HISTORY IN THE MAKING

California State University,
San Bernardino
Journal of History

Volume Eighteen
2025

Alpha Delta Nu Chapter, Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society

History in the Making is an annual publication of the California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) Alpha Delta Nu Chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, and is sponsored by the History Department and the Instructionally Related Programs at CSUSB. Issues are published at the end of the spring semester of each academic year.

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.

California State University, San Bernardino Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that California State University, San Bernardino sits on the territory and ancestral land of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (Yuhaaviatam). We recognize that every member. of the California State University, San Bernardino community has benefitted and continues to benefit from the use and occupation of this land since the institution's founding in 1965.

Consistent with our values of community and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the university's relationship to Native peoples. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold California State University, San Bernardino more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.

Table of Contents

Travels Through History

Reviews

Introduction

> "To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to always remain a child. For what is the worth of a human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?"
>
> - Marcus T. Cicero, *Orator* (106 B.C.- 43 B.C.)

Welcome to the eighteenth edition of California State University, San Bernardino's (CSUSB) annual student-run history journal, *History in the Making*. As with previous editions, the journal is a collection of work from talented students and recent graduates from CSUSB and other collegiate institutions. Every year the editorial board strives to create an engaging volume of articles and reviews that capture the nature of historical inquiry in the past and present. This year's journal invites discussions on race, questions of independence, and feminism. The articles herein speak to past historical events while signifying their importance to present future topics of historical research.

For this year's journal, the editorial board is honored to present four full-length articles, two in-memoriams, a travel essay, an archival essay, and four review essays. Topics in this eighteenth edition include a confrontation between Abrahamic religions and racism, discussions of American neo-colonialism and its modern repercussions, an exploration into the beginnings of Chicana civil rights through the issues they faced, and an illumination of the impact of women during the American Revolution towards revolutionary efforts.

The image on the cover is one of the many images taken by Randi Stoner in 2024 during her trip through northern Germany and Poland. Taken at Wroclaw, Poland, the image is a bronze sculpture which represents contemporary figurative artwork. It is a depiction of a woman, with a globe forming the outlines of her skirt. The

image was chosen because many of the articles in this journal highlight the important role of women in global events, but it can also represent people's own interconnection with the world.

The opening article, "The Black Curse: The Curse of Ham and the Mark of Cain as Justification for Black Subjugation," by Margaret Phillips, explores the foundations of black racial subjugation by analyzing how the concept of race formed in accordance with religious justifications made by Abrahamic religions. She also discusses how the texts and arguments used by Christians, Jews, and Muslims determined black Africans to be inferior. Phillips discusses the development and evolution of this racial conflict, to the emergence of the trans-continental slave trade, and, finally, to the contemporary era. In addition, she goes into depth on how Mormons and Black churches contributed to or countered this narrative of racial inferiority.

Our second article, "Reverberations of the 1950s Puerto Rico Nationalist Independence Movement," by Gustavo Alonso Chamu, analyzes the conditions and social movements that led towards Puerto Rico's aims for independence in the face of neo-colonialism and decolonization, as well as the enduring effects of its legacy on the island today. In addition, he sheds light on the agencies that suppressed and supported the independence movement, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party (PRNP). Lastly, Alonso Chamu examines the repercussions of the failed attempt on Puerto Ricans today.

"Revolutionary Sisters: The Rise of Chicana Feminism," by Christian Rodriguez, examines the rise of Chicana feminism as a result of frustrations within the Chicano Rights Movement, going in depth about what it signified for these women to be part of the movement. She highlights and explores the various reasons that women would join these socio-political movements, such as family values, like-minded people, a supportive cohort, political values. There were many Chicana organizations, such the League of

Mexican American women, *La Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional*, *Las Adelitas de Aztlán,* and the Chicana Action Service Center, amongst others, that were instrumental in advocating for Mexican American women's voices and rights. Despite significant differences, these women eventually became leaders themselves, showing their willingness to persevere in the male-dominated political mainstream.

The last article, "Impact of Elite Patriot Women," by Anthony Luna, brings attention to the impact of elite patriot women in the success and development of the American Revolution. This work explains the historical context, the various roles of women during the revolution, and the ways they organized to impact the American Revolution. Luna shows that women created grassroots organizations and boosted morale, via their work in the frontlines or employing war propaganda in support of the revolution.

Two historic figures are memorialized and reflected upon in this year's journal. Marlet Felix's "A Champion of Human Rights: Remembering Jimmy Carter," delves into the humanitarian legacy that Carter leaves behind. The second in-memoriam, titled "Taking it to the People: Nikki Giovanni (1943-2024), by Cameron Smith, exalts Giovanni's enduring impact on culture and through various art forms.

Following the in-memoriams, Ahlys Gandara's archival essay, "A Familiar Taste: Considerations on Honey in California's Historical Record," analyzes and brings to the forefront the importance of beekeeping in California's long agricultural history.

Next, in "Travels through History," Randi Stoner's "Megastructures: Forced Labor and Massive Works in the Third Reich," chronicles their tour through Northern Germany and Poland to visit historic sites and acknowledge the atrocities of World War II.

The last section, Reviews, contains analyses of two films, one literature, and one museum exhibit. Starting off, Isai Martinez's "Film Review: '*Wicked Part 1*,'" examines how iterations of the Oz universe, through films or books, are made in response to societal events.

"Book Review: '*Coexistence: Stories*,'" by Gabrielle Velazquez, offers an analysis of the effect of colonialism, religion, and queerness upon the First Nations in Canada, while tying these same themes to the United States.

Lastly, Martin Perez offers two reviews. His first, "Film Review: '*Hijack 1971*,'" seeks to recreate the events of a hijacking of a Korean flight. His second, titled "Exhibit Review: 'Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today,'" offers an insightful look into Korean artforms, which was held at CSUSB.

Gustavo Alonso Chamu and Christina Monson
Chief Editors

Acknowledgements

The *History in the Making* journal is only possible with the hard work, dedication, and passion of CSUSB students, faculty, and staff. We would like to begin by thanking the talented authors and editors who contributed to this year's edition. From the "call for papers" to the meticulous editing process and the final copy-editing stage, the authors and editors worked diligently to produce the best long-form research pieces, in memoriams, archival pieces, travel pieces, film reviews, book reviews, and exhibit reviews possible. Due to their incredible commitment and passion for history, we created a timely and insightful edition of *History in the Making*.

The editorial board would like to extend their gratitude to Dr. Tiffany Jones for her diligence and constant availability. While the journal is a student-run publication, work of this caliber would not have been possible without her guidance, patience, and insight every step of the way. The editorial board would also like to thank Dr. Jeremy Murray for lending his expertise and knowledge of the editing and publishing process. Dr. Jones and Dr. Murray are integral to the publication of the journal. In addition, we must also acknowledge the contributions of CSUSB's History faculty who collaborated with the authors and editors to ensure the academic integrity of their work. The editorial board is grateful for their willingness and enthusiasm to work with the journal and its contributors.

Lastly, we would like to thank the History department administrative support coordinator, Pamela Crosson, for the vital support she provides year after year. We would also like to thank CSUSB's Robert (TJ) Osborne, Brandon Hernandez, and Elizabeth Diaz in Printing Services, and Shipping and Receiving, who offer their outstanding services and support to bring our journal to print every year.

Editorial Staff

Chief Editors

Gustavo Alonso
Christina Monson

Copy Editor

Margaret Phillips

Section Editors

Bshara Alsheikh
Ayden Kelly
Ahlys Gandara
Erin Maddex

Editors

Marlet Felix
Isai Martinez
Samuel Griffin
Randi Stoner
Allen Hall
Jessie Zepeda
Moises Leon

Faculty Advisors

Dr. Tiffany F. Jones
Professor, Journal Advisor

Dr. Jeremy Murray
Professor, History Club/Phi Alpha Theta Advisor

Articles

The Black Curse: The Curse of Ham and the Mark of Cain as Justification for Black Subjugation

By Margaret Phillips

Abstract: *The concept of race, particularly the construction of blackness and anti-blackness, emerged during the Medieval and Early Modern periods around the Mediterranean and its surrounding cultures. It is a concept of religious origin, in that it first depended on the worldview of the Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam— and their interpretations of the narratives surrounding the Biblical figures Cain and Ham. This established the "mark" of black skin as a curse placed by the Abrahamic God that made up the foundational justifications for racial hierarchies and the subjugation of black Africans. The convenient narrative framed blackness as inherently inferior and divinely ordained for servitude. The latter provided not only a moral justification but, at times, a moral imperative for the practice of racialized slavery, specifically in the Americas. These theological constructs evolved well into the nineteenth century, blending religious, cultural, and later scientific justifications to reinforce racial hierarchies. Religious justification, while powerful and pervasive, acted primarily as moral cover rather than root cause, ultimately proving to be unnecessary to continue in maintaining the status quo of black subjugation.*

How the concept of race came into being remains somewhat of a mystery. Though the complex web it has woven around modern history is obvious, pinpointing the origin– the weaver itself– has proved tricky. When it comes to our modern understanding of blackness and anti-blackness, however, there is at least one culprit among many that can lay claim to the sentiment and its popularity in the West. In the Medieval and Early Modern periods of the Mediterranean, comprising the Middle East, Southern Europe, and the African continent, the adherents of the Abrahamic faiths began formulating ideas around black Africans and their place among them based on Biblical texts. It was then and there that a unique take on human racial identity and its perceived hierarchies came into being, focused specifically on sub-Saharan Africans and their role in two dominating cultures– the Christian and the Islamic worlds.

It is no surprise that these concepts arose at a time of extreme political and social unrest in the Mediterranean and the surrounding region. The creation of racial hierarchies aided the people of the dominating cultures in carving out a sense of identity and purpose while also supporting economic endeavors. Adding to the complexity of these man-made social structures is their religious support, equally constructed to serve as a foundation for an economically prosperous society made cohesive through the establishment of *self* and *other*. The three major Abrahamic faiths– Judaism, Christianity, and Islam– found themselves coming to blows at almost every turn, fighting for land, power, and the unimaginable wealth that raw resources could offer. Yet, despite their constant contention, they managed to find unity in their own supremacist thought and subjugation of black Africans. By basing this view on their sacred texts and stories, faithful adherents found their justification and mission. If black Africans were the progeny of Ham, they were then equipped with God-given inferiority and the command to serve those deemed superior to them– *whites*.

Biblical Narratives

The Story of Ham

In chapter 9 of the Book of Genesis, after the floodwaters have receded and the family has found land, there is a vague passage that speaks of some form of wrongdoing by Noah's son, Ham, committed against the prophet himself:

> And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done unto him.
> And he said: Cursed be Canaan;
> A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.
> And he said: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem:
> And let Canaan be their servant.
> God enlarge Japheth,
> And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem;
> And let Canaan be their servant.[1]

The differences between the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible, which overlaps with the Christian Old Testament) and the Christian Bible's versions of this tale are subtle and entirely superficial. Both translations and editions say roughly the same thing– after the flood, Noah falls asleep in his drunkenness and his son, Ham, commits some sort of transgression against him, "seeing his nakedness", which leads to his brothers, Japeth and Shem, averting their eyes while they cover their father, showing him the respect and offering him the dignity that Ham had denied him. This last part is important in that the sons are set above Ham, especially Shem, who is now declared Ham's or Canaan's master, depending on interpretation.

[1] Gen. 9:24-27 (1917 Jewish Publication Society Translation).

In the Quran

Though the Qur'an does not mention Noah's sons, Shem, Japeth, and Ham, it does mention a wayward son that is omitted from the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, Biblical interpretation is supported in Islam, allowing for Biblical narratives to be represented. This has meant that although Ham is not mentioned directly in the Qur'an, he is accepted in Islam as one of the sons of Noah along with Shem and Japeth. It is unknown how exactly Muslims of this age came to believe that Ham's curse amounted to these things, but it is known that this belief was not their creation.

Noah (*Nuh*) himself is considered a prophet in Islam and appears or is mentioned in the Qur'an multiple times, having an entire chapter (*surah*) devoted to him. As with Jewish and Christian tradition, Noah in Islam is considered a father of the people, after Adam and Abraham, as he continues their line after the Great Flood. This is acknowledged in at least two places in the Qur'an: beginning in the early chapters "God chose Adam, Noah, Abraham's family, and the family of Imran, over all other people, in one line of descent– God hears and knows all" and continuing later, "We sent Noah and Abraham, and gave prophethood and scripture to their offspring."[2] Because some traditions believed that it was through the line of Noah that the world was repopulated, the logical conclusion was that his sons were the fathers of the different races and civilizations that inhabited the earth.

The Mark of Cain

Earlier in Genesis, the story of Cain and Abel concludes with Cain's punishment for killing his brother and his protection from the same fate– "Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should

[2] Qur'an 3:33, 57:26.

kill him."[3] Though the subjugation and enslavement of black Africans rested largely on the story of Ham and his curse, elements of the Mark of Cain bled into the reasoning over time. Most notably, the Mark of Cain would be considered to be dark or black skin to some. Of note is that both the Mark of Cain and Curse of Ham had other interpretations that also worked towards the subjugation of a group, for example, the idea of the Mark of Cain being held by the Jewish population by some in Medieval Europe and beyond.[4] Though the Mark of Cain as blackness narrative was not as popular or relied on as the Curse of Ham, the same logic that declared Cain's curse a skin of blackness had roots in earlier, depictions of sin or evildoers as having "Negroid features" such as the 13th century English psalter which depicts not only Cain as a black African, but, as David M. Goldenberg, scholar of Jewish history, points out, also "one of the men who arrested Christ at the Betrayal."[5]

The Curse Becomes Blackness

Prior to the curse narrative involving an affliction of the skin, the Medieval faithful recognized the three sons of Noah as fathers of the great nations of the Earth. Historian Benjamin Braude writes that the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim interpretations of the sons of Noah are the origin of racial and ethnic identities of European, Asian, and African peoples. This interpretation would evolve over time, transforming into what we recognize today as racial and ethnic identifiers, "the Noachic genealogy was retained, to a degree, for the Others, but it was rejected for the Selves. Ham and Shem, as they subsequently evolved in the modern era, retained their popular usage among Europeans and their descendants. Gradually, they assumed their current identities as the black and

---

[3] Gen. 4:15 (Revised Standard Version).

[4] David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 179.

[5] Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 179.

the Jew," which, of course, leads to their usefulness; as Braude notes, "the Sons of Noah have been major cultural symbols used in the complex, long, and gradual process of constructing racism in Western society."[6] He argues that, on some level, even the Other was in relation to the Self, as "the treatment of Jews, blacks, and Indians in the early modern world arose despite, not because of, theological acceptance of a shared genealogy."[7] In addition, Braude argues that had other theories about human origins been accepted that proposed separate origins for separate peoples, the result would have been far more violent and destructive as "the logic of common descent, once accepted, carried the assumption of a unified blood relation."[8] Although mentions of skin color in general, or blackness in particular, would come later, the story was used to describe various races beyond simple ethnic identifiers. One such version held not only that Ham was the father of sub-Saharan Africans, but that the other two sons of Noah also fathered ethnicities– Shem Asians and Japhet Europeans.[9] If this were the interpretation of the curse narrative, it would also support the idea that Ham's children (in this case, black Africans) were the God-given servants of the other two brothers' lineage (Asians and Europeans).

The Genesis of Anti-Blackness

It is in the Islamic world of the Middle Ages that the earliest known accounts of Ham as cursed with dark or black skin are found. This makes perfect sense when one considers the closeness of the Islamic world to the continent of Africa, both regionally and culturally. As more and more Muslim scholars and explorers

---

[6] Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 142.

[7] Braude, "The Sons of Noah," 105.

[8] Braude, "The Sons of Noah," 105.

[9] Braude, "The Sons of Noah," 114.

moved out into the continent, they came into contact with black Africans and their customs. In coming into contact with sub-Saharan Africans, Muslims were both intrigued by and disgusted with these newfound cultures and the people in relation to them. A desire to understand these new things they were coming into contact with no doubt aided in their search for the reasoning behind the people and their world. The connection of Ham with black Africans is found in the Islamic world of the eighth century when Wahb ibn Munabbih, considered at the time to be an expert of so-called "Jewish legends", is credited to have said: "Ham, the son of Noah was a white man, fair of face. God—Mighty and Exalted is He —changed his color and the color of his descendants because of the curse of his father. He went off and his offspring followed him and they settled on the sea shore. God increased and multiplied them, and they are the Blacks (al-südan)".[10]

Blackness being interpreted as a curse from God had its usefulness in the Arab world of the time. Having already come into contact with black Africans, those of Arab descent had chosen to view blackness as subpar, perhaps even before its connection to Ham and his curse. We see this in early eighth-century poetry written by both Arabs and black Africans of the Islamic world. In response to what we would now term *racism* or, at the very least, *colorism*, at the hands of the Arab poet, Jahir, poet Al Hayqutan, a black man, wrote in defense of himself and his coloring:

> Though I be frizzle-haired, coal-black of skin,
> My generosity and honor shine yet brighter.
> Blackness of skin does me no harm
> When in battle's heat my sword is flailing.
> Would you claim glory where there is none?
> The Ethiopians are more glorious than you.[11]

---

[10] Paul Halsall, ed., "Internet History Sourcebooks: Medieval Sourcebook," sourcebooks.fordham.edu, accessed March 30, 2024, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/race-medieval1.asp#Wahb.

[11] *Colorism* is a racial prejudice based on a hierarchy of skin tone, typically with the lighter shades being considered superior; Paul Halsall, ed., "Internet History

It is important to note that the poem only predates the interpretation of Ham's curse by Ibn Munabbih by a few years. It is entirely possible that ideas about a curse and divinely ordained enslavement already existed in the Islamic world and had reached men like Al Hayqutan and Jahir. Regardless, the choice to mock and belittle the color of black Africans' skin, the texture of their hair, and so on suggests that the bigotry towards black Africans had extended beyond their supposed destiny for servitude into core issues with the people themselves.

Due to both location and the presence of the Islamic world, the Iberian Peninsula became the first stop in Europe for black Africans. In the sixteenth century, the vast majority of Africans in Europe were located in Spain and Portugal. Most were enslaved.[12] For European Christians, black Africans were *ipso facto* sub-human as "not only were blacks not Christians, but they were the Muslims' servants, the heathen's heathen, doubly cursed by their status as nonbelievers and by their servile condition."[13] From early on, in the beginnings of the fourteenth century, Europeans began making distinctions between white and black slaves.[14]

Here is where it becomes important to discuss the practice of slavery prior to its racialization in the Early Modern Period. Slavery, of course, was not a new concept to the peoples of the region or period. For time immemorial, humans have engaged in the forced labor of other humans. In fact, the Greek and Roman systems of slavery had been used as inspiration for the systems of forced labor that Europeans, especially, engaged in during the Middle Ages and beyond. During this time in Europe and the Middle East, most slaves were "white," even by today's standards.

Sourcebooks: Medieval Sourcebook," sourcebooks.fordham.edu, accessed March 30, 2024, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/race-medieval1.asp#Al Hayqutan.

