, which recognized the importance of sourcing locally, can be tied with Chen's insistence on utilizing homegrown and domestic supplies in his crafts, rather than importing from a foreign entity.

One aspect of Chen's tinkering in a nationalistic enterprise is his use of cuttlefish bones from the natural beach environment in Cixi in the Zhejiang Province. Lean notes that Chen "realized that he had found at his disposal an abundant, natural, and most importantly, local source of calcium carbonate...the key ingredient in the production of toothpowder."¹⁷ Though the actual calcium carbonate level was too low to be effective, this practice of wanting a local supply rather than importing from outside of China shows that Chen desired to remain domestic, especially with growing imperial powers around him. Using an adjusted tooth powder that used magnesium carbonate, Chen established The Association of Household Industries in 1918 as both a pharmaceutical and household goods corporation. Starting small in scale, the company eventually expanded when Chen marketed his company as national in a time when anti-Japanese and anti-Western sentiments exploded in China. The company eventually grew to be the third-largest cosmetic corporation in China within two decades of its creation due to the expansion of cosmetic goods such as lotions and face creams. Chen tinkered with all of his items and was praised by the Nationalist government in China for his efforts, even when some of his endeavors failed, such as his paper manufacturing and mosquito repellent. Nevertheless, in 1936, one Ministry of Industry account "explicitly praised Chen's efforts in tinkering and testing to improve raw materials and manufacturing techniques."¹⁸

¹⁶ The May Fourth Movement of 1919 was a nationwide socio-political anti-imperialist movement that was in response to the Treaty of Versailles (1919). In brief, the treaty to end World War I granted Japan territory traditionally controlled by the Chinese. In response, the Chinese people grew a strong sense of nationalistic patriotism towards their country.

¹⁷ Lean, 162.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

The Association of Household Industries was not successful in its goods alone; it was also successful in its subliminal messaging. As Lean notes that in “China, the promotion of the trademark as something that would guarantee a company’s reputation, ensure profit, and thus be deserving of legal protection by the state emerged under the auspices of imperialism and global capitalism.”¹⁹ The butterfly had phonetic connotations that attracted Chen to the term, therefore he used the butterfly as his brand logo.²⁰ Written as *Wudipai*, the term can mean “butterfly,” “peerless,” or “without enemy” depending on what dialect is being used. In traditional Chinese characteristics, the term meant “the brand without an enemy.”²¹ Not only did Chen use the image for brand recognition and promotion, but he also used it to popularize a homegrown company independent of foreign goods and companies.²² Along with trademarks, Chen also understood the importance of brand reliability. In some cases, Chen would publish family recipes in *Common Knowledge* as a “means to guarantee the trustworthiness of the knowledge.”²³

Challenging the traditionally negative narrative that emerged in the twentieth century about Chinese industrial stagnation when compared to Europe, Lean’s microhistory of Chen’s success demonstrates that there were figures in China during this period who were successful domestic industrialists. Chen embraced translating technologies and pursued industrial endeavors with an open curiosity and a healthy dose of optimism, even if under the banner of patriotism. A long period of foreign imperial pressure stripped much of the Qing’s control over their port cities, and with that, their economic lifeline to the outside

¹⁹ Lean, 205.

²⁰ As noted earlier, Chen was born with the name Chen Shousong. He became attracted to the subliminal wordplay on the term “butterfly” and had adopted the term into his name as “Diexien.”

²¹ Lean, 207.

²² Ibid., 220.

²³ Ibid., 260.

world. As the nations surrounding imperial China industrialized, China's ruling Qing dynasty was overthrown. The end of over two thousand years of dynastic rule opened a socio-economic and political free-for-all as different aspects of life were redefined by figures like Chen. In the case of economics, Lean demonstrates how Chen was a figure that was able to transition from a dynastic China to a Republican China successfully by profiting off of his adaptability and ingenuity. Lean states, "As a native industrialist, he founded his empire by drawing from foreign technologies and ways of building industry, yet he did so with an explicit anti-imperialist agenda that sought to present Chinese brands of toiletries as 'authentic' in contrast to fraudulent enemy goods."²⁴ Chen's success is a testament to a time when homegrown movements for a stronger China in a modernizing world saw the creation of domestic titans of industry, breaking away from the traditional view that industrialists merely borrowed their knowledge from external sources.

²⁴ Lean, 281.

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Film Review: *Mulan* (2020)

By Josefine Pettit

The legendary woman warrior, Hua Mulan, has long been in the spotlight of Chinese folktales and other entertainment, and she is considered a strong woman figure in Chinese society. She has been featured in paintings, poetry, dramas, ballads, and films from the fourth century to the present. The tale of Mulan has been known since China's Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534 CE), and it has recently received the glamorized treatment of Disney and Hollywood. While there have been some common themes, values, and ideas, the story has also changed through the years, and thus, the classic poem, "The Ballad of Mulan," and the 2020 film "Mulan," provide a glimpse of the values of Chinese culture and society in history and today.

The earliest known version of the story of Mulan dates to the fifth or sixth century in a poem called "The Ballad of Mulan."¹ Though the ballad is not dated and the author is unknown, it gives a good glance at Chinese society's ideas. Even though the ballad is only five stanzas long, it reveals what was happening in Chinese history at the time. During the Northern Wei period, there were two different Chinese dynasties in the north and south. In northern China, the ethnic Tuoba rulers were nomad tribes that had created the Wei kingdom, close to their homelands. The Han Chinese (today the ethnic majority of China) looked down on the Tuoba clan and considered them barbarians. The Han believed that the Tuoba Wei lacked traditional Chinese cultural refinement.

¹ One full version of the poem was reproduced in Hans H. Frankel, *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry*. See, "The Ballad of Mulan," in *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady: Interpretations of Chinese Poetry*, Hans H. Frankel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 68–72.

Although in reality, the Tuoba Wei had begun to assimilate aspects of Chinese culture by incorporating values and government structure.

Centuries earlier, Confucianism emerged as the major philosophical foundation of Chinese society. It required all members of society to know their roles and their place within the family and society. Reciprocal relationships included devotion to family elders, maintaining social harmony, and political hierarchy. The roles of girls and women were established in the “Three Obediences” (first to father, then husband, then son), and “Four Virtues” (ethics, speech, manners, and works, all in relation to the previous obediences). As historians Sarah Shaver Hughes and Brady Hughes note in their study of women in ancient civilizations, Confucianism’s “prescriptions of humility, meekness, modesty, and hard work continued to be copied by generations of young women until the twentieth century.”²

This context of Confucianism in “The Ballad of Mulan” shows Mulan’s Confucian devotion to her parents, also known as a daughter’s filial piety. Her father was about to be conscripted as a soldier and she acknowledged that if her father went into the battle that he might die. She wanted to act quickly to protect her father. In the ballad, she states:

Father has no grown-up son,
Mulan has no elder brother.
I want to buy a saddle and horse,
And serve in the army in Father’s place.³

For Mulan, her duty of being a child to a parent was extremely important to her. She believed she must go in place of her father because of her Confucian devotion to save her father

² Sarah Shaver Hughes and Brady Hughes, “Women in Ancient Civilizations,” in *Agricultural and Pastoral Societies in Ancient and Classical History*, ed. Michael Adas (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 134.

³ “The Ballad of Mulan,” 68–72.

from a terrible fate. Understanding traditional gender roles, Mulan decided to hide her gender, wear armor, and go to war. It is worth noting that the ballad only mentions the issue of her gender in the final portion of the poem:

“I open the door to my east chamber,
I sit on my couch in the west room,
I take off my wartime gown
And put on my old-time clothes.”
Facing the window she fixes her cloudlike hair,
Hanging up a mirror she dabs on yellow flower powder
She goes out the door and sees her comrades.
Her comrades are all amazed and perplexed.⁴

It is surprising that “The Ballad of Mulan” only focuses on the gendered aspect of the story near the final lines. The ballad would have been even more shocking in a Confucian world, as it blurs the lines of traditional gender identity:

Traveling together for twelve years
They didn’t know Mulan was a girl.
“The he-hare’s feet go hop and skip,
The she-hare’s eyes are muddled and fuddled.
Two hares running side by side close to the ground,
How can they tell if I am he or she?”⁵

“The Ballad of Mulan,” and the many works of art and literature that it inspired, seem to contradict traditional Confucian gender norms, but these norms have certainly changed over time. Throughout the centuries, the ballad inspired different poems, paintings, and dramatic depictions that have been put into entertainment. In the past few decades, Mulan has been featured in

⁴ “The Ballad of Mulan,” 68–72.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 68–72.

several films in China and two versions by Disney, one in 1998 and one in 2020.

In the 2020 Disney film version of “Mulan,” directed by Niki Caro and starring Liu Yifei as Mulan, there is a focus on virtues that are upheld in Chinese culture throughout history and still celebrated today. These virtues are introduced by Mulan’s father, whose sword is engraved with the characters: “loyal, brave, true.” He taught Mulan the virtues of the warrior and that she can be brave and strong and that gender does not define all that she is. Throughout the film, Mulan was uneasy about the virtue of truth because she felt that she was not being true to herself and that she was pretending to be a man to protect her family. Ultimately, Mulan returned home victorious, but her father’s sword had been destroyed in battle. The emperor sent her a new sword with a single character engraved on it representing “devotion to family” (*xiao*).

There have been several versions of Mulan’s story told in recent films with new characters introduced. One completely new character added to the 2020 film was Xian Lang, a martial arts warrior with powers of sorcery. She was able to shapeshift into people and animals and possess people to force them to do her work. Xian Lang’s character “becomes a villainous analog to Mulan—a woman who is similarly under the thumb of men and is struggling to ascend to her full potential.”⁶ Xian Lang was so powerful that people were afraid to point out that she was a witch. Recognizing that Mulan was a woman, Xian Lang tried to point out they were the same, just on different paths. This relationship shows a particular interest in gender in the new retelling of the original story.

The film received positive reviews but the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a full global cinematic release. There was also controversy related to the film regarding the lead actor’s (Liu

⁶ Yohana Desta, “Mulan: Gong Li’s Witch Character Is More Than Meets the Eye,” *Vanity Fair*, September 4, 2020.
www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2020/09/mulan-gong-li-character-interview.

Yifei) statements following the protests and police crackdowns in Hong Kong throughout the preceding year. In 2019, protestors opposing decreased autonomy in Hong Kong and more direct control of the region by Beijing had been attacked by the Hong Kong Police with pepper spray, tear gas, and rubber bullets. Liu Yifei made her stance on the issue clear by stating on social media: “I also support the Hong Kong police”; she included heart and strong-arm emojis.⁷ Many outside of the People’s Republic of China disapproved of her actions, believing that she was opposing human rights. This resulted in a movement to boycott the film.

Even though there was controversy over the last film, *Hua Mulan* has meant different things in different times and for different people. Today, she can be seen as a woman who transcended inequality and gender oppression, which certainly is something that women still deal with in the home, the workplace, and politics. But she also gave us insight into family relationships, fathers and daughters, and family honor. In political terms, she can be the hero for those who fight for their nation and who answer the call to service, no matter the cost. Since she can mean so many things, *Mulan* continues to empower women to fight for whatever they believe is right. Her tale will always live on for people to tell her story.

⁷ Andrew R. Chow, “Why Fans Called for *Mulan* Boycott Amid the Film’s Release,” *Time*, March 2, 2020, <https://time.com/5653973/mulan-boycott-liu-yifei/>.

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Author Bio

Josefine Pettit is a graduate of California State University, San Bernardino with a Bachelor of Arts in History. With her focus towards becoming an educator, Josefine is currently completing the Single-Subject Teaching Credential Program at CSUSB and is considering pursuing a master's degree in the future. She hopes to incorporate film into her curriculum to educate students by making connections between media and history. As a devout connoisseur of Disney with a dedication to history, Josefine combined both of her passions in her "Mulan" review. In her research, she developed a deeper and more meaningful understanding of both areas of expertise and interest. Josefine hopes to continue her research on influential female icons throughout history, looking to shine a light on how their presence and actions helped shape our views of female influence today.



Film Review: *The Trial of the Chicago 7*

By Moises Gonzales

The Trial of the Chicago 7, directed by Aaron Sorkin and released in 2020, was set during the late 1960s in the United States when abuse of the law by the United States criminal justice system and law enforcement personnel was rampant. The misuse of the law, including police brutality, racism, and corruption, reached a boiling point when it empowered eight brave young men to fight against the unjust socio-political and racial ideals.¹ The film centers around a riot at the Democratic National Convention in the summer of 1968, where thousands went to protest the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War (1954–1975), which had been unpopular among a younger generation of Americans since 1955. In 1969, a select few protesters found themselves in federal court for allegedly inciting a riot at the convention. The trial began with eight defendants known as the Chicago Eight, but when Bobby Seale was granted a mistrial, they became known as the Chicago Seven. Even though these men lost the initial trial, their combined effort to challenge corruption, racism, and the Vietnam War was significant because it set an example for future generations of Americans to fight for their own beliefs.

As the United States continued to draft more men to Vietnam, anti-war efforts heightened. A national protest was organized outside of the Democratic National Convention of 1968 in Chicago, Illinois, where a riot broke out between the police and protestors. Chaos ensued. Among the protestors were Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) leaders Tom Hayden and Rennie

¹ Terry Gross, "Author Says The Chicago 7 Trial Reflected 'All The Conflicts In America,'" NPR, November 18, 2020.
<https://www.npr.org/2020/11/18/936164085/author-says-the-chicago-7-trial-reflected-all-the-conflicts-in-america>.

Davis. Also involved were Organizers for the Youth International Party (Yippies) Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, as well as David Dellinger, who led the Mobilization to end the war in Vietnam. Additionally, Chairman of the Black Panther Party, Bobby Seale, and activists Lee Wiener and John R. Froines joined them in Chicago. These eight men were arrested and tried for allegedly inciting the riot.