[12] Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 98.

[13] James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 149.

[14] Sweet, "The Iberian Roots," 150.

Philip D. Morgan, historian of Early America and the Atlantic world, in explaining the origins of American slavery, explains that at one point, "the eastern Adriatic became Europe's main 'slave coast,'" meaning that Europeans were capturing and enslaving along the borders of their own continent, though not within their own nations.[15] Thus, prior to slavery taking on a racial identity, it had taken on an ethnic one. The European slaves of this era were so prominent that they even changed the terminology for their position: "the Latin word for people of Slavic descent, *sclavus*, became the origin of the word slave in English (and in French *esclave*, in Spanish *esclavo*, and in German *sklave*)."[16]

Of note is that in Islam, slavery is not expressly forbidden, though the Qur'an, much like the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, offers regulations on how one is to treat their slaves. Robin Blackburn, historian of slavery, points out, "Islamic societies were prepared to enslave anyone, of any color or race, as long as they were initially infidel."[17] The same is, of course, true of the Bible, which contains passages in both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament that not only condone slavery but offer guidelines for both slavers and the enslaved. Thus, like the Muslims, Christians had no problem with capturing and enslaving the *other*. Prior to the racialization of slavery, the enslavement of the perceived *other* was based on religious identity. Both Christians and Muslims had firm rules around enslaving their own, up to the strict exclusion of doing so. In the Christian world, the conversion of some groups had led to their freedom, as was the case in 1435, when Pope Eugene IV (1383–1447) issued *Sicut Dudum,* which, in no uncertain terms, called for the release of the enslaved black inhabitants of the Canary Islands due to their conversion–

> These people are to be totally and perpetually free,

---

[15] Blackburn, "Old World Background," 83.

[16] Philip D. Morgan, "Origins of American Slavery," *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 4 (2005): 52.

[17] Blackburn, "Old World Background," 99.

> and are to be let go without the exaction or reception of money. If this is not done when the fifteen days have passed, they incur the sentence of excommunication by the act itself, from which they cannot be absolved, except at the point of death, even by the Holy See, or by any Spanish bishop, or by the aforementioned Ferdinand, unless they have first given freedom to these captive persons and restored their goods.[18]

However, over time and with rising need, both faiths became more relaxed in allowing their own faithful to be enslaved, as long as the Christian or Muslim slave was a convert, a heretic, or non-white (however they chose to define that at the time). As such, race became the determining factor of *otherness*.

Africa and the New World

Forms of slavery existed in Africa long before the Islamic or Christian worlds made the practice explode there; indeed, long before the two faiths even existed. Like with most systems of slavery throughout the Ancient world, the African system was based in war and conquest and was far from racialized. People from neighboring regions would be enslaved as a result of war or as gifts of hospitality in peacetime. Debt slavery and other systems of servitude, including systems that looked like the West's indentured structure, also existed on the continent. These systems tended towards a kinship model, in which the enslaved became, in a sense, a part of the families who claimed them.[19]

---

[18] Eugene IV, *Sicut Dudum* [Against the Enslaving of Black Natives from the Canary Islands], The Holy See, January 13, 1435, https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Eugene04/eugene04sicut.htm.

[19] Rebecca Schnabel, "Enslaved Peoples in African Societies Before the Transatlantic Slave Trade," *America's Black Holocaust Museum*, last modified August 28, 2020, https://www.abhmuseum.org/enslaved-peoples-in-african-societies-before-the-transatlantic-slave-trade/.

Portugal's appearance in Western Africa in the fifteenth century ushered in the Christian world's direct contact with black Africans. The fact that these Africans also were not converted to Christianity presented the Christians with the opportunity for not only economic growth but also spiritual dominance. As was customary, Portugal sought the approval of the Vatican in their foreign endeavors. *Dum Diversas*, issued by Pope Nicholas V (1397–1455) on June 18, 1452, recognized Portugal, under King Afonso V (1432–1481), as having the right to the West African coastal territories it had "discovered". This decree gave Portugal the right to:

> invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.[20]

Thus began the transatlantic slave trade.

While the Portuguese established themselves on the Western coast of Africa, the Spanish made their way across the Atlantic. Almost immediately after Columbus landed in the Americas, the question of labor forces begged an answer. The *encomienda* system was an early development of forced labor of the indigenous, one that came with its own problems that it seemed, later down the road, black slavery offered solutions to. The early North American colonists found themselves on much the

[20] Nicholas V, *Dum Diversas*, The Holy See, June 18, 1452, https://doctrineofdiscovery.org/dum-diversas/.

same trajectory. Native forced labor in the future United States became a lucrative system and trade beginning in the seventeenth century, as Philip D. Morgan, historian of slavery in the Americas, writes, "Early South Carolina resorted to Indian slaves who, in the first decade of the eighteenth century, comprised one-third of the colony's slave labor force" adding, "From 1670 to 1715 an active Indian slave trade saw as many as 50,000 Indians from the Carolinas and Florida sold to the West Indies and to the Northern mainland colonies."[21] Like in Latin America, North American colonists found the forced labor of Native Americans to be less lucrative and more difficult than they preferred.

An added complication was the question of whether or not enslaving Native Americans was morally just. The curse narratives did not have a place among these new peoples, whose Biblical origin was being debated within the Christian world. For the Catholic Church, the paramount issue was that of conversion, at least on the surface. In May 1537, Pope Paul III (1468–1549) issued *Sublimis Deus: On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians*, which was concerned with making it possible for the Native Americans under the yoke of Catholic nations to receive the faith. This marked a shift from previous similar declarations in that it did not require conversion as a protection from slavery–

> notwithstanding whatever may have been or may be said to the contrary, the said Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should, freely and legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in any way enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null and have no effect.[22]

---

[21] Morgan, "Origins of American Slavery," 52.

[22] Pope Paul III, *Sublimis Deus* [On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians], the Holy See, May 29, 1537,

Though the forced labor of the indigenous persisted, the racial systems that were forming in the Americas still positioned them above imported black Africans, who existed, it seemed, as little more than beasts of burden.

Slowly, as black slaves began to outnumber whites and the indigenous in various forms of forced labor, slavery became synonymous with blackness across the Western world. But it is in the Americas that the racialization of slavery took hold. As Morgan points out, "The racial factor became one of the most distinctive features of slavery in the New World," as did "the dishonor, humiliation, and bestialization that were universally associated with chattel slavery" become merged with blackness.[23] This began in the seventeenth century with the mass importation of black African slaves. Of course, this is not to say that this racialization remained only in the Americas. The so-called discovery of the New World led to a globalization previously unheard of. Therefore, what was true in the Americas was essentially as true among their European counterparts and vice versa. Goldenberg makes this point when he lists a number of references:

> in England Thomas Peyton referred to the black African as 'the cursed descendant of Cain and the devil' in his The Glasse of Time published in 1620, and in 1785 Paul Erdman Isert more expansively recorded the view that the Black's skin color "originated with Cain, the murderer of his brother, whose family were destined to have the black colour as a punishment." In France the Curse is mentioned in a 1733 *Dissertation sur l'origine des nègres et des américains*, and is recorded by Jean-Baptiste Labat, the Dominican missionary and explorer (d. 1738), as also by Nicolas Bergier in his Dictionnaire Théologique in 1789. It

https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm.

[23] Morgan, "Origins of American Slavery," 53.

> is also found in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Portuguese empire.[24]

As for the Curse of Ham narrative, it too begins to show up in commentary as a reasoning for black enslavement around the time Portugal moves into sub-Saharan Africa. In the fifteenth century, Gomes Eannes de Zurara (1410–1474), in his *Chronicle of Discovery and Conquest of Guinea,* wrote:

> these blacks were Moors like the others, though their slaves, in accordance with ancient custom, which I believe to have been because of the curse which, after the Deluge, Noah laid upon his son Cain, cursing him in this way — that his race should be subject to all the other races of the world.[25]

Of course, by Noah's son Cain, de Zurara meant Ham. He goes on to name his sources for this as "the Archbishop Don Roderic of Toledo, and Josephus in his book on the *Antiquities of the Jews*, and Walter, with other authors who have spoken of the generations of Noah, from the time of his going out of the Ark."[26]

The Nineteenth Century

It is in the nineteenth century that the dual curse of Ham and the mark of Cain narratives reach their zenith. This is especially true for the United States, which by the end of the century will have undergone a massive and bloody social shift away from slavery. This move, however, does not mark a change in racist attitudes. In fact, ideas about race and racial supremacy only grow in intensity, adding more concrete scientific justifications for racism. These

---

[24] Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham*, 179.

[25] Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea* (B. Franklin, 1896), 54.

[26] de Zurara, *Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, 54.

scientific justifications become their own scourge in the following century, all bolstered by "evidence" as found in the gospel of eugenics.

The Jewish Diaspora

In speaking of the role the three main Abrahamic faiths played in the religiously sanctioned subjugation of black Africans, it is clear that the most influential faiths were two out of the three– Christianity and Islam, leaving Judaism in its own class. For centuries, it was a popular notion that the interpretation of both Cain and Ham's blackness in the Hebrew Bible came from Jewish tradition, but there is simply no evidence to support this. The first accounts of Jews referencing these Biblical narratives to explain the black race come only after this belief was adopted by the Christian and Muslim worlds, of which the Jewish diaspora was largely beholden as subjects under their rule. To be sure, Jewish individuals took part in the maintenance of these harmful narratives as well as in the slave trade itself.

Although they, themselves, had been targeted over the centuries and across continents for their perceived racial and ethnic *otherness*, Jews in nineteenth-century America came under scrutiny for various reasons. Historian and president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Leonard Rogoff, examines the place of the Southern Jew. Of note, he offers that "The Jewish racial question was not a social or political issue in the antebellum South: whatever anti-Semitism Southern Jews encountered was primarily economic or religious," in fact, "'Race' in the vernacular lacked its scientific connotations other than to suggest that Southerners looked upon Jews as a class."[27] Too often, Jewishness was used against black Africans by whites, in both worlds of science and religion. The argument went that "The science that placed the Jew as racially similar to Europeans denigrated the

[27] Leonard Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?: The Racial Place of the Southern Jew," *American Jewish History* 85, no. 3 (1997): 201.

African as an inferior race or species that could not be improved by emancipation, suffrage, or education."[28] No doubt understanding the benefit of a closer perceived proximity to whiteness, many Jews in the American South "shared the Southerners' "romantic racialism" and assented to the view of themselves as members of a pure, fixed, uniform white race which had preserved its lineage since antiquity."[29] This same acceptance of *whiteness* is seen elsewhere in the Jewish diaspora over the centuries of black slavery, including Latin America, the Netherlands, and England. It is, therefore, more than fair to say that the Jewish ideology and experience in black slavery was similar to the white experience, albeit with some very important caveats.

The Mormons

Joseph Smith Jr. (1805–1844) came from a fairly standard lower-class white family in upstate New York. Like many of the time, the Smith family consisted of both nominal and avid Christians. Smith himself began attending local revivals and other church related activities that were full of various charismatic preachers spreading the Christian message. In his teens, he became deeply invested in the faith and the Bible. Though there is no direct evidence that Smith was aware of the curse of Ham or the mark of Cain narratives, it is highly likely given the era in which he was born and raised.

Founded in the mid-nineteenth century on the heels of the Second Great Awakening, Mormonism has a unique position in the history of Christendom and blackness.[30] The new faith developed at the height of the curse narrative's popularity. There was much found in Mormonism's theology that stood outside standard

---

[28] Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?," 202.

[29] Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?," 204.

[30] The Second Great Awakening was the second occurrence of a massive Protestant revival sweeping through the United States, this time in the nineteenth century.

Christian doctrine, but Smith's stance on Ham and the dual curse fit in perfectly. Of the story of Ham's curse, Smith wrote:

> And so far from that prediction's being averse from the mind of God it remains as a lasting monument of the decree of Jehovah, to the shame and confusion of all who have cried out against the South, in consequence of their holding the sons of Ham in servitude! […] Trace the history of the world from this notable event down to this day, and you will find the fulfilment of this singular prophecy.[31]

It should be noted that there is a long and complicated history with regard to Mormon relations with black Africans and the enslaved, but the religious stance remains clear.

After Smith's death at the hands of an unruly mob, the leadership of the Mormon church passed to Brigham Young (1801–1877), who would eventually move the new religion and its faithful west to the Utah territory. Though Smith had clearly adopted the curse narrative, he also had shown deference to some African Americans like Elijah Abel (1808–1884), who was roughly an eighth black. He was the first black man (as he was considered at the time) to receive the Mormon priesthood. Young's stance proved far harsher. Under his rule, no black man or white man who copulated with a black woman could hold the priesthood. Of this, the second prophet and leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said:

> The Lord said I will not kill Cain, but I will put a mark upon him, and it is seen in the face of every Negro on the Earth. And it is the decree of God that that mark shall remain upon the seed of Cain (and the curse) until all the seed of Abel should be redeemed; and Cain will not receive

[31] Joseph Smith Jr., "Letter to Oliver Cowdery," The Joseph Smith Papers, April 9, 1836, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-cowdery-circa-9-april-1836/2.

> the Priesthood or Salvation until all the seed of Abel are redeemed.[32]

None of this comes as a surprise when one considers the most damning evidence of the Mormon faith's being directly influenced by the curse narratives. Unlike the other faiths referenced here, the concept of God's cursing those who have turned against Him in sin with dark skin was central to the faith's theology. This appears somewhat early in the Book of Mormon, when the brothers of Nephi, Laman and Lemuel, and their descendants, known as *Lamanites*, are separated from Nephi's, known as *Nephites*,

> And he had caused the cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them.[33]

The Lamanites of the Book of Mormon, for Latter-day Saints, were the ancestors of Native Americans. This story was used to explain how, if they were descendants of Israelites who had journeyed to the Americas prior to the birth of Christ, they would look so different.

The Mormon mythos around the "curse of dark skin" did not stop there. According to Mormon doctrine, the curse could be removed not only from the black or brown community as a whole, but from individuals if they lived their lives "righteously."[34] This belief continued well into the twentieth century. In 1960, Mormon

---

[32] Fred C. Collier, ed., *The Teachings of President Brigham Young Vol. 3 1852–1854* (Collier's Publishing, 1987), 48.

[33] 2 Nephi 5:21 (The Book of Mormon).

[34] 3 Nephi 2:14-16 (The Book of Mormon).

leader Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) remarked, "The day of the Lamanites is nigh. For years they have been growing delightsome, and they are now becoming white and delightsome, as they were promised," going on to add:

> At one meeting a father and mother and their sixteen-year-old daughter were present, the little member girl — sixteen — sitting between the dark father and mother, and it was evident she was several shades lighter than her parents — on the same reservation, in the same hogan, subject to the same sun and wind and weather. There was the doctor in a Utah city who for two years had had an Indian boy in his home who stated that he was some shades lighter than the younger brother just coming into the program from the reservation. These young members of the Church are changing to whiteness and to delightsomeness. One white elder jokingly said that he and his companion were donating blood regularly to the hospital in the hope that the process might be accelerated.[35]

Unsurprisingly, the Mormon church did not revoke the priesthood ban on black men until 1978.[36] They have also made moves in recent years away from all skin color curse narratives, including in the Book of Mormon.[37]

The Black Church

Though Christianity was used as a tool of subjugation towards black Africans and their descendants, it also became a tool of

---

[35] Spencer W. Kimball, "The Day of the Lamanites," The Improvement Era, December 1960, http://archive.org/details/improvementera6312unse.
[36] "Official Declaration 2," https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/eng/scriptures/dc-testament/od/2.
[37] Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Error in Printed LDS Church Manual Could Revive Racial Criticisms," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2020/01/18/error-printed-lds-church/.

liberation for many of the enslaved and freed in the diaspora. Enslaved black Americans found hope in Biblical stories of the Exodus and the general message of liberation some have found in the New Testament. In the United States, the so-called Black Church has existed as a unifying and revolutionary force among black Americans from enslavement through to the Civil Rights movement of the twentieth century. Black Christian ministers, especially, have played a key role in black activism, with Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) and Reverend Al Sharpton (1954–present) being only two examples in a very long list.

For black Christians, especially the enslaved in the United States, the adoption of Christianity was not as simple as taking up the white man's narrative. As religious historian J. Albert Harrill points out, "African Americans had their own hermeneutics of suspicion and an oral canon of Christian Scripture that competed with the white folks' Bible."[38] This oral canon, he says, consisted of Bible stories transmitted through music. For these men and women, their "experiential Christianity" and related slave spirituals were "more authentic than the 'Bible Christianity' of their white masters."[39] Black Christianity became an entirely different beast than the Christianity of the ruling classes. Prominent religious historian, Timothy L. Smith, explains the development of this unique form of the faith– "Picking their way through the maze of contradictions between the teaching and the practice of those who oppressed them, the African Christians emerged with a deep sense of the paradox and mystery of God's dealings with men."[40] He goes on to explain the paradox and mystery of the black church

---

[38] J. Albert Harrill, "The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy: A Case History in the Hermeneutical Tension between Biblical Criticism and Christian Moral Debate," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 10, no. 2 (2000): 162.

[39] Harrill, "The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy," 162.

[40] Timothy L. Smith, "Slavery and Theology: The Emergence of Black Christian Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America," *Church History* 41, no. 4 (1972): 498.

with the poetic wonder it is due:

> Africans were pressed up against the wall by American slavery's vast assault upon their humanity. This tragic circumstance compelled them to discover in the religion of their white oppressors a faith whose depths few of the latter had ever suspected, enabling the Black Christians to reconcile suffering and hope, guilt and forgiveness, tyranny and spiritual freedom, self-hate and divine acceptance. In that faith some of them found the strength to throw off their bonds, and many others the dignity, when once emancipated, to stand up free. Remarkable numbers of their preachers have ever since displayed the grace and good sense to declare, when few white men listened, that perceptions of Christianity grasped by enslaved Blacks were the heritage of all men, and their hope as well.[41]

Of course, the adoption of Christianity by many black slaves in the United States included the adoption of the curse narrative. Popular sentiment among black American Christians was that they were descendants of Ham, or *Hamites*; unsurprising, as it was just as popular among the general public. Not every black American activist, minister, or otherwise, agreed with their identification as Hamites. Historian Brian Connolly focuses on W.E.B. DuBois's (1868–1963) criticism of the narrative as historical evidence– "Du Bois rejected its historical veracity: "The biblical story of Shem, Ham, and Japheth retains the interest of a primitive myth with its measure of allegorical truth, but has, of course, no historic basis."[42] Still, of those who did accept themselves as descendants of Ham, there were those in the Black Church who upended the narrative in, perhaps, surprising ways.

---

[41] Smith, "Slavery and Theology," 512.

[42] Brian Connolly, "The Curse of Canaan; or, A Fantasy of Origins in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Connexions*, Histories of Race and Sex in North America (University of Illinois Press, 2016), 169.