John Mitchell (1913–1988), United States Attorney General under the Nixon administration (1968–1972), wanted to indict these men for violating Section 2001 of Title 18 in the United States Constitution, better known as the Rap Brown Law, a federal law that enabled more than one individual to be charged with conspiracy to cross state lines to incite violence. Since more than one person could be tried for the same crime in a conspiracy trial, the prosecution ensured that all eight men were tried as a group.² In the case of the Chicago Eight, the prosecution had the upper hand because they did not need to prove that the defendants did anything wrong to get a conviction based on conspiracy; they only had to prove that these men had planned or “conspired” to do so.³

The defendants opposed these charges and argued that they went to Chicago to end the war, not to incite a riot. Yet, while the film mainly focuses on the group’s opposition to the war, the men also had other motives. In *Conspiracy In The Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of the Chicago Eight*, the book by American historian Jon Wiener which the film is based on, Tom Hayden (one of the Chicago Eight) went on record explaining the group’s full intentions in 1968 and the aftermath of the trial:

This Other America, never triumphal but never defeated, once again rose in the sixties. Millions of young people, and some (but not many) of our

² Jon Wiener, *Conspiracy In the Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of Chicago Eight* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 16–17.

³ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

parents, were on the march. They were riveted by the Chicago demonstrations and subsequent trial—a larger “jury,” if you will, whose verdict of rage was delivered in the streets on the day we were convicted, when there were dozens of riots, and one bank burning in sunny Santa Barbara. Chicago not only radicalized many Americans, it also awakened a liberal conscience in response to the perceived outrages of the Nixon years.⁴

Here, Hayden expresses his true feelings and frustrations at the situation that he and the other defendants found themselves in from 1968 to 1970. By identifying himself and the others under the “Other America” banner, he revealed their radical nature which went against, not just the Vietnam War, but also the socio-political and racial injustices that were happening in the United States. The “Other America” banner meant opposing racial discrimination in society and the law. Instead, it suggested enacting progressive reforms to better serve the American people.⁵

As the trial began, Judge Hoffman (1895–1983) and the prosecution took the men’s purpose for going to Chicago completely out of context. Judge Hoffman and the prosecution believed that they went to Chicago to incite violence. In contrast, The Chicago Eight stated, on multiple occasions, that their demonstrations were strictly to protest the Vietnam War. In these scenes, the film unraveled a key part of the prosecution’s agenda, which was to silence the defendants from expressing their opposition to the Vietnam War. This became clear to the general public and brought the legitimacy of the trial into question, illuminating the discrimination and corruption of the United States criminal justice system.⁶

⁴ Weiner, *Conspiracy In the Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of the Chicago Eight*, 256–257.

⁵ Ibid., 255–257.

⁶ Gross.

Police brutality was another key issue addressed in the film. In multiple scenes, protestors and policemen engaged in violent clashes where policemen beat protestors with clubs and sprayed them with tear gas at the Democratic National Convention. In a particularly powerful scene, the film showed the police officers deliberately taking off their badges before confronting the protestors. By intentionally removing their badges, the policemen demonstrated premeditation to commit these acts of violence; they went above the law when they realized that without their badges they could not be easily recognized and punished for their misconduct. These police officers demonstrated a disregard towards their duty to uphold the law. Instead, as is evident throughout the film, the police had no regard for the people and they acted with brutal force.

Out of all eight defendants, Bobby Seale, the only African American defendant, received the most unfair treatment throughout the trial. He played an important role in outlining the blatant bias and corrupt nature of Judge Hoffman.⁷ Since the beginning of the trial, the judge purposely tried to derail Seale's case. To clarify, even though Seale appeared in court alongside the rest of the defendants, he was also put on trial for homicide in Connecticut in 1969, which were different charges than the other defendants faced.⁸ While he should have had a separate trial, he appeared in court alongside the other defendants because it was a conspiracy trial in which they were all tried for a conspiracy to commit a crime together.⁹

At the beginning of the trial, Seale repeatedly said that his trial had "begun without his lawyer."¹⁰ This was true since neither

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Wiener, *Conspiracy In the Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of Chicago Eight*, 37. Seale was also being tried for homicide in Connecticut because it was believed that he ordered the torture-killing of a New Haven Black Panther Party member.

⁹ Ibid., 16–17.

¹⁰ *The Trial of the Chicago Seven*, directed by Aaron Sorkin (2020; Los Angeles, Paramount Pictures, September 2020), film, 20:22–20:23.

of the lawyers present during the case, Mr. Kunstler or Mr. Weinglass, were his actual lawyers, and he refused to be represented by them because they were representing the other defendants in the case. Judge Hoffman also declined to let Seale speak, knowing he did not have his lawyer present and ordered for the trial to proceed. The judge abused his power by having Seale appear in court without proper representation.¹¹ Since Seale did not have his own lawyer beside him, he should have been granted a postponement from the very beginning of the trial, which he had argued for. This early confrontation between Seale and Judge Hoffman displayed Judge Hoffman's unwillingness to hold a fair trial. Therefore, it demonstrated the corrupt nature of the United States criminal justice system because they willingly violated a basic constitutional right.¹² It also set the stage for a more violent confrontation between Seale and the judge.

In a final outburst of rage against Judge Hoffman in which Seale argued that the killing of American activist and socialist Fred Hampton (1948–1969) was an assassination carried out by the Chicago police, the judge ordered the marshals to deal with Seale “as he should be dealt with.”¹³ When Seale returned to the courtroom after the outburst, he was handcuffed, bound to his chair, and gagged. Seale was angered by the killing of Hampton because he was the leader of the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party, served as an important link between himself and the rest of the defendants, and, above all else, was a good friend.¹⁴ As the bright young leader of the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party, Hampton organized the day-to-day activities of the other members of the party.¹⁵

¹¹ Gross.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Trial of the Chicago Seven*, 1:13:53–1:13:57.

¹⁴ Gross.

¹⁵ Wiener, *Conspiracy In the Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of Chicago Eight*, 127.

In the raid led by the Chicago Police Department where Hampton was killed, Edward Hanrahan (1921–2009), the Cook County State’s attorney, said that “the police had shown ‘good judgment, considerable restraint [and] professional discipline’ in killing Fred Hampton.”¹⁶ The police also said that in the shootout with the Black Panthers, he resisted arrest which led to him being shot.¹⁷ While this was the police’s story, Seale argued that his friend had been assassinated because “he wouldn’t have been able to hold a gun in his hand! When they publish the coroner’s report, ask about the bullet in his shoulder!”¹⁸ Hampton had been shot four times, presumably in his shoulder, as Seale said, and twice in the head.¹⁹ Furthermore, the autopsy found that he was shot while in his bed. This meant that he was asleep when it happened and that the police were lying in the initial retelling of events.²⁰

The shootout between the Black Panthers and the Chicago Police Department was deliberate. The police, who were conveniently searching for guns inside the building, wanted to provoke a confrontation with the Black Panthers. While searching the building for weapons, instead of following proper police conduct, which is to announce themselves and demand hands raised, they realized that they could respond with gunfire, killing anybody in their line of sight if engaged by the Black Panthers, and thus they opened fire on a sleeping Hampton.²¹ This action was a legal grey area because, by conducting a search, the police had a good reason for going to the Black Panther’s building. Nevertheless, the Chicago Police Department’s planned attack represented their willingness to silence their enemies at any cost,

¹⁶ Ibid., 127.