These laypeople, activists, and ministers sought to use the narrative in a way that served the black community as a whole and lessened the power of the white point of view over them.

Harvey Johnson (1843–1923) was a civil rights leader from Baltimore, Maryland, at the turn of the nineteenth century. He also happened to be an educated Christian minister. Born into slavery in 1843, Johnson's relationship with the church existed alongside his belief in black liberation. He published several Christian works to this effect, some of which specifically addressed the Curse of Ham and related Biblical understandings of race. In *The Hamite*, Johnson argues against the concept of the dual curse, laying out his reasoning as to why the lineage of Ham, though black, is not ordained to be slaves by God. Using both the Bible and history, he hones in on the fact that white slavery predated the Atlantic Slave Trade:

> African slavery—so called—did not begin for more than a thousand years after Christ; and therefore white slavery is over two thousand years older than black slavery; or in other words, the white race were slaves for more than two thousand years before the colored race.[43]

Of the Greeks and Romans and their systems of slavery, he argues:

> they were the descendants of Japheth, both the slaves themselves and the enslavers. I repeat that the descendants of Japheth, or the white men, were the very first to enslave their own brethren ; so the race degradation is on the other side, for slavery existed among the Greeks and Romans before the days of Homer, and he lived a thousand years before Christ.[44]

If the curse truly was meant for the black race and the black race

---

[43] Harvey Johnson, *The Hamite.* (Printing Office of J.F. Weishampel, 1889), 11.
[44] Johnson, *The Hamite*, 11.

alone to serve the white, his argument goes, then the widespread and long-lasting enslavement of whites disproves the curse of servitude as belonging only to Ham and his descendants. Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) offers a similar rebuttal of the dual curse narrative. Sharon Carson, religion and philosophy scholar, addresses Douglass's dismantling in her examination of his memoir, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*– "Douglass challenges this rationalization by first making explicit the fact that many slaves, himself included, are the offspring of white fathers and black mothers, thus fracturing the racial boundaries so critical to the theologies of white Christians."[45]

In 1891's *The Question of Race*, Johnson argues that it is blackness, not whiteness, that is the default human race; the one God Himself created us to be:

> Sir Henry Rawlinson, one of the greatest paleologists that ever lived, himself being a white man, says that the word "Adam" means "dark race." So that we have the best of authority for saying that God never created man white, but created him dark: and that the color of the white man is an unknown, and probably an unknowable act of nature. No one ever has been able yet to trace the white man's color to its origin. But the dark man's color is traced to his creation. He was made so.[46]

The argument that man was created black and not white seems to have gained in popularity in the twentieth-century struggle for civil rights. Biblical scholar Nyasha Junior shares nineteenth and twentieth-century accounts from Africa and black communities in the United States of the tale of Cain turning white or pale with fear after the murder of his brother, Abel. She shares one particular

---

[45] Sharon Carson, "Shaking the Foundation: Liberation Theology in 'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,'" *Religion & Literature* 24, no. 2 (1992): 20.
[46] Harvey Johnson, The Question of Race: a Reply to W. Cabell Bruce, Esq. (Printing Office of J.F. Weishampel, 1891), 4-5.

interpretation of this tale–

> In 1926, Newbell Niles Puckett, a White sociologist from Mississippi, credited Hattie Harris of Columbus, Mississippi, with a version of the story. Puckett wrote, "Nature made Africans black, and ethnocentrism, based upon this natural feature, always declares in the African story that all men were at first made black, but that when Cain killed Abel he turned white from fear; and in Maryland and Mississippi at least, precisely the same belief survives."[47]

Later in the article, Junior ties in this uniquely black mythos about Cain to the advocacy work of one influential– and infamous– Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), Jamaican activist and founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. Garvey argues that not only did the white race inherit their coloring from Cain, who turned white from hiding in caves for centuries, but also his violence and greed.[48] Garvey's story deviates from the idea that Cain turned white with fear but maintains Cain's cowardice in his hiding in caves. For him, whiteness was not only greedy and violent but also barbaric and backward–

> According to Garvey, the White race ended up in Europe because Cain's White descendants were driven out of Africa by the Black descendants of Adam and Eve who knew of Cain's violence. Garvey credited the Black descendants of Adam and Eve living in Africa with developing civilizations while the White descendants of Cain hid in caves in Europe.[49]

---

[47] Nyasha Junior, "The Mark of Cain and White Violence," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 4 (2020): 665–666.

[48] Junior, "The Mark of Cain and White Violence," 669.

[49] Nyasha Junior, "The Mark of Cain and White Violence," *Journal of Biblical*

It should be noted that Garvey did not share these ideas about Cain and whiteness merely in passing but had them within his 1937 "School of African Philosophy" curriculum; lesson 12, to be exact.

Exceptions and Deviations

Oddly, both the Mark of Cain and Curse of Ham narratives offered a path for black Africans, and those included in the diaspora, to be considered equals with whites. Though black slavery apologists were engaging the narratives in a highly bigoted manner, there was still an even worse option. This was already alluded to earlier in the paper, with Benjamin Braude pointing out "the logic of common descent, once accepted, carried the assumption of a unified blood relation."[50] In *Living Color: the Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color*, anthropologist Nina G. Jablonski supports this assertion: "In the eighteenth century, most believers in a single origin of humanity accepted that all humans descended from a single father, the biblical Adam. The question then became how they had become differentiated."[51] Common descent, also known as monogenism and single origin, gave blacks and others a shared origin with the white races. It named them humans.

The understanding of black Africans as fellow humans presented an obvious dilemma for some whites. The only answer was to dehumanize them through a more exclusive mythos around the creation of the races. Connolly puts this ideology in simple terms: "to explain racial inequality and the treatment of people of African descent required excluding them from the human family, for to accord them a place in the human family, as the curse of Canaan did, was also to acknowledge their equal kinship with

---

Literature 139, no. 4 (2020): 670.

[50] Braude, "The Sons of Noah", 105.

[51] Nina G. Jablonski, *Living Color: The Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color* (University of California Press, 2012) 137.

God."[52] The theory of polygenism, or multiple origins, underscored the black person's station of *otherness*, drawing a stark line between who was to be considered human and who was not. This is evident in the theory's Biblical understanding of the origin of the races, where the belief arises that the curse narrative must be false because black people are not human and Cain and Ham were, as the progeny of Adam, ordained of God. This belief posited that there were races of manlike beings prior to the creation of Adam. In 1912, Reverend James Riley Lamb, who was at the time the founder and president of the True American League of the White Brotherhood of the World, wrote a short work of sixty-eight pages, in part debunking Ham and Cain as the fathers of the black race. Lamb offers his analysis in firm and simple language, declaring;

> The black and yellow peoples were created prior to the creation of Adam, and to distinguish these races from the white race, they are known in the Scriptures as the "beast" races which were not created in the image of God, and therefore could not become the inspired oracles of God, nor be the "seed" of which Christ should be born, nor possess the ability for world "dominion" and exemplarship.[53]

There were, of course, exceptions to Cain and Ham as fathers of the race. Jablonski points out that by the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, "many pre-Adamite theorists averred that the biblical 'mark of Cain' was blackness or that he had married a black-skinned wife. Thus, the punishment for Cain's evildoing was the blackening of his body or his union with dark, inferior beings."[54] In other words, Cain may have been the father of the black race, but the mother of the race was inhuman and,

---

[52] Connolly, "The Curse of Canaan," 193.

[53] James Riley Lamb, *Bible Account of Origin of Races; Baptists vs. World Evils* (Eufaula, Okl., 1921), 6.

[54] Jablonski, *Living Color*, 137.

therefore, so were her children. Not only that, but Cain then took on the physical characteristics of something altogether different from the race of Adam, or God's ordained race.

Abolitionists of the age leaned into the biblical argument for black Africans' inherent humanity. They argued that this alone proved their right to freedom and equal treatment. Lorenzo Dow Turner, an African-American linguist and scholar, turns to eighteenth century American literature, where "the theory that all men were born free and had equal rights was used in reference to the African slave" like one Samuel Sewall, a judge in the Salem witch trials, who "contended that 'all men, as they are the Sons of Adam, are coheirs, and have equal right unto Liberty, and all other outward Comforts of Life.'"[55] In the eighteenth century, an image of a black man, on bent knee, in chains with the words "Am I not a man and brother?" became the official image of the antislavery movement in England. This image was reproduced in medallion form for those in the cause to carry with them (Figure 1). The words are poignant, naming black slaves as both men and brothers; in other words, the human children of Adam.

[55] Lorenzo Dow Turner, "The Anti-Slavery Movement Prior to the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade (1641-1808)," *The Journal of Negro History* 14, no. 4 (1929): 381–382.

Figure 1: Medallion of an enslaved black man, shackled and kneeling in supplication. The words "Am I not a man and brother?"are etched along the border.[56]

Conclusion

It cannot be understated that religious justification does not lend to religious causation. In the beginning of the history of anti-blackness in the Western world, it is evident that the sentiment predates the use of Biblical narratives to justify it. By the end, religious justifications made way for scientific, which had always been present alongside one another, the scientific used as supposed proof of divine will. Man's desire for moral sanction is not out of necessity, only the preservation of ego. This is, perhaps, the best lesson we can learn from the history of subjugation based on

[56] Josiah Wedgwood and William Hackwood, *Antislavery Medallion*, ca 1787, Jasperware, Overall (confirmed): 1 3/16 × 1 1/16 in. (3 × 2.7 cm); Overall (as mounted, confirmed): 2 3/8 × 1 3/16 in. (6 × 3 cm), ca 1787, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/191076.

religious justification; humanity is fully responsible for its own actions. Where justification is given that positions the adherent in a superior moral and/or ethical standing, a deconstruction of that justification is in order, one that will unmask the true culprit. It is only through this introspective relationship with the stories we tell ourselves that humanity can hope to break these dangerous cycles. Going after the justification as the cause only serves to prevent damage to the deeply held beliefs we use to, both literally and figuratively, enslave one another.

Bibliography

Albert, Harrill J. "The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy: A Case History in the Hermeneutical Tension between Biblical Criticism and Christian Moral Debate." *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 10 (2000): 149–86. https://doi.org/10.2307/1123945.

Bashir, Haroon. "Black Excellence and the Curse of Ham: Debating Race and Slavery in the Islamic Tradition." *ReOrient* 5 (2019): 92–116. https://doi.org/10.13169/reorient.5.1.0092.

Blackburn, Robin. "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (January 1997): 65. https://doi.org/10.2307/2953313.

Braude, Benjamin. "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 103–42. https://doi.org/10.2307/2953314.

Carson, Sharon. "Shaking the Foundation: Liberation Theology in 'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.'" *Religion & Literature* 24 (1992): 19–34. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40059512.

Collier, Fred C, ed. *The Teachings of President Brigham Young Vol. 3 1852–1854*. Collier's Publishing, 1987. https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Teachings_of_President_Brigham_Young/LkRZGQ8oO8IC?hl=en&gbpv=0.

Connolly, Brian. "The Curse of Canaan; Or, a Fantasy of Origins in Nineteenth-Century America," 169–202. University of Illinois Press, 2016. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1hd18k1.11

Constable, Olivia Remie. *To Live Like a Moor: Christian*

Perceptions of Muslim Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain. Edited by Robin Vose. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv16t6fdz.

Esseissah, Khaled. "'Paradise Is under the Feet of Your Master': The Construction of the Religious Basis of Racial Slavery in the Mauritanian Arab-Berber Community." *Journal of Black Studies* 47 (2016): 3–23. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24572956.

Goldenberg, David M. *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Princeton University Press, 2003.

Gomes, Zurara. *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*. B. Franklin, 1896.

Jablonski, Nina G. *Living Color: The Biological and Social Meaning of Skin Color*. University of California Press, 2012.

Jr, Smith. "Letter to Oliver Cowdery." The Joseph Smith Papers, April 1836. https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-cowdery-circa-9-april-1836/2.

Junior, Nyasha. "The Mark of Cain and White Violence." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139 (2020): 661–73. https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1394.2020.2.

Kimball, Spencer W. "The Day of the Lamanites." *The Improvement Era* 63 (December 1960): 922–24. http://archive.org/details/improvementera6312unse.

Lamb, James Riley. *Bible Account of Origin of Races; Baptists vs. World Evils*. Eufaula, Okl., 1921. https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.biblеaccountofor00lamb/.

Mariscal, George. "The Role of Spain in Contemporary Race Theory." *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 2 (1998): 7–22. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20641414.

Morgan, Philip D. "Origins of American Slavery." *OAH Magazine of History* 19 (2005): 51–56. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25161964.

"Official Declaration 2." https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/eng/scriptures/dc-testament/od/2.

Papal Encyclicals. "Romanus Pontifex," June 2017. https://www.papalencyclicals.net/nichol05/romanus-pontifex.htm.

Phillips, William D. *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hjm6x.

Pope, Catholic Church. *Bullarium Patronatus Portugalliae Regum in Ecclesiis Africae, Asiae Atque Oceaniae: Bullas, Brevia, Epistolas, Decreta Actaque Sanctae Sedis Ab Alexandro III Ad Hoc Usque Tempus Amplectens*. Ex Typographia nationali, 1868.

Rogoff, Leonard. "Is the Jew White?: The Racial Place of the Southern Jew." *American Jewish History* 85 (1997): 195–230. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23885563.

Schnabel, Rebecca. "Enslaved Peoples in African Societies before the Transatlantic Slave Trade." America's Black Holocaust Museum, August 2020. https://www.abhmuseum.org/enslaved-peoples-in-african-societies-before-the-transatlantic-slave-trade/.

Smith, Timothy L. "Slavery and Theology: The Emergence of Black Christian Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America." *Church History* 41 (1972): 497–512. https://doi.org/10.2307/3163880.

Stack, Fletcher. "Error in Printed LDS Church Manual Could Revive Racial Criticisms." The Salt Lake Tribune. https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2020/01/18/error-printed-lds-church/.

Sweet, James H. “The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 143–66. https://doi.org/10.2307/2953315.

Turner, Lorenzo Dow. “The Anti-Slavery Movement prior to the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade (1641-1808).” *The Journal of Negro History* 14 (October 1929): 373–402. https://doi.org/10.2307/2714190.

Wedgwood, Josiah, and William Hackwood. “Antislavery Medallion,” 1787. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/191076.

Author Bio

Margaret Phillips is a graduate student in the Master of Arts in History program at California State University, San Bernardino, where she also completed her Bachelor of Arts in History in 2024. Her research interests center on the history of the United States, with a particular emphasis on the American West and issues of race in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her current work examines the development and evolution of racial theology within Mormonism, which is the focus of her MA thesis. She plans to pursue doctoral study in a related field after completing her degree in 2026.

Reverberations of the 1950s Puerto Rico Nationalist Independence Movement

By Gustavo Alonso Chamu

Abstract: *In the first half of the twentieth century, the nationalist movement in Puerto Rico, led by Harvard Law School graduate Pedro Albizu Campos (1893–1965), firmly called for the independence of the island. Its supporters made vociferous calls against the exploitation of the island by the United States government, its military and multinational corporations. Their campaign for independence culminated on October 30, 1950, with small-scale armed insurgencies across Puerto Rico, the Governor's residence in San Juan, and the attacks against then President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972) at Blair House, Washington D.C. While a combination of domestic and foreign actors played significant roles in the failed insurgency, it was primarily the United States and the Puerto Rican governments who actively worked for the collapse of the independence coalition. Monolith government forces embodied in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Puerto Rican Insular Police relied on coercive force, undercover work, and intimidation of people to disrupt and interfere with the nationalist movement. These repressive campaigns had traumatic repercussions on Puerto Rican nationalists and their supporters that still reverberate in the historical collective memory and Puerto Rican society.*

The attack on the United States' Capitol, on January 6, 2021, perpetrated by President Donald Trump's (1946–) supporters in Washington, DC, received plenty of media coverage during the last

four years. Such widespread exposure brought much recognition to an almost forgotten assault on Congress that took place seventy-one years ago. In March 1954, four Puerto Rican nationalists had significant "parallels" with the 2021 Capitol riots, particularly with regard to its "impact on American democracy" and the legal system, which continues to reverberate today.[1] The nationalist movement continues to resonate with Puerto Ricans and the island's political status because the nationalist Puerto Rican movement ardently sought the independence of Puerto Rico. Unable to work with the radical nationalists because they represented an anticolonial force, insular authorities, with US support and financial assistance, repressed their cause. The overbearing colonial government radicalized the Puerto Rican nationalist movement, which culminated with the nationalist uprising on October 30, 1950. To end popular support for the movement, the American government unleashed a series of violent, repressive assaults against the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party (PRNP) and other pro-independence supporters from the 1930s to the 1950s. Working as representatives of the colonial state, the Puerto Rican Insular Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) utilized overt state political repression, covert surveillance of citizens, and bureaucratic procedures to incriminate many Puerto Rican nationalists, or *independentistas*, as well as other political groups.

One of the few individuals who challenged the mistreatment of Puerto Ricans and at the same time denounced the economic exploitation of the island was Pedro Albizu Campos. Following the legacy of previous independence leaders like Ramón Emeterio Betances (1827–1898), Eugenio María de Hostos (1839–1903), and José de Diego (1866–1918), Albizu rallied his compatriots to resist the authoritarian insular government through legal and militant means. In so doing, Albizu awakened the sense

[1] Anthony J. Rivera, "An Attack on the Capitol 70 Years Ago Set the Stage for Jan. 6 Cases," *The Washington Post*, March 1, 2024.

of nationhood present in Puerto Ricans, a sentiment that authorities had suppressed for many years due to the island's colonial status.

This essay explores the historical antecedents, emergence, coalescence, and continental transcendence of the PRNP. In doing so, this work will consider how Puerto Ricans fought against the secondary forms of citizenship imposed by the US Congress and the island's status as a colonial territory. Lastly, this work will emphasize how the designation of "Commonwealth" given to Puerto Rico during the 1950s did not fully disentangle issues that existed since 1898, but instead exacerbated already existing social, political tensions that remain unsolved today.

Antecedents and Colonial Formation

Puerto Rico, a small island in the Caribbean Sea, has had a long history of colonialism and exploitation. Since its discovery by Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) in the late fifteenth century, colonial powers such as the Spanish, English, French, and Dutch have fought amongst themselves for control of the island due to its production of labor-intensive crops like sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee. The island also had geographic and economic significance. In the nineteenth century, it was coined "a commercial depot of first importance."[2] The island also extends into the Atlantic Ocean and, for that reason, connects various points of commerce between North America, the Caribbean, and South America. The island has many essential resources, such as "its abundant water facilitating cleanliness and industry."[3] In addition, to cite some examples of its contemporary importance, "in 1995, US direct investment amounted to 13.3 billion in comparison to the UK's 13.7 billion. Before that, in the early 1990s, the island represented 21.7 percent

[2] Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, "Puerto Rico, Seen Without Spectacles by a Myopic," in *The Intellectual Roots of Independence: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Political Essays,* ed. Iris Zavala, and Rafael Rodriguez, (Monthly Review Press, 1980), 49.