¹⁷ Gross.

¹⁸ *The Trial of the Chicago Seven*, 1:13:31-1:13:37.

¹⁹ Wiener, *Conspiracy In the Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of Chicago Eight*, 127.

²⁰ Gross.

²¹ Ibid.

and it showed the unspeakable violence regularly levied against African Americans by United States law enforcement.²²

Due to the disturbing and uncomfortable nature of Seale being restrained by excessive force, he was granted a mistrial and separated from the rest of the defendants. From this point on in the trial, the Chicago Eight became the Chicago Seven. Yet even after Seale's mistrial was granted, Judge Hoffman stated: "you are not home free, sir, and I doubt you ever will be."²³ While it is understandable that Seale also disrespected Judge Hoffman, he made many valid points against both the judge and the killing of Hampton at the hands of the Chicago Police Department. Yet, during this exchange, it was evident through the victimization of Seale that Judge Hoffman disregarded the law and made judgments based on his own racial biases. By singling out Seale, Judge Hoffman proved his inability to perform his constitutional duty, which was to provide Seale with a fair trial. This meant that not only had the judge discriminated against an African American, but it was a setback to the prosecution's case because he further damaged the trial's legitimacy by ordering the marshals to physically restrain and silence Seale. This scene detailed how corrupt the United States criminal justice system was, demonstrated the use of excessive force by the marshals, and showed the racist attitudes of the judge. In the process, it further captured the racialized violence towards African Americans that occurred in the 1960s.²⁴

As the trial drew closer to its conclusion, it became clear that the defendants had no chance of winning the case because Judge Hoffman undermined their lawyer's arguments and witnesses in the case. For example, Ramsey Clark (1927–2021), one of the defendant's key witnesses and the former United States Attorney General during the Lyndon B. Johnson Administration from 1967 to 1969, testified under oath during the trial and without

²² Gross.

²³ *The Trial of the Chicago Seven*, 1:18:10–1:18:15.

²⁴ Gross.

the jury present that “an investigation by our criminal division led to the conclusion that the riots were started by the Chicago Police Department.”²⁵ He also said that the counterintelligence division found that “there was no conspiracy by the defendants to incite violence during the convention.”²⁶ Given his testimony, it was clear that the Chicago Seven should have been acquitted of all charges and set free. However, this did not happen because the judge refused to let the jury hear Clark’s testimony. If the jury had been allowed to hear his testimony, it would have been an embarrassment for the United States criminal justice system as it would have unveiled their disregard for the law, which they interpreted as they saw fit to suit their needs. Clark’s testimony revealed the tainted reputation of the United States criminal justice system because it proved that the charges levied against the Chicago Seven were baseless.

This purposeful misinterpretation of the law aimed to counter the social movements of the 1960s, like the Black Panther Party and the anti-Vietnam War protests, that threatened Cold War anti-communist and anti-socialist American life. In the era following McCarthyism, which was a campaign against alleged Communists in the United States government and other institutions, those who challenged the status quo and the interests of the United States government were subject to suspicion and often accused of treason or subversion.²⁷ By labeling the Chicago Seven as criminals, the United States criminal justice system sought to protect their war effort in Vietnam by delegitimizing the Chicago Seven and their anti-war protests.²⁸

As the group of seven reevaluated their actions that led them to the trial, they realized that their fates were sealed. In a powerful scene involving Tom Hayden and Abbie Hoffman,

²⁵ *The Trial of the Chicago Seven*, 1:30:30–1:30:37.

²⁶ Gross.

²⁷ Wiener. *Conspiracy In The Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of the Chicago Eight*, 253.

²⁸ Gross.

Hayden asked Hoffman why he went to the convention to which Hoffman replied, “to end the war.”²⁹ Later, Hoffman took the stand to testify. His attorney asked him, “do you know why you are on trial here?” To which he replied, “We carried certain ideas across state lines. Not machine guns or drugs or little girls. Ideas. When we crossed from New York to New Jersey to Pennsylvania to Ohio to Illinois, we had certain ideas. And for that, we were gassed, beaten, arrested, and put on trial.”³⁰ With this scene, Hoffman made it clear that the Chicago Seven never intended to hurt anyone at the Democratic convention of 1968. They only wanted their voices to be heard, to express their criticisms against the many socio-political and racial injustices happening in America, and to end the war in Vietnam.

At the end of the film, before Judge Hoffman sentenced the Chicago Seven, he allowed one of the defendants to speak for the whole group. They chose Hayden to deliver their final statements to the court. He read the names of United States soldiers killed in the Vietnam War up to that point in 1970. This drew cheers and applause from the majority of people in the courtroom. According to Wiener, “Here, the film is (laughter) a little misleading. The film has a happy ending, with Tom Hayden defying the judge while everyone cheers. That’s the way Aaron Sorkin likes his films to end.”³¹ To clarify, this is where the film and the real-life events differ drastically because, in reality, the defendants had a miserable experience upon their conviction.

In reality, at the end of the trial, five out of the Chicago Seven—Hoffman, Hayden, Davis, Rubin, and Dellinger—were found guilty of inciting a riot.³² The judge sentenced these five men to five years in prison for inciting the riot in Chicago and fined them five thousand dollars each. Furthermore, he also gave

²⁹ Gross.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Wiener, *Conspiracy In The Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of the Chicago Eight*, 239.

long additions to their sentences for multiple counts of contempt of court, adding up to another four years for Dellinger, Davis, Hayden, Hoffman, and Rubin.³³ Due to the long sentences for multiple counts of contempt of court, the defendants had a constitutional right to a separate trial. Yet, the judge refused to give them a separate trial, even after multiple pleas from their attorneys.³⁴ He also revoked their bail. In a final effort, Judge Hoffman abused the law because he refused to grant them a separate trial. According to Jon Weiner, the verdict, sentencing of the defendants, and the judge were “improper,” demonstrating the corrupt nature of the United States criminal justice system.³⁵

While the defendants would have spent years in prison for their convictions and multiple counts of contempt of court, the men only served one night in prison because almost all the charges were overturned on appeal.³⁶ When the appeal was finalized in November 1972, the defendants were finally free.³⁷

The Trial of the Chicago 7 details a United States criminal justice system worthy of distrust. For example, even though the defendants were in a criminal trial, Hoffman referred to their trial as a “political trial” because, as he saw it, their fates were already decided for them.³⁸ From Hoffman’s point of view, the trial that he and the other defendants were involved in was politically motivated because their open and vocal opposition to the Vietnam War reflected poorly on the United States government. The government chose to both discredit and punish them for speaking out against the actions of their government. The film is a testament to 1960’s America, a time where, prior to the trial, “McCarthyism seemed to have eradicated any trace of subversion from American

³³ Ibid., 26.

³⁴ Gross.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Wiener, *Conspiracy In The Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of the Chicago Eight*, 26.