[3] Tapia, "Myopic," 49.

of the entire world trade carried on US-flagships."[4] These studies have argued that Puerto Rico has been more "lucrative" for Wall Street and US corporations than nations such as Brazil and Mexico.[5] Therefore, Puerto Rico is not only coveted for its critical geographic location in the Caribbean, but also because of the vast opportunities it provides for American business.

Moreover, the Puerto Rican struggle for independence began in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1868, in the cities of Lares and San Sebastián ("*El Pepino*"), local insurgents led by Betances advocated for liberation from Spanish rule. Although the rebels captured Lares, forces loyal to the Spanish government halted the insurgency at "El Pepino" and ended the campaign for independence.[6] Moreover, Spanish military efforts were aided by conservative reformist agents in Puerto Rico who disagreed with the revolution's direction. While unsuccessful, the *"Grito de Lares*," or the Lares Revolution, demonstrated the islanders' ardent desire for independence and profound sense of nationalism. At the time, the Liberal Reformist Party (LRP) was presided over by Pedro Gerónimo Goyco (1808–1890), who believed Puerto Rican society needed to assimilate more with Spain. Then, a series of reforms in 1870 led the LRP to accept conditions demanded by the Spanish administration that would lead the path towards "complete assimilation" of the island, halting calls for independence.[7]

Some thirty years later, in what is commonly known as the Spanish-American War (1898), Puerto Rico gained a new colonial overseer. The Treaty of Paris (1898), signed between

---

[4] Juan Gonzalez, "Puerto Rico Had Never Seen Anything like It," *Progressive* 62, no. 9 (1998): 24-26.

[5] René Francisco Poitevin, "Political Surveillance, State Repression, and Class Resistance: The Puerto Rican Experience." *Social Justice* 27, no. 3 (2000): 90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/29767233.

[6] Juan Antonio Corretjer, *La Lucha por la Independencia de Puerto Rico*, (Zumbador Publishing, 2020), chap. 1 and chap. 4, Kindle. In addition, in 1868, the liberation struggles concluded in the abolishment of slavery at Lares. By 1873, it was abolished, read chapter 4.

[7] Corretjer, *Lucha por Independencia*, chapter 3.

representatives of the Spanish Empire and the United States government, ended the war between the two nations and offered Republican President William McKinley (1843–1901) the opportunity to make specific demands and conditions. An ambitious expansionist, he sought to obtain the Spanish island territories in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Although the US government claimed to only want to help the insurgents in the rebelling colonies, McKinley pushed for the Spanish territories to be part of the negotiation to end the war. Through negotiations, the US government agreed to pay the decaying Spanish Empire twenty million dollars for war damages and for its colonial possessions, including Puerto Rico.[8] Many residents of the island heavily criticized its transfer to the US because Spain, prior to the war, had granted Puerto Rico autonomy and self-government via the Autonomic Charter of 1897.[9] The United States' victory in the conflict disregarded this agreement and instead established American hegemony over Puerto Rico.

Ecological and natural disasters further benefited American newcomers who prioritized their investment over the common folk in Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans typically sustained and dealt with the climate-brought hardships with relatively little federal help. Historically, they were accustomed to the tropical storms, as well as the chaos and the devastation they typically brought. However, in August 1899, Hurricane San Ciriaco unleashed deadly havoc on the islanders and ruined large industrial plantations. Being one of the deadliest natural disasters on the island during the nineteenth century, it caused the death of over 3,000 and injured more than

---

[8] Ronald Fernandez, *The Disenchanted Island: Puerto Rico and the United States in the Twentieth Century,* 2nd ed., (Praeger Publisher, 1996), 8.

[9] Federico Ribes Tovar, *Albizu Campos el Revolucionario,* (Plus Ultra Educational Publishers: 1975), 245-250; English version, Federico Ribes Tovar, *Albizu Campos: Puerto Rican Revolutionary*, translated by Anthony Rawlings, (Plus Ultra Educational Publishers, 1971), 187-188, https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC29_scans/29.tovar.albizu.campos.1971.pdf.

2,000.[10] The hurricane inflicted much damage to the tobacco industry, which affected farmers and employers. American sugar producers took advantage of this disaster by buying up small, deteriorated family businesses and vast amounts of land, justified as an attempt to supposedly "help" islanders.[11] Arguably, in the long run, this was a way for these corporations to seize property from Puerto Ricans.

Besides the ailments brought by American multinational corporations, the US occupation also came accompanied by a brief military government that shows the authoritarian nature of colonialism. Following a short-lived military regime that started with General Nelson Miles (1839–1925) and the hurricane devastation, the Foraker Act of 1900 (also known as the Organic Act) established a civilian political government, albeit with limited rights and no US citizenship.[12] In addition, the occupation of the US government significantly and asymmetrically altered the economic structure of the island. First, the Foraker Act changed the military government, which ran from 1898 to 1900, to a civilian government. Also, Puerto Ricans were not given American citizenship, and the island, by law, was treated as "not part of the United States."[13] Through this act, Congress "affirmed US rule over Puerto Rico and [practically] defined the island as a foreign territory."[14] Next, the Puerto Rican peso was replaced by the American dollar, devaluing to half its worth in an instant.[15] At the

---

[10] Jorell Meléndez-Badillo, *Puerto Rico: Historia de una Nación,* (Editorial Planeta Mexicana, 2024), 92-93.

[11] Writers' Program of the Work's Projects Administration, *Puerto Rico; a Guide to the Island of Boriquén*, (The University Society, Inc., 1940), 55-56, in Corretjer, *Lucha por la Independencia,* chapter 6.

[12] Foraker Act, 1900, Pub. L. 56-191, Session 1; 31 Stat. 77, https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/31/STATUTE-31-Pg77.pdf.

[13] César J Ayala, and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 25-26.

[14] Ayala, and Bernabe, *American Century,* 25-26.

[15] Meléndez-Badillo, *Historia*, 91.

same moment, US business entities appeared to be more interested in the island's potential for agribusiness because the US government wanted "auto sufficiency" in sugar production.[16] For Americans, the island's agricultural capacity and convenient geographic location made it a profitable place for investment in the sugar, tobacco, textile, and shipping industries.

Puerto Rican "creole" elites, according to journalist and Nationalist Party leader Juan Antonio Corretjer, worked with American corporations and government authorities to gain absolute control of local political and economic affairs.[17] Elites benefitted from this state of affairs thanks to the dollarization of the economy, the creation of more banks that they owned and controlled, as well as public and private infrastructure projects, and access to American goods.[18] The relationship between local elites and Americans is illustrated by wealthy families like the Ferrés in Ponce and the Valdeses in Mayagüez. Families like these have repeatedly halted the consolidation of a nation-state and represent the most privileged conservative segments of Puerto Rican society. They also owned commercial establishments, and sugar plantations, which allowed them to share financial management of the island with US corporations.[19]

US colonial authorities and Puerto Rican creole elites believed they acted in the name of progress and civilization. They both correlated modernization with "Americanization " and "progress" for Puerto Rico; as one historian has noted, "the intellectual elite viewed the United States as the exemplar of democracy and progress and believed in the promise of political

---

[16] Luis Angel Ferrao, *Pedro Albizu Campos: Y el Nacionalismo Puertorriqueño*, (San Juan, Editorial Cultural, 1990), 30.

[17] Corretjer, *La lucha por la independencia*, chapter 4.

[18] Michael Gonzalez-Cruz, "The US Invasion of Puerto Rico: Occupation and Resistance to the Colonial State, 1898 to the Present," *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 5 (1998): 12-13.

[19] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo*, 36.

modernity."[20] Therefore, American authorities required the use of English in government offices, public institutions, and schools, and pushed for the observation of American holidays and cultural practices.[21] These connections preserved the economic welfare of American multinationals and the island's creole elite, not the well-being of most residents of Puerto Rico, and the reaction of those who were excluded from this system soon became evident.

Puerto Rican journalists began to speak out against the American colonial establishment shortly after the conflict with Spain had ended. Newspapers rejected US rule, denounced anti-democratic policies, and the use of violence during the occupations of the island. As a result, in December 1898 US authorities incarcerated journalists, censored newspapers, and shut them down. By 1899, military governor Guy V. Henry announced he would not allow the publication of articles that critique the US government or its officials.[22] This policy led to the incarceration of Evaristo Izcoa Díaz, a reporter from *La Bomba* (and later *El Combate*), who wrote an article about the destruction of property carried out in the city of Ponce by the US Army. He would be jailed at least one more time, and the newspapers he worked on were forced to shut down.[23] Although Izcoa Díaz was finally released in November 1899, the time he spent in prison adversely affected his health. He endured both solitary confinement and forced labor, and died two years later at the age of thirty-six.[24] Other journalists suffered under this kind of persecution, which

---

[20] Antonio Sotomayor, *The Sovereign Colony: Olympic Sport, National Identity, and International Politics in Puerto Rico,* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 42.

[21] Meléndez-Badillo, *Historia,* 96-97.

[22] Jose Paralitici, "Encarcelamiento de Luchadores Anti-Coloniales" in *Las Carpetas: Persecución Política y Derechos Civiles en Puerto Rico: Ensayos y Documentos* edited by Ramón Bosque Pérez, and José Javier Colón Morera (Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997), 238; also see, Gonzalez Cruz, "US Invasion of Puerto Rico," 10.

[23] Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 40.

[24] Paralitici, "Encarcelamiento," 238.

became emblematic of the repressive efforts made by colonial authorities to employ state violence to bring all dissent to a close.

Meanwhile, as American political hegemony became pervasive, the Jones-Shafroth Act passed in March 1917, gave Puerto Ricans US citizenship although with limited rights. This act restructured the colonial government to mirror the American political framework, a senate and house of representatives, with the exception that the US president would designate the governor.[25] The extension of American citizenship to Puerto Ricans also coincided with the mandatory military service for World War I (1914–1918). This explained why some two hundred Puerto Ricans refused citizenship and to serve in the armed forces, and many were arrested for their actions.[26]

American politics also substantially altered sea-trade in Puerto Rico. Besides the Jones-Shafroth Act, the 1920 Merchant Maritime Act, coincidentally known as the Jones Act, took away Puerto Rico's economic agency by cutting it off from direct to global trade and independent economic development.[27] The act was a form of cabotage law that expanded American naval and trade jurisdiction onto the ports of the island. It required the use of US vessels and ships for exporting and importing prime materials and products.[28] In addition, the policy prevented Puerto Ricans from receiving prompt and sufficient aid when natural disasters struck or during economic recessions. In 1928, for instance, after

---

[25] Jones-Shafroth Act, 2017, Pub. L. 64-368, 39 Stat. 951. https://govtrackus.s3.amazonaws.com/legislink/pdf/stat/39/STATUTE-39-Pg951.pdf; Melendez-Badillo, *Historia,* 108.

[26] Paralitici, "Encarcelamiento," 241.

[27] Merchant Marine Act, June 5, 1920, ch. 250, §39, 41 Stat. 1008. https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid%3AUSC-2000-title46a-chapter24&edition=2000. This act has been amended and revised several times since 1920, and it remains in effect as of April 2025.; Melendez-Badillo, *Historia,* 108.

[28] Ed Morales, "Puerto Rico's Unjust Debt," in *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm* edited by Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón, (Haymarket Books, 2019), 212.

hurricane San Felipe caused island-wide devastation, islanders failed to receive the aid needed to recover.[29]

Besides the problem of unequal trade relations, questions of birthright and jurisdiction of the land remained to be answered. Up until the 1920s, the US Supreme Court, with its decisions in the so-called "Insular Cases," helped clarify what American citizenship and territorial status would be for Puerto Rico. First, they were not given full citizenship and, in regard to the island's political status, it became known as an US territory that fell under the jurisdiction and control of the US without exactly being part of it. To demonstrate, *Downes v. Bidwell* (1901) is significant because it validated the Foraker Act in its time, as well as the territorial status of the island; the court decided that "Porto [sic] Rico ceased to be a foreign country and became a domestic territory of the United States" or, simply defined, as an unincorporated territory, not part of the union.[30]

Twenty-one years later, *Balzac v. People of Porto Rico* (1922) reminded Puerto Ricans of their conflicting rights and citizenship on the US mainland and the island. Then-president of the Supreme Court, William H. Taft—who believed the island to be a permanent possession of the United States—determined in this case that islanders had to reside on the mainland to receive full citizenship rights; as he put it, "locality . . . is determinative in the application of the constitution." Taft's reasoning, according to

---

[29] Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol Lebron, "Introduction," in *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm* edited by Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón, (Haymarket Books, 2019), 5. The effects of the law were still felt as recently as 2016, when Hurricane María made landfall and devastated the island, which brought upon the island widespread destruction and a humanitarian crisis.

[30] *Downes v. Bidwel*l, 182 US 244 (1901), https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/182/244/; *Downes v. Bidwell*; Ayala and Bernabe, *American Century,* 27; Melendez-Badillo, *Historia*, 106-107.

many Puerto Rican historians and sociologists, essentially made islanders second-class US citizens.[31]

By the late 1920s the US political, social and economic system had become consolidated in Puerto Rico. American neocolonialism differed from the Spanish colonial system because it prioritized the economic extraction of wealth from the island. Meanwhile, American governors and officials, alongside local elites, dominated the local and federal political and cultural spheres. Consequently, demands to end US colonialism slowly grew while changes in the political spectrum impacted Puerto Ricans' sense of national identity. The transcendental political figures that emerged in the decades that followed would emerge to fight this new colonial system which would define Puerto Rican politics as well as society in the years to come.

The Transcendence of the Nationalist Movement and Pedro Albizu Campos

Political parties in early twentieth-century Puerto Rico provided residents of the island with instruments to voice their concerns to government officials. While some supported conservative and pro-American political associations, political parties like the Republicans and Socialists did garnish voter support. First, the Republican Party embraced the Americans and sought statehood. It enjoyed extensive backing from leaders in the tobacco and sugar industries, and from Afro-Puerto Ricans, showing they had cross racial and class support.[32] On the other hand, the Socialist Party- formed in 1915 founded by ex-members of the American Federation of Labor (AFL)- received much support from laborers in the sugar and tobacco industries, its leaders agreed with

---

[31] William H. Taft in Fernandez, *Disenchanted Island*, 91-93; Melendez-Bonilla, *Historia,* 108, 110.

[32] Margaret Power, *Solidarity across the Americas: The Puerto Rican Nationalist Party and Anti-Imperialism,* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2023), 56,

conservatives that statehood should be the solution for the political status of the island.[33]

On the other hand, the Union Party, formed in 1904 under the leadership of José de Diego (1866–1918) and Luis Muñoz Rivera (1859–1916) who had fought for greater autonomy of the island during Spanish rule, continued their call for self-government after the US seized control of Puerto Rico. Both men, however, did not see eye-to-eye on some topics.[34] Muñoz Rivera preferred autonomy, not necessarily independence, while de Diego belonged to the old traditional elite, *los hacendados,* who were adversely affected by US occupation.[35] Muñoz Rivera believed Puerto Rico should have been incorporated in the United States government; he wanted Puerto Rico to become an American state. Muñoz Rivera was also associated with political elite segments of Puerto Rican society, and his form of politics dominated the Union party until the 1920s.[36] Likewise, de Diego identified as a staunch capitalist. He believed in the "sovereignty of the markets," and that corporations should own more land.[37] After de Diego's death in 1918, disagreements within the party grew and, eventually, by February 1922, the Unionists, composed in majority by elite individuals, officially stopped their support for independence.[38]

In 1919 the internal disputes referenced previously prompted supporters of independence in the Union Party to break away and form a new political organization. These men established a series of local governing boards, or *juntas,* throughout the island that worked towards the official creation of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party or PRNP which took place on September 17, 1922, in the city of Río Piedras.[39] Moderation initially defined the

---

[33] Power, *Solidarity*, 44.

[34] Ayala and Bernabe, *American Century,* 57.

[35] Ayala and Bernabe, *American Century,* 56-57.

[36] Ayala and Bernabe, *American Century,* 56.

[37] Ayala and Bernabe, *American Century,* 60.

[38] Power, *Solidarity,* 34, 58.

[39] Power, *Solidarity*, 58, 59.

PRNP, as it "promoted cultural identity, intellectual discussion, and cordial relations with the United States." Because the party had little popular support in its early days and lacked a unique and authentic message, it slowly worked to develop an organized political and economic platform that could appeal to the disgruntled masses.[40]

Moreover, the early Nationalist Party, a politically moderate bloc, consisted of professional and highly educated men who sought to address traditional and cultural issues. It advocated for the usage of Spanish over English as the primary language in public institutions, demanded the restoration of Puerto Rican Hispanic cultural traditions, and touched on issues regarding the use of the Puerto Rican flag in public spaces which showed they were relatively moderate figures not radical.[41] Their ranks included lawyers, students, journalists, merchants, and doctors, but the party rarely made attempts to gather popular support and thus had a small following.[42] In both elections of 1924 and 1928, the PNPR failed to even receive four hundred votes out of the 250,000 possible, less than one percent of the vote.[43] The historical antecedents, and emergence of the nationalist movement showed a relatively modest political organization undisruptive of the American-Puerto Rican Insular government with little popular support.

Given its poor showing at the ballot box, and in response to growing internal demands for social change and political reform, in 1930 the PRNP moved to align itself with the voices of those who called for radical political and social change, and no one exemplified this shift like Pedro Albizu Campos.[44] Born into poverty in the city of Ponce on September 12, 1891, to a white Spanish father and a mulatto mother, Albizu became the leading

---

[40] Power, *Solidarity,* 61.

[41] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo*, 40-41.

[42] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo*, 40-41.

[43] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo,* 40; Power, *Solidarity*, 61.

[44] Power, *Solidarity,* 96.

figure of a movement who railed against US colonialism and criticized the second class status assigned to Puerto Ricans.

Albizu's early life was marked by a series of unfortunate events. In 1898, the then-seven year old Albizu saw General Miles' troops march through Ponce. His ethnic background also proved important in his upbringing. Not only did Albizu suffer at the hands of Spanish "pigmentocracy," he also endured American forms of discrimination.[45] In addition, Albizu did not enjoy a traditionally stable family life. He became an orphan at the age of eight when he lost his mother in 1899. Furthermore, his father refused to recognize him as his son.[46] Not until Albizu became a young adult, in 1914, and started attending school in the US did his father acknowledge his connection to him.[47] He also received his father's last name Albizu at this time. This means he grew up without any biological parental figures, for the entirety of his childhood.

Fortunately for young Albizu, his aunt adopted him and made sure he became educated. As a young man, his great intellect, initiative, and leadership skills led him to prosper academically. Albizu graduated from high school in 1912, and accepted a study abroad scholarship to the University of Vermont; he transferred to Harvard University one year later, where he attended law school.[48] Albizu also grew spiritually. He became even more closely tied to his Catholic faith, a religion which guided his personal beliefs and moral values.[49] He also called for Puerto Rican society to return to Hispanic values and closer ties to

---

[45] Pigmentocracy refers to the social stratification of society based on skin tones and shades of skin color, not so much race; Juan Palacio Moreno, "Myth & Remembrance: The Harvard Life of Pedro Albizu Campos," *Harvard Latin America Law Review* 26, no. 1 (2023): 304.