³⁸ *The Trial of the Chicago Seven*, 29:46-29:51.

culture. In the Chicago Conspiracy trial, McCarthyism was resurrected once again, this time to fail. Times had changed.”³⁹ The United States government’s interests heavily outweighed their citizen’s concerns, who were dealing with an unpopular war that was no longer able to carry on unquestioned under the sentiment of anti-communist McCarthyism.

Yet, the film’s overall purpose and impact goes much deeper because, in the aftermath of the trial, it validated the Chicago Eight’s cries for a fair government for everyone. In 2006, Hayden wrote that while things did not turn out the way they had hoped, change had finally been achieved, and the country had benefited from it.⁴⁰ The United States “stabilized itself by a surge of reforms: ending the draft, enfranchising eighteen-year-olds, reforming the presidential primaries, passing the War Powers Act [1973] and environmental reform, and the rest.”⁴¹ Even though the film detailed events that happened almost fifty years ago, this film is significant because its message to fight against an oppressive institution, such as the United States criminal justice system, continues to resonate in America. It acts as a wake-up call to future generations that, if something is not right, you can do something about it. Real change is possible.

Epilogue

The film, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, depicted multiple socio-political issues and instances of race-based discrimination such as corruption, police brutality, and racism. From Jon Wiener’s book to the screen, the trial brilliantly captures the violence against African Americans and the unfair United States criminal justice system of the 1960s that attempted to silence critics of the government and Vietnam War. As of now, the film has garnered

³⁹ Weiner, *Conspiracy in The Streets: The Extraordinary Trial of the Chicago Eight*, 253.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 257.

⁴¹ Ibid., 257.

multiple accolades, including a Golden Globe for best screenplay and a Screen Actor Guild (SAG) award for outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture.⁴² With the success of the film, it's safe to say that it has been a source of inspiration and influence for many. With that being said, there were questions about the film and other socio-political issues that, thankfully, Jon Weiner, American historian, journalist, and author was willing to answer.

When asked what he thinks the film's legacy for future generations will be, Weiner stated that "the film presents a sympathetic portrayal of antiwar and Black activists and an indictment of the 'justice system' as unjust and racist."⁴³ In regard to the film's message to younger generations about organizing massive demonstrations and protests, Wiener was quoted saying,

Younger generations won't learn much about organized demonstrations in this film. It's mostly about the trial, and the film's main point about the demonstrations is that the police were brutal and unfair. I guess that's something you could learn here. As for the demonstrations in Chicago at the Democratic Convention of 1968, in fact, they were somewhere between a disappointment and a failure; they had hoped for hundreds of thousands but maybe 15,000 people participated. Anti-war demonstrations both before and after Chicago 1968 were a ten or a hundred times bigger. One key was that the Chicago Mayor threatened that the police would attack demonstrators, so unless you wanted to fight the police, you did not go to Chicago in August 1968.⁴⁴

⁴² "The Trial of the Chicago 7 Awards," IMDB, accessed April 25, 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1070874/awards>.

⁴³ Jon Wiener, email message to author, April 13, 2021.

⁴⁴ Jon Wiener, email message to author, April 13, 2021.

In his concluding comments on the difference between the conditions and protests in the 1960s as compared to those in the present day, Weiner stated that,

The BLM [Black Lives Matter] protests of summer 2020 were a hundred times better—not just a few days but lasted months; not just in one city but in hundreds; not just young white people but diverse and multicultural; led not by white men but by Black women. And the BLM protests did a magnificent job combining street protest and electoral politics, among other things sparking the election of a progressive D.A. [District Attorney] in L.A., the largest district attorney’s office in the country.⁴⁵

We greatly appreciate that Jon Wiener took the time to answer these questions to give us a better understanding of the film, its themes, and comparisons to current socio-political issues in America.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

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Author Bio

Moises Gonzalez graduated from California State University, San Bernardino in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. His main academic focus is on Europe because he enjoys learning about the ancient Romans. He plans to return to CSUSB in the near future because he wants to obtain a master's degree and teach at a higher level. He would like to thank the many professors there that had a positive impact on his learning experience including Dr. Murray, Dr. Keating, and Dr. Barber. He would also like to thank his editors, Devin Gillen and Kristina Cardinale, for giving him helpful guidance throughout the publishing process.

Film Review: *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb*

By Erika Kelley

The documentary *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb*, released on Netflix on October 28, 2020, focuses on one of the excavations taking place at Saqqara, Egypt, about twenty miles from Cairo, and the team that has worked to better understand the life and beliefs of the tomb owner. The film is directed by James Tovell and examines the discovery and excavation of the tomb of Wahtye which had been unopened for 4,400 years. While the tomb is the main emphasis of the film, Tovell also focuses on the archeological process of excavation and the different specialists and workers that are a part of the process. Tovell includes testimonies and cameos from a long list of specialists, all of which provide thoughtful commentary about the excavation process and their area of specialization.¹ *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb* is an insightful documentary that thoroughly communicates the process of archaeological excavation and the personal feelings of the site workers, all while keeping the overall tone of the film suspenseful and interesting.

As the name suggests, the archaeological site that Dr. Mohammad Mohammad Yousef directed is located in the ancient necropolis of Saqqara, which was very important to the ancient Egyptians. Saqqara is covered with hundreds of tombs and is home

¹ The people who provided testimonies and cameos include site director Dr. Mohammad Mohammad Yousef, director general of the Saqqara Necropolis Dr. Sabry Mohyeldin Farag, site supervisor Ahmed Zikrey Abdellhak, archaeologist Hamada Shehata Ahmed Mansour, Dr. Mostafa Waziri the secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt, funerary archeologist and archaeozoologist Dr. Salima Ikram, foreman Mustafa Abdo Sadek Mahmoud, translators Nermeen Momen Mohamed and Nabil Eldaleel, workman Ghareeb Ali Mohammed Abushousha, and rheumatologists Dr. Amira Shaheen

to several of Egypt's pharaoh's funerary monuments with the oldest belonging to King Djoser (c. 2668–c. 2575 BCE) who ruled during the Third Dynasty of Egypt's Old Kingdom, approximately 4700 years ago.² Due to the amount and types of tombs present at Saqqara, it is clear for archeologists to see that this area was an incredibly important funerary site for Egyptian royals and elites throughout its history. While the Saqqara area has been looted and unofficially excavated, legal excavation of the area started in the mid to late twentieth century by a series of different institutions that have persisted until today.³

In 2018, Dr. Yousef and his archaeological team discovered a completely hidden tomb dating to Egypt's Fifth Dynasty located in the Bubasteion necropolis in Saqqara. This tomb was somewhat of an anomaly as a majority of Egyptian tombs are looted before archaeologists can begin excavating them, therefore the full extent of a tomb's statuary, grave goods, artwork, and mummies are never really known. The tomb Dr. Yousef and his team discovered was completely untouched and was filled with mummies, hieroglyphs, authentic colors, statues, and other grave goods. Since the tomb had so much information still inside it, the documentary explores many disciplines of Egyptology, whether it be the workmen looking for the tomb or a biological anthropologist studying the mummies contained within. The director, James Tovell, realized this and took advantage of it which is partly what makes this documentary so interesting. *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb* does not just focus on the tomb and the people that might have owned it, it also focuses on how much work and pressure go into an excavation and takes into account all the perspectives of the people involved. Tovell skillfully weaves together all of the perspectives and experiences of the specialists and workmen to

² Aguizy, Ola el, "Saqqara," ARCE, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.arce.org/resource/saqqara>.