[46] Marisa Rosado, *Las Llamas de la Aurora: Acercamiento a una Biografía de Pedro Albizu Campos,* 2a. ed. rev. y aum. 4a. reimpr, (Ediciones Puerto, 2006), 43-44.

[47] Rosado, *Las Llamas,* 39.

[48] Rosado, *Las Llamas,* 46-47, 56-57.

[49] Tovar, *Revolutionary*, 22-23.

Spain.[50] Albizu also participated in many discussions and learned from India and Ireland's struggle for independence. He headed an Irish student campaign and learned Indian philosophy. He also became influenced by figures like Éamon de Valera (1882–1975) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), both prominent-national figures for their respective countries, Ireland and India.[51] Albizu's exposure to these global political trends and religious ideals would influence his construct of Puerto Rican nationalism.

At the same time, Albizu's involvement and overt discrimination in the US military shaped his perspective on American oppression and injustice. Albizu put a short interruption to his studies in order to volunteer to fight in WWI. After the US entered the war, he joined the Harvard Reserve Officers Training Camp, where he studied Military Sciences under the guidance of the French Army.[52] Despite having little say in the matter, he enlisted under the condition he could form part of a unit composed of Puerto Ricans.[53] Determined to acquire military skills, the army sent him to a military camp training in San Juan.[54] His leadership abilities enabled him to reach the rank of Lieutenant in Regiment 375, an all-black Puerto Rican Unit. Before he had the time to deploy, however, the war ended. Albizu then received a letter from Woodrow Wilson's (1856–1924) cabinet in 1918, where Wilson requested Albizu return to Harvard and represent the university at the Peace Conference in Paris, France. On his way to the summit, while stationed in a US Southern seaport, he witnessed the effects of Jim Crow discrimination firsthand as well as the systematic mistreatment of Black people, which angered him profusely.[55] According to some historians, the deviant event proved significant in Albizu's "spiritual evolution" and contributed to making him an

---

[50] Tovar, *Revolutionary*, 181.

[51] Rosado, *Las Llamas,* 71-72.

[52] Tovar, *El Revolucionario,* 41.

[53] Tovar, *El Revolucionario,* 17-43.

[54] Tovar, *Revolutionary,* 20; Palacio Moreno, "Myth and Remembrance," 313.

[55] Rosado, *Las Llamas,* 70.

authentic "revolutionary leader."[56] He ended his trip there and went back to Harvard to finish his coursework, convinced of the need to fight against inequality and American colonialism on the island.

Once Albizu returned to Puerto Rico in 1921, the newly graduated lawyer devoted his energy to helping poor islanders. He turned down prestigious and lucrative job offers from law firms in the US and Puerto Rico, as well as the US Supreme Court.[57] Instead, he opted to establish a law office in one of Ponce's most marginalized areas to represent impoverished clients. Albizu also tried to humanize Puerto Rico's independence movement by emphasizing the need for Puerto Ricans to be free-thinking individuals and more capable citizens. To do so, independence from the dependent colonial mentality was necessary.[58] He deeply believed Puerto Rico should be free, and any aversion from this goal signified a stance against his own ideals. He went against the US government to the point that it could be construed as counterproductive. In short, Albizu epitomized his people's self-consciousness and unceasing quest for national identity.

The Ponce lawyer sought alliances with organizations and entities that represented the cause of independence. He joined the Union Party in 1921 and remained there for two years, even after they stopped their endorsement of independence. However, the creation of the so-called Puerto Rican Alliance (*Alianza Puertorriquena)* in March 1924 that brought together Unionists and Republicans in a corrupt alliance, made Albizu abandon the Unionists. He then decided to join the Nationalist Party and became its vice president. In 1927, he journeyed abroad in an attempt to build connections with other Latin American nations to garner transnational support for Puerto Rican independence. He visited the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, where he met other revolutionary leaders, nationalists,

---

[56] Tovar, *El Revolucionario,* 42-43.

[57] Rosado, *Las Llamas,* 92.

[58] Power, *Solidarity,* 103.

intellectuals, and like-minded individuals. His genuine commitment to the welfare of poor Puerto Ricans became evident to other important political figures of the era like Italian American Congressman, Vito Marcantonio (1902–1954); future governor of Puerto Rico Luis Muñoz Marín (1898–1980); Mexican political philosopher Jose Vasconcelos (1882–1959), and founder of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, Gilberto Concepción de Gracia (1909–1969).[59] Although these men had conflicting opinions about Albizu, each of them recognized his commitment to the cause of independence. More importantly, his actions advanced the agenda to see a free, independent Puerto Rico across transnational boundaries.

Ascending to the presidency of the party upon his return to the island in 1930, Albizu became a vociferous leader. He believed that the foundations of Puerto Rican nationalism had been built in 1868 with Betances's *Grito de Lares* under the "pure principle of national sovereignty."[60] He ardently condemned US rule and associated the party with anticolonialism.[61] As a legal expert, he argued that the Autonomic Charter of 1897 nullified the Treaty of Paris. Albizu also formed the *Cadetes de la República (Cadets of the Republic)* and the *Cuerpo de Enfermeras de la República (Nurse Corps of the Republic),* two militant and civic nationalist organizations.[62] He redefined the party's direction by making direct demands for independence and rewrote its platform. The Nationalist economic program consisted of eight points, which included organizing workers against foreign "invading"

---

[59] Gerald J. Meyer, "Pedro Albizu Campos, Gilberto Concepcion de Gracia, and Vito Marcantonio Collaboration in the Cause of Puerto Rico 's Independence," *Centro Journal* 23, no. 1 (2011): 87; Tovar, *El Revolutionary*, 32, 34-38.

[60] Pedro Albizu Campos, "El Nacionalismo Puertorriqueño," in *La Conciencia Nacional Puertorriqueño,* ed. Manuel Maldonado-Denis, (Siglo Veintiuno, 1972), 58-61.

[61] Pedro Albizu Campos, "Manifiesto del Partido Nacionalista," in *La Conciencia Nacional Puertorriqueño,* ed. Manuel Maldonado-Denis, (Siglo Veintiuno, 1972), 64-65.

[62] Tovar, *Revolucionario*, 245-246, and 149-150.

companies, taxation of "absentee landlordism," reversing the free shipping agreements, encouraging the creation of a merchant marine, restoring "native banks," and reorganizing the island's finances.[63]

Other than Albizu, Puerto Ricans residing on the island also expressed their political awareness by supporting independence. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Nationalist movement received moral and financial support from the Puerto Rican diaspora in American cities like New York City, Chicago, and Atlanta. New York City became a center point for Puerto Rican nationalism. The multi-ethnic community of East Harlem, known as *El Barrio*, held the largest concentration of islanders in the nation. Many Puerto Rican political and social organizations, including the PRNP, met in El Barrio's Lexington Hall, a vibrant gathering space inside a well-known hotel in the middle of Manhattan.[64] Congressman Marcantonio, who represented East Harlem, backed Puerto Rican independence and later worked with Albizu to support that goal. This further showed how transcendent the Puerto Rican Nationalist movement had become. Fervent requests for a Puerto Rican nation-state were not vague, superficial demands from uneducated people, but an authentic demand for independence made by politically-conscious individuals.

By the early 1930s, the Puerto Rican sense of nationalism had not perished, but instead expanded throughout North American and Latin America. Albizu's rise to the PNRP presidency drove the small-scale party into an unceasing and genuine quest for independence. The party's dedication and devotion for independence was seen with their alliances with other Latin American nations and prominent US political figures, like US senator Marcantonio who sympathized with the island's calls for independence. Yet, American colonial authorities' blunt response

---

[63] Albizu, "Manifiesto," 64-65; also in Tovar, *Revolutionary,* 42-43.

[64] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 94.

to suppress the aspirations of freedom would define the next years in Puerto Rican history.

State Repression and The Great Depression

Since the 1920s, US colonial authorities sought to end the independence campaigns in Puerto Rico. President Warren G. Harding (1865–1923) named Montgomery Reily (1866–1954) governor of the island in 1921. A strict and rigid individual who did not understand Puerto Ricans, Reily announced that anyone who believed in Puerto Rican independence would be banned from working in the insular government. Reily's statements also made him unpopular with islanders. He wrote to the president that "Puerto Ricans, as all continentals say, are children" and "these people are so different from North Americans that it is impossible to make any comparison."[65] Like Reily, many American intellectuals did not understand the islanders' demand for freedom. They believed "few nations have done more for any of their possessions than the United States" had done for Puerto Rico.[66] In addition, the new governor created fears and apprehension among members of political organizations. For instance, many members of the Union Party no longer supported independence because of Reily's warnings; they had government jobs and did not want to lose them. Reily also successfully pressured the Union Party to revoke independence from its platform, which as mentioned before, they did.

In the end, Reily's remarks and anti-independence actions made him unpopular in the island, which led to his resignation as governor in 1923. In the years following Reily's resignation, Puerto Rico saw more pro-independent political parties emerge to compete with the Nationalists for popular support. In 1929, the Liberal Party broke away from the *Alianza Puertorriqueña* and claimed to support the island's independence. Similar to Albizu,

---

[65] Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 150.

[66] Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 146-147.

the liberals led by Muñoz Marín believed in the economic necessity of independence in order to "determine …[Puerto Rico's] tariffs and agricultural policies."[67] In 1932, *Alianza* won the elections, proving capable of gaining more popular support than nationalists, who received 5,257 votes out of 383,722.[68] Even though Puerto Ricans supported the idea of independence, as demonstrated with their popular backing of the Liberal Party, voting outcomes also showed that 98% of constituents preferred more conservative and moderate parties, including the Liberals, Socialists, and Union-Republicans. People possibly voted this way because they feared losing their jobs and saw Albizu as representing an abrupt radical change. Ultimately, the disappointing popular vote results convinced the PRNP to stop participating in subsequent insular elections.[69]

In addition to this political dead end, exterior-global events adversely affected the island's economy, and brought ecological destruction causing grave social despair, especially to the working class. Before the economic downturn, Puerto Rico had been hit by hurricane San Felipe in September 1929. A Category Five Storm, San Felipe remains today one of the most devastating tropical storms in Puerto Rico's history. It ruined many tobacco plantations and left field workers without jobs.[70] Then, one month later, the New York stock market crashed. Although Puerto Rican sugar producers did better than other industries, the recession eventually reached them. Very few exporters bought sugar; consequently, sugar demanded decreased which led to concerns about overproduction. As part of President's Franklin D. Roosevelt's (1882–1945) New Deal program, the new Agricultural Adjustment Act (1933) required sugar companies to meet specific quotas that

---

[67] Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 183.

[68] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo,* 82-83.

[69] This has also been referred to as *retraimiento* in Tovar*, El Revolucionario,* 148.

[70] Power, *Solidarity,* 98-100.

forced them to cut twenty percent of their production.[71] The crisis also increased the cost of living by twenty five percent and unemployment by sixty five percent.[72] All these factors proved unbearable and the consequences of the economic crisis would soon be imminent.

To protest the deteriorating economic conditions, workers in the tobacco, textile, and sugar industries expressed their disagreement with corporate and colonial powers. For instance, 5,000 tobacco workers went on strike all over the island.[73] In the city of Mayagüez, approximately 2,000 textile workers destroyed the workshops they labored in.[74] Then, in 1934, 6,000 laborers of the United Porto [sic] Rico Sugar Company went on strike; the protesters asked Albizu, who had participated in other worker revolts, to represent them in the strike.[75] As a result, the employees gained better wages and working conditions.[76] The decade ended with a 1938 strike among dock workers that prohibited imports and exports from coming and leaving Puerto Rico.[77] This industrial action halted the economy of the island for two weeks and showed the extent of protest and the power of workers too.

Combined with the economic and social turmoil, the colonial state adopted an aggressive stance against those with legitimate grievances. In 1934, Washington D.C. designated Blaton C. Winship (1869–1947) as governor; he proved to be a true authoritarian leader. He and Colonel Francis Riggs (1887-1936), Chief of the Insular Police, both possessed elite military experience and would not hesitate to use brute force against the

---

[71] Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 186-187.

[72] Power, *Solidarity*, 100.

[73] Fernández, *La Isla Desencantada,* 187.

[74] Fernández, *La Isla Desencantada,* 187.

[75] Miñi Seijo Bruno, *La Insurrección Nacionalista en Puerto Rico, 1950.* (Editorial Edil, 1989)*,* 187.

[76] James L. Dietz, *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional change and Capitalist Development,* (Princeton University, Press, 1986), 167; Power, *Solidarity,* 109

[77] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo,* 152.

Nationalists. Winship, for instance, participated in the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection (1899–1901), and the First World War. He also served as adviser for the President and the colonial Philippine government. Riggs, on the other hand, had been stationed in the Philippines and later sent to Russia during its revolutionary period from 1916 to 1920. As soon as he arrived, Winship equipped the police department with more military weapons such as the Thompson machine guns, tear gas, and riot gear. He also regularly assisted training camps and supervised activities for the national guard and insular police.[78]

With these authoritative figures in the highest ranks of power, the Rio Piedras police emboldened authorities to begin their violent crackdown on the nationalists. Violence started on October 24, 1935, at the University of Puerto Rico. Angry students convened an assembly to declare Albizu a *persona non grata* because he had supposedly spoken negatively about students in a radio speech. As soon as nationalist students heard of this, they went to challenge those proposals, but the insular police decided to confront them. First, authorities canceled the assembly and surrounded the perimeters of the University. As four nationalists drove away from the campus, the police pulled them over. The driver, however, had a gun and fired at the policemen; the ensuing shootout killed one police officer and all four nationalists in the vehicle.[79] The deaths of the young men were deeply felt; 8,000 people from the community of Rio Piedras went to pay their respects.[80] At the funeral, Albizu Campos spoke and blamed Winship and Riggs for having ordered the death of the four nationalists. Albizu asked mourners to raise their hands, to which the crowd did by responding, "we swear the murderers will not

[78] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo*, 151-153.

[79] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo,* 157*;* Power, *Solidarity,* 114.

[80] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo,* 159.

survive in Puerto Rico."[81] While these events elevated the popularity of the Nationalists, a fierce cycle of violence continued.

What followed after the events at University of Puerto Rico led to the further radicalization within the PRNP ranks. Elias Beauchamp and Hiram Rosado, two young nationalist members, assassinated Riggs on February 23, 1936, in San Juan.[82] Instead of following standard legal procedures immediately after their arrest, authorities "slain out of hand" the young men at the police headquarters.[83] A couple of days later, Albizu eulogized the two nationalist as martyrs at their burial.

> There is only one gateway to immortality: the gateway of valour, which leads to sacrifice for the sacred cause. We must sacrifice ourselves for the independence of our country…Here we have two true heroes, Elias Beauchamp and Hiriam Rosado, blood of heroes, are the fruit of an ideal and of its reconquest. Their ideology is the independence of Puerto Rico. It is an ideal and a consecration to heroism and sacrifice… [Their sacrifice] say to me, and all people of Puerto Rico, that the oath of dedication to our country is valid and has been sealed with the blood of immortals.[84]

To Albizu and the nationalists, Beauchamp and Rosado had set an example for others to follow. This also shows a turning point in Albizu's own conviction and sacrifice to see a liberated Puerto Rico. Their actions demonstrated that some nationalists could and would forcefully resist colonial rule.

---

[81] Pedro Albizu Campos, in *Albizu Campos: Escritos,* ed. Laura Albizu-Campos Meneses, Fr. Mario A. Rodriguez Leon, and Andres Palomares (Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas, 2007), 122-123; Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 196.

[82] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo,* 161.

[83] Tovar, *Revolutionary*, 58.

[84] Tovar, *Revolutionary,* 59-62.

Colonial authorities proved their indifference to the nationalist cause. Albizu's followers' lethal initiatives led to even more successive investigations and court cases under the US Justice Department. First, the Federal Prosecutor, Cecil Snyder, wanted "revenge" for Riggs' assassination. Then, two "show" trials targeted Albizu and seven Nationalist leaders. In both cases, Albizu represented the nationalists in court. The first trial began on July 14, 1936, where Albizu spoke honestly and confidently to the court and jury; because of this, the jury, made up of seven Puerto Ricans and five Americans, could not reach a verdict.[85] The second trial began on July 27, 1936, but in this case, a new jury, now made up of ten Americans and two Puerto Ricans, who had commercial ties with American companies, convicted Albizu and his colleagues for "seditious conspiracy acts."[86] Despite disagreeing on the issue of armed resistance, Marcantonio would come to assist Albizu during both trials. He commented that Albizu held the "composure of a soldier" upon hearing his conviction.[87] Nevertheless, Federal Judge Robert Cooper gave the nationalist leaders prison sentences ranging between six to ten years, and they spent a year in *La Princesa*- an old colonial prison fortress in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Afterwards, some convicted served prison time in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary in Georgia, while others were sent as far as Ohio.[88]

Nationalists in the US mainland expressed their concern about the US insular Government's growing use of violent and repressive tactics. The president of the Nationalist Party in New York City, Julio Pinto Gandía, worried about the "police brutality, massacres, and systematic imprisonment of the leadership for

---

[85] Ferrao, *Nacionalismo,* 163-164.

[86] Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 206; and José Atiles-Osoria, "Colonial State Terror in Puerto Rico: A Research Agenda," *State Crime Journal* 5, no. 2 (2016): 230-231, https://doi.org/10.13169/statecrime.5.2.0220.

[87] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 94.

[88] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 100.

independence."[89] On Marcantonio's return to *El Barrio*, 10,000 nationalist supporters, who had been protesting the imprisonment of the nationalists, welcomed him.[90] In the face of growing persecution and repression, Puerto Ricans outside of the island offered moral and legal support to the nationalist cause. The Harlem senator pushed for better treatment of the nationalists once in the American prison system.

Violence against the nationalists did not diminish back on the island, with a prime example being the notorious Ponce Massacre on March 21, 1937. The colonial government wanted to send a message to other nationalist followers to finally end their support for independence. They wanted to assist their incarcerated comrades by fundraising for them and orchestrating social events. The Nationalist governing board in the city of Ponce organized a meeting and a parade to condemn the undemocratic incarceration of Albizu and his colleagues, but also to commemorate the 1873 abolition of slavery.[91] This shows this gathering also had other non-violent purposes and intentions. They informed Ponce's mayor of their plans, and he gave permission for gatherers to rally. Two days prior to the event, Governor Winship ordered the new Chief of the Insular Police, Colonel Orbeta, to investigate. Winship then directed Orbeta to cancel the nationalist's rally, which he did.[92] This repeal, however, did not stop protestors and other supporters from attending the gathering and many went despite the heavy police presence.

---

[89] FBI, *NPPR*, file no. 100-3-3715, 54-55.

[90] "10,000 Parade Here for Puerto Ricans," *New York Times,* August 30, 1936, in Power, *Solidarity,* 116.

[91] Jose Ramon Giboyeaux, interview Six with Jose Ramon Giboyeaux, Centro: Puerto Rican in New York Voices of the Migration on March 19, 1984, Center for Puerto Rican Studies Library & Archives, Hunter College, Cuny, 17:36-18:00, accessed November 21, 2023, https://centroca.hunter.cuny.edu/Detail/objects/4475.

[92] Juan Antonio Corretjer, *Albizu Campos and the Ponce Massacre,* (Worldview Publishers, 1975).

Knowing the nationalists would rally anyway, insular authorities intended to use lethal force against civilians. Orbeta then deployed a force of 200 men and Ponce's police garrison, perhaps over 250, all of whom were heavily armed with rifles, carbines, Thompson sub-machine guns, tear gas bombs, [and] hand grenades. Alongside the Nationalist Club Committee in Ponce were Nationalists, cadets, nurse corps, as well as random women, children, and other people, lined up.[93] Police forces separated themselves into groups and enclosed the people within the street. The government's version of the events stated that police attempted to disperse the protestors when they heard gunshots fired at them, at which point, they had no choice but to retaliate. However, the police discharged their weapons on the crowd for apparently fifteen minutes. As a result, twenty-one people died, including a child, and roughly two hundred suffered injuries.[94]

The official government statements did not concur with what really happened in Ponce. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), led by Arthur Garfield Hays (1881–1954), an expert civil liberties lawyer, and other prominent Puerto Rican attorneys, proved false the declarations made by the Insular Police. Their investigations confirmed that authorities had acted with premeditation. For instance, photographs taken at the moment revealed the officers had shot at a startled crowd which had no weapons.[95] The ACLU also confirmed that Winship had been the mastermind of the events and concluded that what took place in Ponce constituted a "massacre." In addition, the McCaleb Report, a secret investigation by the Department of Interior, also placed responsibility for the atrocious acts on Winship.[96] The events in Ponce signified a prime case of massive police misconduct and

---

[93] Corretjer, *Ponce Massacre,*14-20.

[94] Corretjer, *Ponce Massace,* 14-20.

[95] American Civil Liberties Union, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Civil Rights in Puerto Rico,* Nueva York: May 22, 1937; Corretjer, *Ponce Massacre,* 21-22.

[96] ACLU, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Civil Rights in Puerto Rico*; Corretjer, *Ponce Massacre,* 21-22.

state-sponsored violence that affected the legitimacy of American rule of the island.

Efforts to oust Governor Winship for his role in the massacre gained momentum after the cover-up was exposed. This reached a culminating point on July 25, 1938, when a failed assassination attempt on Winship took place during a parade in Ponce.[97] One year later, Senator Marcantonio spoke in the House of Representatives in August 1939 critiquing Winship's blatant display of absolute power.[98] Despite the massive discontent with the governor and incriminating ACLU and McCaleb reports, the President took more than two years to formally dismiss Winship.[99] Journalist Pedro Aponte suggested his leave might have resulted from other non-related administrative reasons, not specifically for his incriminating actions.[100] By the end of his removal, Winship left his position without receiving any sort of punishment for his actions. This demonstrated that Washington lacked sympathy with events taking place in Puerto Rico. Overall, the removal of the governor offered a false image of democracy.

With Winship removed from power and Nationalist leadership in prison, colonial powers enabled Muñoz Marin's rise to power. In 1938, he formed the Popular Democratic Party, *Partido Popular Democratico* (PPD), on the ideals of reconstruction, economic justice, and independence.[101] Despite the party's platform, which was far from Albizu's solid convictions, Muñoz Marin sought to work closely with the colonial government. This was illustrated in 1939, when Albizu received a visit in Atlanta from a US official named Pedro Capo Rodriguez. He informed the nationalist leader that federal authorities were willing to pardon him and his colleagues on the condition they stop

---

[97] Tovar, *Revolutionary*, 81.

[98] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 96.

[99] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 97.

[100] Pedro Aponte Vázquez, *Albizu: Su Persecución por el FBI*, ed. ampliada y revisada (Publicaciones René, 2000), 20.

[101] Fernandez, *La Isla Desencantada,* 223.

violent demands for independence and let go of their anti-imperialist posture.[102] Rodriguez also reassured Albizu that the federal government would help him obtain the governorship of the island. Adhering to his convictions, Albizu and his colleagues refused the offer. However, some have strongly argued that Munoz Marin and the PPD was offered this same deal; unlike Albizu, they took the deal. This can explain the reason for the PPD's ascent to power.[103] President Roosevelt, furthermore, ordered Muñoz Marín to not talk about independence and insisted he push for Commonwealth status of the island.[104] When the US congress passed a law that would allow Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor, Marin became the one of the first elected as such in 1948.

Efforts to change the island's political status by Muñoz Marín coincided with the return of Albizu Campos to Puerto Rico, leading to a new period of confrontation between nationalists and the insular government.[105] Albizu's time in prison did not affect his position on independence; if anything, he understood that it could only be obtained by force. At the end of 1947 he returned to the island where a large crowd of people welcomed him. Nevertheless, the Nationalist Party support had declined. Many of its ex–members had joined other political parties such as the Puerto Rican Independence Party, *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP), led by Concepción de Gracia. He opposed plans for armed

---

[102] Ruth M. Reynolds, *Campus in Bondage: A 1948 Microcosm of Puerto Rico in Bondage*, (Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños/Hunter College, the City University of New York, 1989), 6; Tovar, *Revolucionario,* 293-294.

[103] Reynolds, *Campus in Bondage,* 7; Tovar, *Revolucionario*, 293-297.

[104] Ivonne Acosta, *La Mordaza: Puerto Rico, 1948-1957,* (DS Editores, 1989), 37, Kindle.

[105] Albizu had stayed in prison in Atlanta, Georgia, until 1943 when the US government released him on probation due to health complications. Because of the terms of his parole, however, he could not return to the island for the next four years. In the meantime, he opted to stay at Columbus Hospital in New York City. There he received many visits from Puerto Ricans and other well-known figures who supported and appreciated him.

rebellion and preferred a non-violent movement.[106] Upon his return, Albizu managed to reanimate people's enthusiasm and devotion to the nationalist cause. To illustrate this, a few PIP members departed to rejoin their old ranks with the Nationalist Party.

Protests escalated and led to massive police repression at the University of Puerto Rico. Students endured tear gas, clubbing, pistol brandishing, and mass arrests at the hands of abusive authorities.[107] Furthermore, protests due to unfavorable educational policies and conscription laws convinced the insular government to enact legal codes that could target government dissenters. In May 1948, the Puerto Rican Legislative Assembly passed Law 53. Referred to as the "Gag Law," this measure made it illegal, "[T]o promote, advocate, advise, or preach, willfully or knowingly the necessity, desirability, or expediency of overthrowing, paralyzing, or subverting the Insular Government, or any particular political subdivision thereof by means of force or violence."[108] The law benefited the PPD because it went after its opponents. Law 53 essentially criminalized supporters of independence as well as those who critiqued the insular government. In addition, the act of simply having a Puerto Rican flag made a person suspect of breaking the law.[109]

Clear evidence of this was the fact that the first individuals convicted under this law were Felix Ojeda, a Socialist Party leader, who said, "the government we are suffering [on] must be overthrown even if we have to resort to bombs and dynamites." In a public rally, Arturo Gonzalez, an *independentista*, called Munoz Marin "a liar and a scoundrel."[110] The cases of Ojeda and Gonzalez demonstrated the oppressive nature of Law 53 and offered an outlook of the troubled times to come. Furthermore, the legal

---

[106] Tovar, *Revolucionario,* 315.

[107] Reynolds, *Campus in Bondage,* 171.

[108] Acosta, *Mordaza,* 333.

[109] Acosta, *Mordaza,* 12, 15, 19, 61.

[110] Acosta, *Mordaza,* 128.

measures that justified this systematic persecution of the Nationalists sought to repress anyone who spoke out against the colonial government led by Muñoz Marín.

In a separate case, young protestors manifested their frustration with the unjust colonial practices. Discontent among students at the University of Puerto Rico arose when President Truman failed to pass a bill that would allow teaching Spanish in institutions of higher education. In addition, students took special offense to this overrule because Truman had taken six months to veto the law; many of them believed he had taken that long on purpose.[111] Further frustration erupted when the rector of the University expelled students on the grounds of displaying a Puerto Rican flag inside school premises. At the end of the protest, students failed to get their demands met and an "era of silence," as coined by a local writer, fell upon the university; this is because of the "repressive mindset" assumed by the institution's administration and rector.[112] Additionally, the Selective Service Act targeted Nationalists and Puerto Ricans who refused to serve in the military. Government reports argued that nationalists, among other political left and right organizations, especially disobeyed conscription laws.[113] High estimates revealed that 60,000 islanders "rejected the compulsory military conscription."[114] Few were arrested, while others fled; a good portion of them were nationalists.[115]

Discouraged by unjust legislation and mass police retaliation, many nationalists opted to leave the party after this brutal violence campaign. Much more significantly, the Gag Law paved the way for future repression of Puerto Ricans dissidents and initiated a massive-island-wide web of government surveillance.

---

[111] Reynolds, *Campus in Bondage,* 35.

[112] Acosta, *Mordaza*, 122; Reynolds, Campus in Bondage, 68-70.

[113] FBI, *NPPR*, file no. 100-3-3716*,* 1a-1c.

[114] Acosta, *Mordaza*, 139.

[115] Paralitici, "Encarcelamiento," 248.

Covert Surveillance!

Government espionage was not new in Puerto Rico. Early interactions between American investigation agencies and the Puerto Rican police included working on secret surveillance of citizens as far as the early 1900s.[116] Consequently, communications between these government entities increased by 1936 when Albizu began to gain popular support. Discerning the Nationalist movement as a legitimate threat to colonial rule, authorities in Washington and San Juan began to gather intelligence on the PRNP. Before the creation of the FBI, secret agents known as the "G-men" (Government men) commenced undercover work on the nationalists, PIP members, and communists.[117] With secret government espionage already in place, Law 53 enabled island-wide surveillance in Puerto Rico.

For instance, US military agencies participated and encouraged investigations on the nationalists and *independentistas*. Reports by the *Comisión de Derechos Civiles (*CDC), or Commission of Civil Rights, stated that by 1956, 14,095 espionage dossiers had already been compiled on individual people.[118] Later records confirmed that about 135,000 files had been archived on over 75,000 nationalists, communists, and subversives, with at least 4,500 pertaining to the nationalists.[119] In addition, US agencies such as the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), Office of Special Investigations (OSI), the Intelligence, Security Unit in the

---

[116] Comision de Derechos Civiles (CDC), "Mecanica de la Practica de Confeccionar y Mantener Expedientes de Ciudadanos por Razon de Ideologia Politica" in *Las Carpetas: Persecución Política y Derechos Civiles en Puerto Rico: Ensayos y Documentos,* (Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997), 153; Ramon Bosque-Perez, "Political Persecution against Puerto Rican Anti-Colonial Activists in the Twentieth Century," in *Puerto Rico Under Colonial Rule,* ed. Ramon Bozque-Perez and Jose J. Colon Morera, (State University of New York Press, 2006), 15-18.

[117] Poitevin, "The Puerto Rican Experience," 93, Ferrao, *Nacionalismo*, 161.

[118] CDC, "Mecánica de la Práctica," 151.

[119] Bosque-Perez, "Carpetas y Persecución Política," 40-44.

United States Army (G-2), and the Secret Service agency also received copies of these reports transcribed by FBI investigators in New York City and San Juan.[120] Additionally, in April 1949, the US Attorney General declared the PRNP "a subversive organization."[121] Declarations made by the chief legal officer demonstrated the involvement of US authority to placate certain voices in Puerto Rico.

Along with these military organizations, the FBI and Puerto Rican Intelligence Division further facilitated intrusive government surveillance on the island, which increased exponentially. By 1948, the Commission on Civil Rights stated, "the Intelligence division of the [Puerto Rican] police and its regional offices had solidified…ties with the FBI and other US government agencies."[122] According to some scholars, the federal bureau had created its own list of "subversives" which primarily focused on the investigation of Nationalist Party members.[123] In addition, Edgar Hoover (1895–1972), Director of the FBI, became infatuated with ending this particular independence movement that he believed constituted a radical anti-American threat.

The FBI also employed informants to spy on the different organizations and meetings. Under Hoover's leadership, the surveillance apparatus became directed at Albizu and people associated with the independence efforts.[124] Their vigilance methods included the use of phone tapping and physical stalking. In 1944, while Albizu stayed at the Columbus Hospital in New York City, FBI agents installed a listening device in his room to

---

[120] FBI, *Federal Bureau of Investigation,* SJ 100-3-5329, vol. 39, *FBI Radiogram.* Dated to March 1, 1954.Accessed Oct. 1, 2023, https://archive.org/details/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/SJ-100-3_39_039_173/page/n9/mode/2up.

[121] Acosta, *Mordaza,* 134.

[122] CDC, "Mecánica de la Práctica," 153.

[123] See Aponte, *Albizu: Su Persecución por el FBI*; also Acosta, *La Mordaza.*

[124] Monica Jiménez, "Puerto Rico Under the Colonial Gaze: Oppression, Resistance and the Myth of the Nationalist Enemy," *Latino Studies* 18 (2020): 29, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-019-00238-3.

overhear his conversations. Senator Marcantonio verified this information when he discovered the spying gadgets used on Albizu. The senator destroyed the surveillance device as soon as he found out and threatened to expose the FBI in the House Floor.[125]

Also, part of the reason for Hoover's suspicion and distrust of Puerto Rican nationalists' connections with communists was due to fears of communism; intelligence agencies considered this relationship dangerous for American colonial rule and capitalist interests in Puerto Rico. In 1944, according to the Special Committee on Un-American Activities, "the Communists had put forth significant efforts to capture the American Labor Party (ALP) throughout the state of New York."[126] Apparently, communists also wanted to join forces with the PRNP in New York and Puerto Rico as well.[127] Regardless of this apparent relationship, government reports admitted that nationalists and communists rarely worked with one another, neither in Puerto Rico nor in the US.[128]

Nevertheless, the relationship between nationalists and communists did exist, despite undercover surveillance by the U.S government and military agencies. The relationship between nationalists and communists partly came about because of their close association in New York City, which intensified government persecution of the movement as well.[129] In NYC and Puerto Rico, part of the Puerto Rican community worked closely with members of the American Communist Party (CPUSA). The party helped many Puerto Ricans in New York City and gave political agency to others. Oftentimes, Puerto Rican community demands received support and backing from the Communist Party. When the nationalists had trouble collecting financial assistance to help the incarcerated members, the communist party members helped with

---

[125] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 101.

[126] FBI, *NPPR*, file no. 100-30-3715, 54.

[127] FBI, *NPPR*, file no. 100-30-3715, 57-59.

[128] FBI, *NPPR*, file no. 100-30-3715, 13-14.

[129] Power, "Solidarity in the Americas," 111.

donations. Informants said that by the end of 1953, Nationalist "ties with communists became stronger."[130]

Fearing the spread of communism, the FBI and Puerto Rican confidential informants appeared to exaggerate the criminality of the nationalists' activities. Classified agents reported that some members of the NPPR were trying to obtain weapons in NYC for the purpose of sending them back to the island.[131] It must be noted that not all members of the party acted in unison with similar aims and objectives. The Investigators noted that by August 1951, nationalists in the US or Puerto Rico did not harbor large amounts of weapons, nor did they have funding for their operations.[132] In other words, the Nationalists did not have the capacity to carry out large-scale attacks throughout the island or on the mainland.

Regardless of the number of weapons the nationalists could harbor, federal agents managed to "penetrate" the private lives of Puerto Ricans associated with leftist organizations. In one specific example, Juana Arocho spoke of the FBI surveillance taking place and knew people involved in the espionage activities. Arocho worked with Marcantonio and identified with the Puerto Rican Independence Party in NYC; so, she had close ties to the political world. She shared a personal story about an individual named Julio Torrres. While conversing with her and her husband, Torres confessed to being an FBI undercover agent. After their talk, Torres solicited Arocho not to reveal his identity to others, to which she complied and stayed quiet.[133] Moreover, she also came under scrutiny from government agents. Arocho stated that, on one

---

[130] FBI*, NPPR, SJ 100-3, vol. 39,* file no. 100-3-5416, 70-72. https://archive.org/details/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/SJ-100-3_39_039_173/page/n9/mode/2up, accessed Oct. 1, 2023.

[131] FBI, *NPPR,* file no. 100-3-3715, 30-32.

[132] FBI*, NPPR,* file no. 100-3-3715, 31.

[133] Juana Arocho, interview three with Juanita Arocho Rosado on February 16, 1983, Centro: Puerto Ricans in New York - Voices of the Migration: Center for Puerto Rican Studies Library & Archives, Hunter College, CUNY, 2:54, accessed Nov. 21, 2023, https://centroca.hunter.cuny.edu/Detail/objects/4540.

occasion, an agent followed her when she purchased a couple of Puerto Rican flags.[134] She said the agency never detained or arrested her, but her personal stories reveal the agency's use of invasive procedures and their effect on people.[135] The FBI indiscriminately used these surveillance techniques, further proving the irresponsibility of the agency's actions.

Once authorities entered the lives of the nationalists, federal agents harassed individuals and acted outside their legal boundaries. Citizens labeled as "subversives" received the same treatment as criminals and became targets of hefty investigations.[136] In NYC and Chicago, investigations on Nationalist leaders, Oscar Collazo and Julio Pinto Gandía, intensified due to their "subversive activities."[137] In another example, government reports mentioned an incident between the nationalists and federal agents. In this case, two nationalists, Gonzalo Lebron Sotomayor and Jorge Jimenez, spoke about altercations they had with federal agents. They commented on feeling afraid, harassed, and threatened by FBI agents.[138] In a different case, another suspect, Carlos Aulet, stated that agents would monitor him twenty-four hours a day, which sounded exhausting. Other victims of harassment complained about the improper language used by the agents towards them.[139]

---

[134] Juana Arocho, interview two with Juanita Arocho Rosado on February 16, 1983: Centro: Puerto Ricans in New York - Voices of the Migration, Center for Puerto Rican Studies Library & Archives, Hunter College, CUNY, 18:45, accessed Nov. 21, 2023, https://centroca.hunter.cuny.edu/Detail/objects/4540.

[135] Juana Arocho, Interview two with Juanita Arocho, 18:45- 19:30.

[136] Atiles, "Colonial State Terror," 230-231.

[137] CDC, "Mecánica de la Práctica," 154.

[138] FBI File, *Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico (NPPR), SJ 100--3, vol 22,* file no. *100-3-3585.* Accessed Oct. 1, 2023. https://archive.org/details/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/SJ-100-3_22_022_156/page/n3/mode/2up.