³ Some of the specific institutions include the Egypt Exploration Society, Leiden Museum, and Cairo University

show just how diverse the work that goes into an archeological site can be.

The first specialist introduced in the documentary is Dr. Salima Ikram who is a funerary archeologist and an archaeozoologist. Her knowledge and experience are incredibly vital to the team as the area that the team is excavating in Bubasteion “was a cult center and temple devoted to the goddess Bastet” who is most commonly depicted as a cat or a human with a cat’s head.⁴ Dr. Ikram’s expertise is needed when the team is analyzing the different animal mummies found at the site but also when understanding the funerary practices that these animals could have played in larger Egyptian history. The next specialists introduced are Nermeen Momen Mohamed and Nabil Eldaleel who have been tasked with decoding the story of Wahtye written in hieroglyphs on his tomb walls. The tomb walls need to be translated before any excavations can begin inside the tomb itself as the Egyptologists need to understand and investigate who Wahtye was and what his life was like. Decoding these walls is extremely important as it gives insight as to who Wahtye was and what he wanted out of this life and in the afterlife. The information found on ancient Egyptian tomb walls is important because it allows historians to piece together the social, political, cultural, and religious history of the civilization and gives them insight into ancient Egyptians’ own understanding of their society and culture.

The last specialist introduced in the documentary is Dr. Amira Shaheen, a rheumatologist, who is tasked with analyzing the remains found in Wahtye’s burial shafts. Dr. Shaheen’s work is important to the team because it gives a direct, unbiased look into what life was like for Wahtye and other ancient Egyptians living at the time. Bones and human remains can directly tell a historian what kind of life a person lived, how old they were when they died, and if they were suffering from any major illnesses and diseases. This is important when trying to gain a better

⁴ James Tovell, *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb* (2020; United Kingdom: At Land Productions and Lion Television, October 28, 2020).

understanding of ancient Egyptian people since historians can actually see what kind of lives these people lived without relying on the Egyptians' idealized portrayal of themselves found within their art. While all these professionals focus on different topics, their combined findings provide answers and help current historians understand ancient Egyptian people, culture, religion, and society.

Finally, Tovell focuses on the workmen at the site. For many of them, generations of their family have been employed as workmen and it is the only job they know or want to do. One example of this is Ghareeb Ali Mohammed Abushousha who stated: "I've been working here since long ago. My father worked here before me. Thirty or forty...maybe fifty years ago."⁵ Abushousha worked as a digger, but it is not simply a mindless activity for him and he takes immense pride in his job saying, "you have to have some sense...you have to be prepared" to find or stumble upon anything.⁶ And just like his father, Abushousha began taking his son to the site as well so he can "learn the ropes. So when the foreman needs him to work, he'll have experience. If he stayed at home, he'd learn nothing. Then I wouldn't be happy. My happiness is having him here."⁷ For them, the pressures to find another tomb or discover and secure funding are just as high as it is for Dr. Yousef because it is their livelihood. Furthermore, this is a craft that has been passed down in their family for generations and it is something that they are extremely proud of. An archaeological site is a very diverse workplace as it brings together many workers and professionals that provide unique skills that contribute to the overall goal of a better understanding of ancient Egyptian history.

While the near-perfect condition of Wahtye's tomb is uncommon, it is the unprecedented findings of animal mummies and disease that made it extraordinary. Around Wahtye's tomb, archaeologists were able to find additional shaft tombs, with one of

⁵ *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb*, 1:02:00–1:03:09.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:03:09–1:03:45.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:04:21–1:04:58.

the oldest and deepest being only 10 meters to the west.⁸ It is in this shaft that archaeologist Shehata Ahmed Mansour and workman Abushousha found dozens of mummies shaped like cats, one shaped like a crocodile, and an unidentifiable animal much larger than the others.⁹ Once these mummies had been excavated, they were given to Dr. Ikram, who analyzed and x-rayed them. It is through her analysis that the team classified the larger, feline mummy as a lion cub.¹⁰ This lion cub has been confirmed as the “first mummified lion ever discovered.”¹¹ According to Dr. Ikram, this lion cub completely changed historians’ understandings of Egyptian religion, economy, culture, and “how the ancient Egyptians were interacting with wild animals” regarding breeding, taming, and using them in worship.¹² In the actual tomb itself, the workers found more than one human skeleton. The archaeologists theorized that these bodies were that of Wahtye and his family who were depicted in his tomb walls. After further analysis, Dr. Shaheen concluded that the bones of the older male were not healthy. She stated:

[They were] eager for blood and that’s why the bones are distended which can tell us that this person may have some sort of anemia. And the same swelling was found in the mom. We have a congenital cause of anemia...we may think of some sort of a disease or epidemic. Most probably malaria, which would affect the whole family. And if that’s true, that would change ancient Egyptian history.¹³

⁸ Ibid., 2020, 32:09.

⁹ *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb*, 33:14–36:50.

¹⁰ Ibid., 45:03–48:20.

¹¹ Ibid., 1:51:54.

¹² Ibid., 48:50–49:25.

¹³ Ibid., 1:43:50–1:44:50.

While Dr. Shaheen's theory of malaria has yet to be proven, if it is, the death of Wahtye and his family would be the first documented case of malaria in history by more than one thousand years.¹⁴ Tovell also includes the historical impacts that this tomb has had on the Egyptological community and how the information gained from this tomb is actively rewriting the history of ancient Egypt.

Tovell does not only focus on the objects and information gained from Wahtye's tomb in his documentary but also allows the worker's and professional's perspectives on archaeology and excavation to shine as well. Tovell interviewed the site's directors and supervisors, the professionals, and the workmen hired to help which ultimately adds to the viewer's understanding of what actually happens at an archaeological site. While the director and supervisors of this excavation mainly speak about the history of the site and what the discovery will do regarding our understanding of ancient Egypt, Tovell also chooses to focus on the pressure to secure funding. Funding and finances are often overlooked by the general public when the topic of archaeology is brought up as the objects found at the site are usually the "star of the show." Funding, however, is a very real issue that archaeologists face at every expedition. Throughout the documentary, Dr. Yousef and site supervisor Ahmed Zikrey constantly feel this pressure at the site as their funding is only secured for one archaeological season or expedition at a time. This is extremely troublesome when there is no guarantee that the team will finish their work in one season but also when confronted with the fact that the income of hundreds of workmen also relies on that funding. According to Ahmed: "We have hundreds of people working at the mission. It is the only source of income for them. All of the team is hoping for next season but everybody is not sure that they will come back again because there may be no money from the government this time."¹⁵

In order to secure funding for next season, Dr. Yousef and his team needed another major discovery or another site to

¹⁴ *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb*, 1:51:45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13:20–13:59.

excavate before the current season was over as that is one of the only ways they could secure their funding. The cut-off for their expedition was the holy month of Ramadan, May 5 to June 3, 2019, as that is when their funding at the site was due to run out.¹⁶ Fortunately for Dr. Yousef, there were clues that led him to believe that there was another tomb nearby. If this was not the case, it would be virtually impossible for him to secure funding. These clues manifested in the form of different grave goods resurfacing through the expedition area.