[139] FBI, *NPPR, SJ 100-3, vol. 39,* file no. *100-3-5415*, p. 25-27. Report made in Chicago, accessed Oct. 1, 2023. https://archive.org/details/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/SJ-100-3_39_039_173/page/n9/mode/2up.

Acting outside the legal frameworks, colonial authorities implemented the "practice of deception." The manual of instructions used by the Puerto Rican Police Division of Intelligence, for instance, provided officers with guidance on intrusive investigation techniques. The manual gave advice on how to investigate suspects. It encouraged the infiltration of communities by authorities and offered guidance on how to deflect questions from people. The manual told agents to be indirect, precarious and evasive while conducting on-site interviews of political suspects. The guidebook instructed its officers to write down license plate numbers, to infiltrate neighborhoods and, if necessary, to lie to the public about the intentions and motives of their investigations.[140]

Overall, combined with state repression, covert surveillance helped break the nationalist movement from within. Arguably, the rupture of the party would inevitably cause the militant segment of the PRNP to assume a radical position in a desperate and daring attempt to achieve independence for the island.

The 1950s Nationalist Uprising

Albizu Campos extensively tried to find a legal path to independence. He wanted to generate a court case to take to the US Supreme Court in his early days as an attorney.[141] Some members of the Nationalist Party, along with the League for Puerto Rico's Independence, wanted the United Nations (UN) to intervene in favor of Puerto Rican independence.[142] In his initial years, Albizu believed sovereignty and self-determination could be achieved through nonviolent means. FBI reports recognized that Albizu would have preferred a peaceful revolution, but militant segments

---

[140] Intelligence Division of Puerto Rico, "Proceso Investigativo de la Oficina de Inteligencia," *Las Carpetas: Persecución Política y derechos Civiles en Puerto Rico: Ensayos y Documentos* (Rio Piedras, Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997), 159-165.

[141] Acosta, *Mordaza,* 100; Tovar, *Revolucionario*, 237- 244.

[142] Power, *Solidarity*, 150.

within the PRNP believed otherwise.[143] Albizu unconditionally backed the actions of those who sought to liberate the nation despite their belief in armed resistance and extreme nationalism.

The creation of the new Commonwealth status for Puerto Rico finally pushed the PRNP members to engage in militant action. Public Law 600, signed on July 3, 1950 by the Constituent Assembly, allowed the Puerto Rican government to draft its own constitution.[144] Supporters of the law believed that the bill declared Puerto Rico free to "exercise local sovereignty" and believed it removed the island's "possession" status that had been established by the insular cases in the early twentieth century.[145] In addition, part of the reason the US government needed to revise Puerto Rico's political status had been because, after WWII, the newly formed United Nations had put in place a resolution that basically called an end to colonialism.[146] The US then felt pressure to change this political reality.

Finally, on October 30, 1950—perhaps understanding they had no prospect of obtaining their revolutionary goal—the nationalists started a series of attacks on major cities over the Puerto Rican island. Armed incidents between police and Nationalists occurred mainly in eight cities: Peñuelas, Mayagüez, Arecibo, Jayuya, Naranjito, Ponce, Utuado, and San Juan (*La Fortaleza*).[147] These insurgents had planned to meet in Utuado- a major city in the center of the island within a mountainous region- and hold it for a month. The nationalist end goal was to bring world attention to the movement and force the UN to find another resolution in the case of Puerto Rico's territorial status.[148]

---

[143] Acosta, *Mordaza,* 140-141.

[144] US Public Law 600, Art. 3, 81st Congress, July 3, 1950, c. 446, 64 State. 319. Codified at USC. 731 et seq.

[145] Isern Fernos, "Status of Puerto Rico: Objection Voiced to Designation as a United States Possession," *New York Times*, March 17, 1952: 20.

[146] Acosta, *Mordaza*, 11, 207-208.

[147] Seijo Bruno, *La Insurrección*, 207-212; Power, *Solidarity*, 171-173.

[148] Seijo Bruno, *La Insurrección,* 139; Power, *Solidarity,* 172.

The insurrection showcased intense armed encounters between the nationalists and the insular police. In Jayuya, a city located in the center of Puerto Rico, the insurgents succeeded in taking the town. Led by Carlos Irizarri, the insurgents attacked the local police station and captured the city hall. After their victory, Blanca Canales, waved a flag from her home balcony, and declared the city part of the new *República de Puerto Rico*- the Puerto Rican Republic.

Other insurgent groups, however, failed to meet their goals. Due to undercover work on the PRNP, authorities found out the nationalists planned to take Utuado. The police waited in the town's plaza and once the rebels arrived, the shooting commenced. In the end, the insurgents were forced to retreat back to their local headquarters.[149] On October 31, the National Guard arrived in Utuado and delivered a surrender ultimatum. The rebels surrendered, but as they walked down the streets authorities heard gunshots and opened fire on the insurgents, killing four individuals and injuring seven. The next morning after the incident, some of the wounded nationalists received urgent medical care while others were carried to prison.

Besides the armed conflicts on the island, the PRNP on the mainland sought to convince the global community that what had taken place with the nationalist uprising signified a stand against American colonialism. For this purpose, on November 1, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola conducted an attack in Washington, D.C. against President Harry S. Truman. The two nationalists from New York City had arrived that morning and took a taxi to Blair House, where President Truman stayed for a brief time. Once they arrived, Collazo and Torresola fired at three agents who kept guard at the door. At the end of the shootout, Torresola and one of the president's guards had died.[150]

In San Juan, governor Muñoz Marín must have felt astonished and amazed. A "suicidal attack" on *La Fortaleza*- the

---

[149] Tovar, *Revolucionario,* 330-331, Tovar, *Revolutionary*, 51-54.

[150] Tovar, *Revolutionary,* 113- 114.

Governor's Palace- also took place on the same day of the insurgency. Armed with Molotov bombs and submachine guns, five nationalists plunged their vehicle into the residence's patio. A shooting between the secret service and the nationalist followed which left four of them dead, as well as one officer dead.[151] Afterwards, Muñoz Marín flew to Washington where he condemned the actions perpetrated by the nationalists. He stated that the nationalists were a "gang of terrorists" who were linked to communism and had little support in Puerto Rico.[152] Puerto Rican scholars have tried to explain and understand people's motives for taking part in this "nationalist revolt." A few claimed that the nationalist uprisings constituted a "supreme act of protest" rather than a terrorist attack.[153]

Muñoz Marín rapidly employed the conveniently available government powers to suppress the nationalist movement. With the assistance of Law 53, he ordered the detention of nationalist, PIP members, and other government dissenters throughout the island. The insular government detained over 1,000 individuals and convicted more than 100 people for the attacks, mostly nationalists.[154] Before the re-arrest of Albizu, an intense shooting took place in his residence in Old San Juan on the day of the revolt. The insular police had surrounded his home, where he stayed with three other students, one of whom got shot and had to be escorted out by her classmates. By November 2, authorities convinced Albizu to turn himself in.[155] He would receive a fifty-three-year sentence of prison time. Meanwhile in Jayuya, on November 1, in order to retake the local municipal government

---

[151] Tovar, *Revolutionary*, 106-107; Pedro Aponte Vasquez, *"El Ataque Nacionalista a La Fortaleza,"* (Publicaciones René), 4-7.

[152] "Puerto Rico's head links two attacks," *New York Times*, November 02, 1950, 19.

[153] Federico Ribes Tovar, *A Chronological History of Puerto Rico* (Plus Ultra Educational Publishers, 1973), 110-111; Seijo Bruno, *Insurrección,* 242, 260-263, 268, see Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 89.

[154] Poitevin, "Puerto Rican Experience," 92.

[155] Tovar, *Revolucionario*, 111.

from the nationalist insurgents, the Puerto Rican Air Force–with the support of the American National Guard–dropped bombs on its own city and people.[156]

Apart from undergoing massive arrest, Puerto Ricans sustained cruel and excessive punishments due to political reasons. The Senate (under Joseph C. O'Mahoney), the FBI, the Secret Service, and the Justice Department began investigations on the attacks.[157] For example, some notable figures arrested included Ruth Reynolds and Concepción de Gracia.[158] Furthermore, in the case of Collazo, he was tried and given the death penalty for his participation in the attacks in Washington. The Latin American community quickly came together to help prevent his execution. These international demands for leniency influenced Truman to call-off the death sentence. Marcantonio also showed his endless support to the nationalists by helping Collazo avoid the death sentence. The senator petitioned Truman for "clemency" and participated in amnesty campaigns. These efforts appeared to have worked and Truman revoked the death penalty on July 23, 1952. Instead, Collazon would receive life imprisonment.[159] In the end, the nationalist insurgency resulted in twenty-seven deaths, various injured, and over 1,000 arrested.[160]

With mass arrests of Marin's entire opposition, the US government— represented by the Insular government—arguably succeeded in maintaining territorial possession of Puerto Rico. On February 6, 1952, US Congress allowed the passing of the Puerto Rican Constitution designating the island a Commonwealth of the

---

[156] Atiles, "Colonial State Terror in Puerto Rico," 231-232.

[157] "Senate Inquiry Set: O'Mahoney orders investigation of attack on Truman," *New York Times*, November 2, 1950: 17.

[158] Ruth Reynolds was an American civil rights activist and scholar who advocated for Puerto Rican independence and collaborated with the PRNP. She also helped establish the American League for Puerto Rico's Independence; Meyer, "Collaboration in the cause," 121, see note 100.

[159] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 109-111.

[160] Power, *Solidarity,* 170; Acosta*, Mordaza,* 146; Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 89.

United States government, also known in Spanish as the "*Estado Libre Asociado.*" The law officially removed the island 's territorial status and instead became a free associated state.[161]

Furthermore, the UN removed the island from its list of territories in November 1953, but Puerto Rico's new political status did not entirely resolve existing social-political tensions between the nationalists and the colonial government.[162] To prove this point, there was one last attempt with the goal of bringing global attention to Puerto Rico's political status. Three years after the original insurrection, on March 4, 1954, Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Andres Figueroa Contrero, and Irving Flores Rodriguez attacked Congress. First, the nationalists made their way into the Ladies' Gallery within the US House of Representatives. Then, they proceeded to fire inside the chamber, yelling "*Viva Puerto Rico Libre,*" or "Long Live a Free and Sovereign Puerto Rico."[163] The *New York Times* stated the attacks emanated from the "primal motivations of the leaders of the communist movement."[164] In other words, they blamed communist and communism. In addition, before the attack on Congress, surveillance agencies had been spying on the nationalists involved in the attack and had an idea about the nationalists' plan. For his part, Albizu commented that what the four Nationalists had done in Washington constituted an act of "sublime heroism" and yet, another call for independence.[165]

The final attack on Washington and the reimprisonment of Pedro Albizu Campos sent the Nationalist Party and its movement to a dramatic downturn. FBI reports indicated nationalists had seized their illegal activities against the US colonial government.

---

[161] Tovar, *Revolucionario,* 352-353.

[162] Acosta, *Mordaza,* 209.

[163] Clayton Knowles, "Five Congressmen Shot in the House by 3 Puerto Rican Nationalists; Bullets Spray from Gallery," *New York Times*, March 2, 1954: 1.

[164] Nikita Roodkowsky, "Subverting Nationalism: Its use by Communists to Advance Doctrine of Destruction seen," *New York Times,* March 13, 1954: 14.

[165] Peter Kihss, "Sublime heroism' cited in shooting," New York Times, Mar 3, 1954: 14.

By January 1954, FBI investigations concluded that "no indication…. of an organized NPPR" existed. Nationalists had seized their illegal activities against the US colonial government and the party's focus shifted to trying to help their incarcerated peers.[166]

Personal Impact of Repression

The repression had a lasting impact on the nationalist supporters and their families. They had to endure the dehumanizing legal processes and painstaking bureaucratic obstacles to get to their incarcerated relatives. To illustrate this, prisoners served prison sentences far away from their places of origin. This caused massive anxiety for entire families who did not have the resources and time to travel to them.[167] Julio Velasquez's mother, Julia Velasquez, a PRNP member in NYC, suffered substantial depression and immense agony due to the incarceration of her son. To their fortune and with the help of Senator Marcantonio, authorities released Julia's son from prison. The senator even went out of his way to offer him a job.[168]

Regardless of ideology, people suffered long-term effects as a consequence of the state's unlawful practices and discriminatory behavior. Many lost their livelihoods, social stability, and reputation due to the unfair accusations of government agents such as the Puerto Rican Insular Police. Eventually, in 1992, Puerto Ricans sued the Puerto Rican state and the insular police for personal and psychological damages caused

---

[166] FBI, *Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico (NPPR), SJ 100-3,* file no. 100-3-3715, vol 22. Report made at San Juan. Accessed Oct. 1, 2023; and, FBI, *NPPR,* file no.100-3-5416, 121. https://archive.org/details/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/SJ-100-3_23_023_157/.

[167] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 100.

[168] Meyer, "Collaboration in the Cause," 101.

by these persecutions.[169] In *Fernández Pola et al. v. Commonwealth et al.* in October of 1992, the plaintiffs highlighted the psychological, physical, social, and other harms they had suffered.[170] The federal courts in Puerto Rico determined that the actions perpetrated by Puerto Rican police had been illegal. "Contravention to freedoms of speech, peaceful assembly, religion…dignity violation…manifest, organize and protest of workers" exposed extreme police misconduct.[171] The trials revealed that federal agents constantly stalked and intimidated Puerto Ricans in their worksites and personal spaces. Agents, at times, would enter a suspect's workplace requesting information from the employers by accusing them of being part of a "subversive organization."[172] These intrusive procedures caused many to be dismissed from their jobs and made it hard to find employment.

Furthermore, the legacy of the 1950s nationalist movement, in more modern times, is viewed with bitter nostalgia. Victor Villanueva, an English teacher of Puerto Rican parents, shed light on the importance of memory. As he put it, "the postcolonial process of erasure and the substitution of the loss of memory with myth" created a loss of memory within the Puerto Rican community itself. Villanueva tied the memory of the Nationalist movement in the 1950s with the memory of his parents, more specifically his dad. Villanueva shares the story of his father's childhood and his experiences with the Nationalist Party back in Puerto Rico. Turns out, his father's sister had been in a relationship with a nationalist revolutionary. At one point, this man went into hiding at *el Yunque,* a nearby rainforest, and his father would help to provide clothes and food to him. Villanueva states that his dad

---

[169] *Fernandez Pola et al. v. Estado Libre Asociado et al.,* in *Las Carpetas: Persecución Política y Derechos Civiles en Puerto Rico: Ensayos y Documentos,* (Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997), 213.

[170] *Fernández et al v Estado Libre,* 212-216.

[171] *Fernández et al v Estado Libre,* 212.

[172] *Fernández et al v Estado Libre,* 212.

remembers this with nostalgia and his experiences caused his father to refrain from talking about politics.[173] Through his family, Villanueva's personal and profound history demonstrates his connection to the movement. His experiences prove there is lack of knowledge and memory within the community about the Puerto Rican nationalist insurrection. There is dismissal of this uprising which continues to create a struggle for those who seek to keep the memory of the movement alive.

There are issues with memory within the Puerto Rican community regarding the 1950s events; however, the events perpetrated by the nationalists continue to elicit debates among scholars. *War Against All Puerto Ricans* (2016) written by a Puerto Rican politician Nelson Denis, who has served in the New York State Assembly from the 68th District, has had significant commercial success.[174] However, scholars in the field have peer reviewed his work and offered critical feedback. Previously mentioned scholars, Aponte and Ferrao claimed that Nelson's book had large amounts of misquotation and unverified story in his book. Aponte declared that Nelson did not implement the feedback given to him. He advised on the usage of proper sources in his research. In addition, Ferrao has accused Nelson of being misleading in his research.[175] They also have questioned the validity of his evidence. Since the accusations, Nelson has responded vociferously against Ferrao (mainly on his website) by stating that his quotation usage is correct, and he stands firmly by

---

[173] Victor Villanueva, "Colonial Memory and the Crime of Rhetoric: Pedro Albizu Campos." *College English* 71:6 (2009), 630-631, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25653000.

[174] Nelson A Denis, *War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony,* (Nation Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2015).

[175] Luis Ferrao, "Historian Slams 'Lies' of War Against All Puerto Ricans," https://www.latinorebels.com/2015/09/27/historian-slams-lies-of-war-against-all-puerto-ricans/.

his research.[176] However, the debate is understandable since Nelson does not specialize in history and his expertise is in politics. Therefore, his methods of analysis are different from historians and his standards are not as rigorous in regard to primary and secondary sources. His motives also appear to be more politically oriented. Debates among scholars demonstrate that the history of the Nationalist Party will continue to divide people due to the political nature of the topic, but also that future investigations of this matter will continue to require scrutinous commitment to truth and research.

In a different case, Latin American historian Margaret Power, in *Solidarity in the Americas,* has focused on the transcendence of the nationalist movement throughout Latin America and the United States.[177] She noted that what took place in the 1950s is important because the PRNP helped to assert pride in being Puerto Rican, and it gave islanders a sense of identity. The PRNP, she argued, stood for the island's "dignity, history, and right to rule themselves."[178]

Finally, Pedro Albizu Campos was eventually pardoned by Luis Muñoz Marín, but passed away on April 21, 1965, never having achieved his life's goal: to give his nation independence. Nevertheless, his presence is still palpable. Along with the PRNP, Albizu managed to remind the world that Puerto Rico exists with its own separate identity, culture, and people. Regardless of their failure, Puerto Ricans continue to think of themselves as a unique nation worthy of being recognized as such.

---

[176] Nelson Denis, "The many lies of Luis Ferrao," https://waragainstallpuertoricans.com/2015/09/28/the-many-lies-of-luis-ferrao/.

[177] Special thanks to Margaret Power because she helped in answering my emails while making this research essay. Also, Professor Santoni for getting me in contact with her, and also for editing and revising this work. Thank you Dr. Power and Dr. Santoni.

[178] Power, *Solidarity*, 204.

Conclusion

The 1950s uprisings represent a case study of the state's encroachment over the common people of Puerto Rico. The nationalist insurgency is an example of a contemporary struggle against American neocolonialism and decolonization. The state's suppression of this pro-independence movement sheds light on the authoritarian character of these repression campaigns against Latino populations in the Caribbean and in the United States. Puerto Rican authorities in conjunction with American agencies employed belligerent legal and illegal actions to end the movement. The demise of the PRNP, but also Pedro Albizu Campos, serves as an example of an authoritarian repression of American and Latino populations. The lasting personal impacts of the repression campaigns against the nationalists in Puerto Rico and the United States have had unheeded repercussions and reverberations on the lives of those who participated in these events. Ultimately, the political status of Puerto Rico lies in a political limbo and requires desperate revision again, additional political power must also be given to the Puerto Rican people. With all this said, if this is not possible, the United States federal government should finally take a decisive step and finally give its promised independence to the island of Puerto Rico.

Bibliography

Acosta, Ivonne. *La Mordaza (The Gag Law): Puerto Rico, 1948-1957*. Editorial Edil, 1989. Kindle version.