Ironically, Dr. Yousef and his team embodied Wahtye in this struggle as they were both enthralled with securing their future. For example, Wahtye was devoted to ensuring that he and his family were reborn and provided for in the afterlife which was accomplished by living a good life and being a good citizen as depicted on his tomb walls. Dr. Yousef was devoted to securing funding for the next expedition and ensuring that his work could continue. The only problem is that securing what was next for Dr. Yousef was much harder since he had to do more than just depict what he wanted on a tomb wall and there was no clear way to tell where or when there would be another tomb or large discovery.

Unfortunately for the team, a week before Ramadan their government funding dried up and they were given two days to leave the site. In one season, the team was able to uncover more than 3,100 artifacts, in addition to the other unexpected theories and finds mentioned earlier. However, the ending of the film is somewhat ambiguous as it closes on the team unearthing a new tomb separate from Wahtye's. Whether or not the new tomb is actively being excavated is unknown but it does leave the viewer with a sense of curiosity and intrigue for what mysteries will be

¹⁶ *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb*, 14:00. Ramadan is a religious, holy month for Muslims. While each Muslim celebrates differently during this time, one of the usual practices is fasting from sunrise to sunset and more frequent praying. While Muslims are still encouraged to work during this time, they may request a change in schedule to better align with the activities of the holy month. This could have been one of the reasons the team had to finish their work at the site by Ramadan. James

uncovered or answered with its eventual excavation. Regardless of if this tomb is later excavated, continuous archaeological discoveries will eventually unearth the mysteries of the civilization with the help of Egyptologists. The most recent example of this is “the Lost Golden City” of Luxor whose discovery was announced in early April 2021. This find is historical for the Egyptological community and professionals hope that further investigation of the city may reveal why the capital was moved from Thebes to Amarna in the year 38 BCE.¹⁷

Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb is an interesting and skillfully directed documentary. While the focus of the film is a hidden tomb and the contents found within it, the director also uses this documentary to give a more human-centered perspective to archaeology. He incorporates the struggles, successes, and personal testimonies from the archeological site and team that leave the viewer with a better understanding of what archaeology is, what this excavation means to this Egyptian team, and the connection it creates between them and their ancestors. This sentiment is made especially clear when Mansour states: “We are the people who can best give a voice to our ancestors because they are our ancestors. We are one step closer to them than the foreigner.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Jessica Ester Saraceni, “Egypt’s ‘Lost Golden City’ Discovered in Luxor,” *Archaeology Magazine*, April 9, 2021, <https://www.archaeology.org/news/9587-210409-luxor-golden-city>.

¹⁸ *Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb*, 10:55–11:07.

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Film Review: *I'm No Longer Here (Ya no estoy aquí)*

By Jose Castro

I'm No Longer Here (Ya no estoy aquí), directed by Fernando Frías de la Parra, was released on Netflix on May 27, 2020. This Mexican Spanish-language film tells the story of Ulises (played by Juan Daniel Garcia), a young man from Monterrey, Mexico who illegally emigrated to Queens, New York because he was forced to escape the violence and drug gangs that plagued his city.

Ulises and his family lived in a poor urban side of Monterey. As a teenager forced to flee his hometown in Mexico due to his unwilling involvement in the drug and gang violence taking over his city, Ulises became an outsider in New York who found friendship with a young Asian girl named Lin (played by Angelina Chen). But Ulises was stubborn, hence the name of his hometown gang, Los Terkos (stubborn). He was always in control of himself and his emotions and was always on the defensive. Stubbornness and a short temper were part of his life due to his experiences on the streets of his hometown. Ulises was a “Terko” not only by nickname but also as a man who led his gang of teens, who liked to dance to the sound of Cumbia music and dress kitsch to impress each other, away from the criminal gangs invading their hometown. In New York, Ulises still remembered his time in his home city, his friends, and his music. He refused to give up his native culture and assimilate to the culture in the United States; he rejected all kinds of unwanted changes in his life. In this film, the director presents Ulises’ story in the sorrowful social context of the struggles that young teens face in the middle of poverty and misery where the only happiness is music.

The title of the film *I'm No Longer Here (Ya no estoy aquí)* refers to the breakdown of time and space as Ulises remembered

the good times of the past spent with his friends in Monterrey, as he tried to survive in Queens. The sound of the music, Cumbia Rebajada, turns into a melancholic tone that accompanies him through the streets of the great American metropolis. With the help of a portable MP3 player, he let the rhythm of Cumbia music carry him to that place thousands of miles away full of good memories. While he was physically on the roof of a building in New York, his mind and heart were in the dusty streets of his neighborhood in Monterrey. As an immigrant forced to flee to the United States, the distance made him ignore that nothing would be the same as before and that everything would be locked in memories immersed with Cumbia music and sad remembrances of where he once found happiness next to his friends in Mexico. Those melancholic experiences are what many immigrants face when they arrive in a strange multicultural country with different traditions where they continue to yearn for their old memories from their homeland.

On the one hand, director Fernando Frías de la Parra wrote and directed this film to show the social problems in Monterrey, Mexico. Frías declared:

The essence of the film is that the slowed-down cumbias play as a parallel to this idea of not having opportunities or not having social upward mobility as a society in Mexico, where lack of opportunity is just the norm, generation after generation, and youth is punished and doesn't last long...Because you know that there is nothing better coming after that. You want to just keep dancing. You just want to hold on to that golden moment.¹

Through the point of view of young teenagers in Monterrey, the audience sees how they were absorbed into the drug cartels and

¹ Bilge Ebiri, "Oscar Hopeful Fernando Frías Has the Range," *Vulture*, March 4, 2021, <https://www.vulture.com/2021/03/q-and-a-oscar-hopeful-fernando-fras-on-im-no-longer-here.html>.

how they experienced the violence in Mexico during the “war against drugs.” In 2006, then-President Felipe Calderon declared a “war on drugs” shortly after taking office. It was a war against the big cartel bosses in Mexico, however, it failed because that war divided criminal groups, created new cartels, and led to increasingly violent confrontations among them, with horrendous consequences for the people in Mexico. That, coupled with the neoliberal public policies introduced to Mexico in the 1990s, resulted in an increase in poverty in the big cities due to a decrease in jobs. It was the perfect opportunity for organized crime to expand into the poor slums of Monterrey. There was an increase of drug traffickers, such as the Zetas Cartel who became the most horrific and sanguinary drug cartel in the 2000s in the City of Monterrey. These drug traffickers recruited young people in the streets to make them become drug dealers. Those cartels fought over territory in the streets, killing thousands of people. This is the social context that the director presents in this movie.

On the other hand, he also wishes to portray the struggles of immigration and the problems and difficulties outsiders and foreigners face when adapting to a new place. Ulises refused to assimilate to the urbanized and American New York City. In this multi-ethnic city, he could not communicate his unique and complex feelings of longing for home. However, he found friendship in Lin who helped him during his stay in this turbulent city. Lin approached him and made him feel special, embracing his style and love for Cumbia. Ulises wanted to show her his music and his feelings but the language barrier only frustrated him more. Financially poor and feeling alone, his only escape was his MP3 player where he could lose himself in dancing to Cumbia. When Ulises returned to Monterrey at the end of the film, he saw transcendental changes in its streets. Everything had changed, and the future had become uncertain because violence and poverty now ruled the streets. As director Fernando Frías de la Parra said:

When no upward social mobility and a lack of opportunity is the norm, youth doesn't last as long

as it should. The golden years of life get interrupted very early on in these difficult conditions. So, for me, this music comes as the voice of resistance trying to make the song last a little longer, trying to hold on to that dance, trying to squeeze every drop of meaning out of it, because, after that, the future is not so promising.²

The origin of Cumbia music is unknown. As Hector Fernandez L'Hoeste and Pablo Vila explain in their book, *Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre*, the word Cumbia comes from the name of the town founded by runaway slaves in Venezuela called *Cumbe*. Some scholars believe that Cumbia came from a ritual dance initiation from Central Africa. Whatever the origin, it is agreed that Cumbia is an African, Indigenous, and Spanish-Mestizo rhythm. It is the result of the fusion of cultures and races and has managed to cross borders and unite the people of various countries. It is a rhythm of freedom and equality in Latin America.

Cumbia eventually became a traditional way of dance and folklore off the coast of Colombia where it then spread across the continent and into the marginal communities and villages where people in poverty used the simplest instruments to make music. By the 1970s, a form of Cumbia known as Vallenato was emerging and growing in popularity in the streets of Colombia; it was made with an accordion, caja (drums), and scraper called guacharaca.³ By the end of the 1990s, a new way of listening to Cumbia emerged. "La Cumbia Rebajada" is a specific way of listening to Colombian Cumbia music with the RPM (revolutions per minute) speed lowered to make it last longer and to appreciate the dance,

² Anne Marie de la Fuente, "'I'm No Longer Here' Director Fernando Frias Talks About the Mexican Film Biz," *Variety*, March 2, 2021, <https://variety.com/2021/film/news/mexicos-fernando-frias-im-no-longer-here-1234912782/#respond>.

³ A guacharaca is a percussion instrument usually made out of the cane-like trunk of a small palm tree.

the moment, and the sound of the music more. That is where the ecstasy of listening to the “güiro” and “guacharaca,” with the Cumbia and vallenato sound, comes from, wherever it is.⁴ This is how Ulises and his Terkos listen to Cumbia music. In the film, with the Cumbia Rebajada, the song lasts longer which is how the idea of clinging on to a fast-expiring youth is represented. Whether in New York or Monterrey, the ecstasy of the musical vibration runs through the body and makes the listener lose the reality of time and space. When Ulises listened to his music in the big American city, the bliss of his barrio and friends began to appear in his mind.

In Mexico, Cumbia and vallenato touched the streets of the poorest *barrios* (slums) in cities like Monterrey. *Cholombiano* or *Colombiana* became a form of living for teenagers, like Ulises and his Terkos, that decided to use this music as a form of expression.⁵ Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste and Pablo Vila state that:

Colombiana de Monterrey music displays a narrative of identity not just through vallenato, its most explicit narrative genre, but also through a combination of genres offering [an] alternative for multiple situations and states of mind that, together, include the possibility of claiming, “I am,” or “I can be,” all of these things, according to “what I need.”⁶

Ulises expressed this as a Cholombiano who lived in poverty and showed a humble state of life, friendship, and love to those close to

⁴ The güiro is a Latin American percussion instrument consisting of an open-ended, hollow gourd with parallel notches cut in one side. It is played by rubbing a stick or tines along the notches to produce a ratchet sound.

⁵ *Cholombiano* or *Colombiana* was what this group of young people who became fans of Colombian music called themselves. The “Cholo/ Chicano” style of garb from the United States and their “Cholombiano” dance style created a counterculture on the northern border of Mexico.

⁶ Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste and Pablo Vila, *Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 101.

him. He fused the Colombian music and the subculture of Cholombiano with loose-fitting pants, white knee-high socks, and colorful button-front shirts or baggy basketball shorts. This became a form of counterculture for the marginal side of one of the richest cities of Latin America (Monterrey). *Ulises* represents the authenticity and originality of the marginalized in a globalized and polarized city.

This film represents the difficulties we, as immigrants, face in our native cities due to violence, poverty, and the need to emigrate in the pursuit of happiness. It is also an example of what Cumbia means to Latin people and how that music has crossed borders, creating a unique cultural identity in the Americas. Cumbia represents the folklore of a marginalized society that defies physical and cultural borders and brings happiness to those people who are proud of what they are and where they come from in any time and place. Whether in Patagonia, Argentina, or Chicago, Cumbia has broken stereotypes. Cumbia is heard in the poorest neighborhoods, at university parties, or at high-society weddings. Cumbia does not know sex or gender because it is danced by men, women, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

I'm No Longer Here (Ya no estoy aquí) became one of the best international films of 2020 on Netflix. It was nominated for Best Film at the Goya Awards in Spain and was the winner of the Best Film category for the Ariel Awards in Mexico. It is a social portrait of the problems of Mexican youth and the violence they face due to poverty and drug trafficking. Likewise, it highlights the challenges of immigration in the United States and the problems of adaptability in this country. It is also an ode to the counterculture of Colombian music in Mexico, its form of expression through Cumbia and vallenato, and the mixture of Chicano outfits with bright and peculiar alterations and original hairstyles which identify them from the other urban countercultural tribes of Monterrey, Mexico.

We are no longer here but while we are far away from our native town, city, or country, we will always remember our roots,

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traditions, and culture. And as Lizandro Meza says in the song “Lejanía”: “What sadness it gives me, to be so far from my land.”⁷

Spanish:

Lejanía que me tiene entristecido
En mi pecho floreció una cumbia
De la nostalgia como una lágrima que se escapa

Ay me da, qué tristeza que me da, me da
Me da la lejanía, ay me da
Qué tristeza que me da, estar tan lejos de la tierra mía
Ay me da, qué tristeza que me da, me da
Me da la lejanía, ay me da
Qué tristeza que me da, estar tan lejos de la tierra mía

English:

Distance that has saddened me
A cumbia bloomed in my chest
Of nostalgia like a tear that escapes

Oh it gives me, what sadness it gives me, it gives me
It gives me the distance, oh it gives me
What sadness it gives me, to be so far from my land
Oh it gives me, what sadness it gives me, it gives me
It gives me the distance, oh it gives me
What sadness it gives me, to be so far from my land.⁸

⁷ Meza, Lizandro, and Los Hijos de la Niña Luz, “Lejanía,” track 13 on *Cumbias Colombianas*, Tumi Music, 1994, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nhW3cLF6zs>.

⁸ Meza, Lizandro and Los Hijos de la Niña Luz. “Lejanía,” track 13 on *Cumbias Colombianas*, Tumi Music, 1994, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nhW3cLF6zs>.

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