Albizu Campos, Pedro. "El Nacionalismo Puertorriqueño." In *La Conciencia Nacional Puertorriqueña*, editada por Manuel Maldonado-Denis. Siglo Veintiuno, 1972.

———. "Manifiesto del Partido Nacionalista." In *La Conciencia Nacional Puertorriqueño*, editado por Manuel Maldonado-Denis. Siglo Veintiuno, 1972.

———. *Albizu Campos: Escritos*, editado por Laura Albizu-Campos Meneses, Mario A. Rodriguez Leon, and Andres Palomares. Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas, 2007.

———. *Pedro Albizu Campos: Obras Escogidas, 1936-1954,* editado por Benjamin E. Torres, y Edgardo Torres. Vol. III. Segunda edición revisada y aumentada. Editorial Jelofe, 2022.

Aponte Vázquez, Pedro I. *Albizu: Su Persecución por el FBI*. Ed. ampliada y revisada. Publicaciones René, 2000.

Atiles–Osoria, José. "Colonial State Terror in Puerto Rico: A Research Agenda." *State Crime Journal* 5, no. 2 (2016): 220–41. https://doi.org/10.13169/statecrime.5.2.0220.

Ayala, César J, and Rafael Bernabe. *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*. University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Bonilla, Yarimar, and Marisol LeBrón. "Introduction." In *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico before and After the Storm*, edited by Yarimar Bonill and Marisol LeBrón, 1–17. Haymarket Books, 2019.

Bosque-Perez, Ramon. "Political Persecution against Puerto Rican Anti-Colonial Activists in the Twentieth Century." In *Puerto Rico Under Colonial Rule*, edited by Ramón Bosque-Perez and Jose J. Colon Morera, 13–47. State University of New York Press, 2006.

Centro: Puerto Ricans in New York, Voices of the Migration. Center for Puerto Rican Studies Library & Archives,

Hunter College, CUNY. Accessed Web. Nov. 21, 2023. https://centroca.hunter.cuny.edu/Detail/objects/4537.

Comisión de Derechos Civiles (CDC). "Mecánica de la Práctica de Confeccionar y Mantener Expedientes de Ciudadanos por Razón de Ideología Política." En Las *Carpetas: Persecución Política y Derechos Civiles en Puerto Rico: Ensayos y Documentos,* editado por Ramon Bozque-Perez y Jose J. Colon Morera, 135-158. Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997.

Corretjer, Juan Antonio. *La Lucha por la Independencia de Puerto Rico*. 9th ed. Zumbador Publishing, 2020. Kindle version.

———. *Albizu Campos and the Ponce Massacre*. New York City: WorldView Publishers, 1965.

Dietz, James L. *Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional change and Capitalist Development*. Princeton University, Press, 1986.

FBI Files. *Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico (NPPR), SJ 100-3. Volume 22.* Report made at San Juan. https://archive.org/details/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/SJ-100-3_22_022_156/page/n3/mode/2up. Accessed October 1, 2023.

FBI Files, *Federal Bureau of Investigation, SJ 100-3, vol. 39, FBI Radiogram*, dated March 1, 1954. https://archive.org/details/PartidoNacionalistaDePuertoRico/SJ-100-3_39_039_173/page/n9/mode/2up. Accessed October 1, 2023.

Fernandez, Ronald. *La Isla Desencantada: Puerto Rico y los Estados Unidos en el Siglo XX.* 1st ed. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Cultural, 1996.

Ferrao, Luis Angel. *Pedro Albizu Campos y el Nacionalismo Puertorriqueño*. 1st ed. San Juan, Editorial Cultural, 1990.

Gonzalez-Cruz, Michael. "The US Invasion of Puerto Rico: Occupation and Resistance to the Colonial State, 1898 to the Present." *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 5 (1998): 7–26. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2634086.

Gonzalez, Juan. "Puerto Rico Had Never Seen Anything like It."

Progressive 62, no. 9 (1998): 24-26.
Intelligence Division of Puerto Rico. "Proceso Investigativo de la *Derechos Civiles en Puerto Rico: Ensayos y Documentos,* editado por Ramon Bozque-Perez y Jose J. Colon Morera*,* 159-165. Rio Piedras, Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997.
Jiménez, M.A." Puerto Rico Under the Colonial Gaze: Oppression, Resistance and the Myth of the Nationalist Enemy." *Latino Studies* 18, (2020): 27–44.
Meléndez Badillo, Jorell A. *Puerto Rico: Historia de una Nación*. Editorial Planeta Mexicana, 2024.
Meyer, Gerald J. "Pedro Albizu Campos, Gilberto Concepcion de Gracia, and Vito Marcantonio's Collaboration in the Cause of Puerto Rico's Independence." *Centro Journal* 23, no. 1 (2011): 86–123.
Morales, Ed. "Puerto Rico 's Unjust Debt." In *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm* edited by Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón, 211–223. Haymarket Books, 2019.
Nelson, Denis A. *War Against All Puerto Ricans: Revolution and Terror in America's Colony*. Nation Books, 2015.
Palacio Moreno, Juan. "Myth & Remembrance: The Harvard Life of Pedro Albizu Campos." *Harvard Latin American Law Review* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2023): 301–325.
Paralitici, Jose. "Encarcelamiento de Luchadores Anti-Coloniales: 1898-1958" in *Las Carpetas: Persecución Política y Derechos Civiles en Puerto Rico: Ensayos y Documentos*, edited by Ramón Bosque Pérez, and José Javier Colón Morera, 237-254. Centro para la Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Civiles, 1997.
Poitevin, René Francisco. "Political Surveillance, State Repression, and Class Resistance: The Puerto Rican Experience." *Social Justice* 27, no. 3 (81) (2000): 89–100. http://www.jstor.org/stable/29767233.
Power, Margaret. *Solidarity Across the Americas: the Puerto Rican*

Nationalist Party and Anti-Imperialism. University of North Carolina Press, 2023.

Reynolds, Ruth M. Campus in Bondage: A 1948 Microcosm of Puerto Rico in Bondage. Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños/Hunter College, the City University of New York, 1989.

Ribes Tovar, Federico. *A Chronological History of Puerto Rico*. Plus, Ultra Educational Publishers, 1973.

———. *Albizu* Campos*: El Revolucionario*. Plus Ultra Educational Publishers, 1975.

——— . *Albizu Campos: Puerto Rican Revolutionary*. Translated by *Anthony* Rawlings. New York City, New York: Plus Ultra, 1971. https://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC29_scans/29.tovar.albizu.campos.1971.pdf.

Rosado, Marisa. Las llamas de la aurora: acercamiento a una biografía de Pedro Albizu Campos. 2a. ed. rev. y aum.4a. reimpr. Ediciones Puerto, 2006.

Seijo Bruno, Miñi. *La Insurrección Nacionalista en Puerto Rico, 1950*. Editorial Edil, 1989.

Sotomayor, Antonio. *The Sovereign Colony: Olympic Sport, National Identity, and International Politics in Puerto Rico*. University of Nebraska Press, 2016.

Taller de Formación Política, and Luis A. Ferrao. *Pedro Albizu Campos: Conservador, Fascista o Revolucionario?* Taller de Formación Política, 1991. https://horomicos.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/tfp_pac_conservador.pdf.

Tapia y Rivera, Alejandro. "Puerto Rico, Seen Without Spectacles by a Myopic." In *The Intellectual Roots of Independence: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Political Essays*, edited by Iris Zavala, and Rafael Rodriguez, 49-53. Monthly Review Press, 1980.

Villanueva, Victor. "Colonial Memory and the Crime of Rhetoric: Pedro Albizu Campos." College English 71, no. 6 (2009): 630–38. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25653000.

Author Bio

Gustavo Alonso Chamu is a first-year history graduate student at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). He graduated in Spring 2024 with a Bachelor of Arts in history, pre-credential concentration and departmental honors. He has served as a California College Corps Fellow, Treasurer for the SB history club, as well as section editor and co-chief editor for the history journal. Gustavo earned his Associate of Arts degree in history from Riverside City College (RCC). His research interest is in Latin American history, with an emphasis in American intervention in Latin America and the Cold War period. His ultimate goal is to become an educator and be of service to the Riverside-San Bernardino communities from which he is a part of. He is currently working as a substitute teacher.

Gustavo would like to give special thanks to Dr. Pedro Santoni, Dr. Michael Karp, Dr. Jeremy Murray, Dr. Tiffany Jones, Dr. Kate Liszka, Dr. Daisy Ocampo-Diaz, Dr. Joy Barta, and the entire history faculty and staff for their tremendous guidance and outstanding mentorship. He would also like to thank his editor Samuel Griffin who reviewed his works extensively during this arduous writing process. Lastly, he would like to thank his entire family. Thanks everyone!

Revolutionary Sisters: The Rise of Chicana Feminism

By Christian Rodriguez

Abstract: *This essay examines the rise of Chicana feminism during the Chicano Rights Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It covers the reasons why women felt the need to create an organization outside of the movement that focused on specific women's issues and the importance of building sisterhood with Chicanas. As great as it was for women to have a space where they could organize and discuss the advancement of Chicanas, there were other women who did not feel that feminism should even be a topic for discussion. The essay also touches on queer liberation, the importance of art, newspapers, photographs, and media to organize Chicana women, forced sterilization of Mexican women, and the future of Chicana feminism*.

The Chicana feminist movement was born out of sexism and underrepresentation in the male-dominated Chicano Rights Movement. Growing tired of being assigned traditional female jobs and no opportunities for leadership roles, Chicana women decided to create a movement for themselves where they were able to speak about issues affecting them, such as welfare reform, contraception, sexuality, and sexism. Using art, murals, poetry, photography, and newspapers, Chicanas were able to reach a larger audience. This essay not only argues that they found their voice but also created a sisterhood that was built in response to the male-dominated Chicano Rights Movement. Chicana feminists changed the way women were seen and heard in society, but it was not

without criticism from their own communities that looked down on the women for their actions.[1]

Background & Introduction to the Chicano Rights Movement

During the 1960s, America underwent a societal change where marginalized people stood up and fought for their rights. The Civil Rights Movement, the Farm Workers Union (a labor union dedicated to the rights and representation of farm workers), anti-war sentiments (opposition to the Vietnam War), and second-wave feminism (women focused on challenging traditional gender roles and gender equality) were all occurring at the same time. Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, the Chicano Rights Movement was created by Chicano students in the late 1960s because they felt that they were being excluded from thriving in American society.

The Chicano Rights Movement was made up of educated college students, labor activists, land activists, and high school students who demanded equality in white America, an end to racism, the right to cultural autonomy, and national self-determination. Chicanismo meant identifying with *La Raza* ("The people" in Chicano culture; means a group of Mexican-Americans who share culture, traditions, and values) and collectively promoting the interest of *carnales* (brothers) with whom they shared a common language, culture, religion, and Aztec heritage.[2] The organizations that were essential to the Chicano Rights Movement were predominantly created and led by men who used language that was only for their own benefit.

The movement spread throughout the American Southwest, where several organizations aimed to better the lives of Chicanos. Reis Lopez-Tijerina (1926–2015) led *La Alianza Federal de Mercedes,* which was a movement that aimed to give

---

[1] Chicana-A woman or girl of Mexican or Mexican American descent.

[2] Ramón A. Gutierrez, "Community, Patriarchy and Individualism: The Politics of Chicano History and the Dream of Equality," *American Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1993): 44–72, https://doi.org/10.2307/2713052.

land rights to Hispanics in New Mexico. The United Farm Workers Union in California, led by Cesar Chavez (1927–1993) and Dolores Huerta (1930–), fought to give farm workers rights and a living wage. The Crusade for Justice in Colorado, led by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez (1928–2005), was focused on economic, cultural, and political rights. This organization offered job training and food banks for the community and protested against racism, police brutality, and employment discrimination. The Brown Berets in California, co-founded by Carlos Montes (1947–) and David Sanchez (1947–), focused on farm workers' rights, opposition to the Vietnam War, education reform, and protesting police brutality.

While these organizations' goals differed, they all had the same message of unity and equality that attracted young men and women to the Chicano Movement. Many of the women in the Brown Berets felt they were being underutilized and assigned to "traditional" female roles such as cooking, cleaning, and secretarial work.[3] There were little to no women in leadership roles within these organizations. However, Chicana women had previously worked in leadership positions in other Civil Rights organizations, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) offices in both the East Coast and the South, National Organization of Women (NOW), and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).[4] The women left these organizations and joined the Chicano movement when faced with the fact that the Civil Rights Movement was not concerned about Chicano issues and the war on poverty programs did not address the *barrios* (Chicano neighborhoods).[5]

---

[3] Perlita R. Dicochea, "Chicana Critical Rhetoric: Recrafting La Causa in Chicana Movement Discourse, 1970-1979." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 25, no. 1 (2004): 77–92.

[4] Amaia Ibarraran-Bigalondo, *Mexican American women, dress and gender: Pachucas, Chicanas, Cholas,* (Routledge, 2019), 57.

[5] Carlos Munoz Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London:Verso, 2007), 51.

Chicano culture values the family unit, and women viewed the movement as a family. They understood that they were stronger together than divided and initially decided against creating their own movement despite the sexism and discrimination they were facing in the organizations. However, Chicanas still had to endure various hardships in the movement. For example, one of the women in the movement recalled that "It was not uncommon in those days for the men in the movement to request sexual cooperation as proof of commitment to the struggle, by gratifying the men who fought it."[6] In another example of sexism within the movement, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, who was considered one of the first people to speak about Chicano rights and the author of the renowned Chicano poem, *Yō soy Joaquin (I am Joaquin,* a poem about the struggles of Chicanos to assimilate into American culture but still keeping their Mexican roots), went to visit a university campus where the leader of the local MEChA chapter was a woman.[7] The men of MEChA thought it was improper and embarrassing for Corky to see that the leader of the university chapter was a woman, and she was pressured to step down by the males in her chapter.[8]

Creating a Space for Chicana Women

Chicana women grew tired of not being promoted to leadership positions, of sexism, and of not being heard. After all, the movement was created for Chicanos to be seen and heard. They were supposed to work together, but instead, *machismo* and male pride prevented them from being able to grow and further the

---

[6] Gutierrez, "Community, Patriarchy and Individualism", 52-55.

[7] Founded in 1969, MEChA is short for Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, a student organization that promotes Chicano unity and empowerment.

[8] Marisela Rodriguez Chavez, "Despierten Hermanas y Hermanos!:Women, the Chicano Movement, and Chicana Feminism in California, 1966-1981" (Dissertation, Stanford University, 2004) 44.

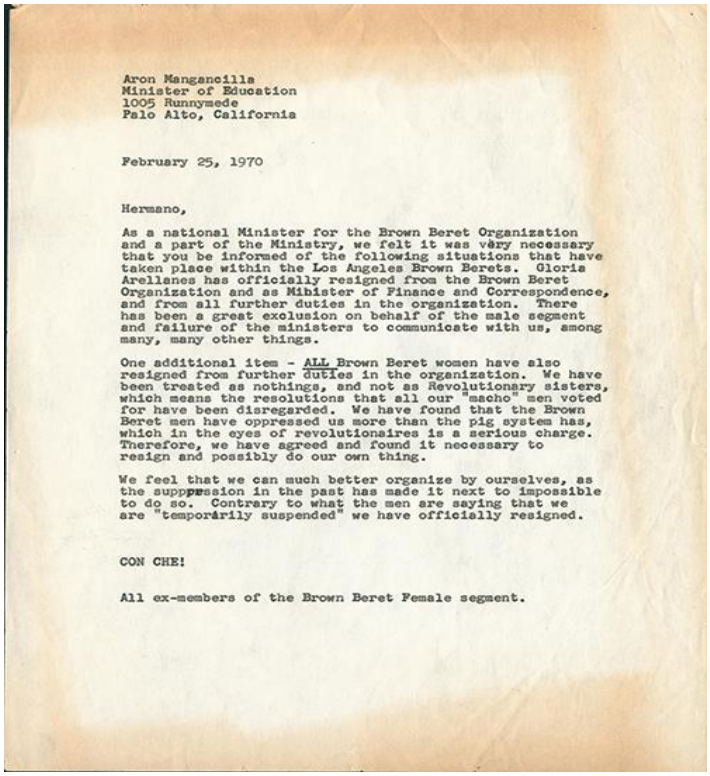
movement.[9] Women in the Brown Berets, specifically the Los Angeles chapter, wrote a letter (Figure 1) to the Brown Berets National headquarters detailing their grievances with the men in the movement and how they had failed to treat their sisters as equals. The letter further calls out the men and says, "We have found that the Brown Beret men have oppressed us more than the pig system". The women collectively resigned from the Brown Berets and went on to create their own organization.[10]

During this time, Chicana-led groups and safe spaces for women were being created so that they could speak about not only issues concerning the Chicano community but also about women's issues such as reproductive rights, sexism, and sexuality freely. The leaders of these new organizations were women who had experience in the movement or had been involved in women's rights for a long time. These groups ranged from small groups on college campuses to larger ones that had chapters all over the country.

---

[9] *Machismo* comes from the assertion of male dominance in everyday life. Examples of this would be men dominating their wives, controlling their children, and demanding the utmost respect from others in the household. In the Mexican American community, the patriarch of the family is the most respected person in the household and the boys are put on a pedestal as well while the women of the family must be obedient and follow rules boys and men do not.

[10] Vanessa Martinez and Julia Barajas, "The Chicana Revolt", Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA), August 23, 2020.



Aron Mangancilla
Minister of Education
1005 Runnymede
Palo Alto, California

February 25, 1970

Hermano,

As a national Minister for the Brown Beret Organization and a part of the Ministry, we felt it was very necessary that you be informed of the following situations that have taken place within the Los Angeles Brown Berets. Gloria Arellanes has officially resigned from the Brown Beret Organization and as Minister of Finance and Correspondence, and from all further duties in the organization. There has been a great exclusion on behalf of the male segment and failure of the ministers to communicate with us, among many, many other things.

One additional item - ALL Brown Beret women have also resigned from further duties in the organization. We have been treated as nothings, and not as Revolutionary sisters, which means the resolutions that all our "macho" men voted for have been disregarded. We have found that the Brown Beret men have oppressed us more than the pig system has, which in the eyes of revolutionaires is a serious charge. Therefore, we have agreed and found it necessary to resign and possibly do our own thing.

We feel that we can much better organize by ourselves, as the suppression in the past has made it next to impossible to do so. Contrary to what the men are saying that we are "temporarily suspended" we have officially resigned.

CON CHE!

All ex-members of the Brown Beret Female segment.

Figure 1: Letter of resignation from female Brown Berets.[11]

After leaving the Brown Berets, the women created a new group called *Las Adelitas de Aztlán*. The women decided to name themselves after the female soldiers in the Mexican Revolution (*Adelitas*) who fought side by side with the men during Mexico's War of Independence (1810–1821) from Spain. The theme of looking to women from the past would be a common occurrence and source of debate for Chicana feminists in the future. The *Adelitas de Aztlán* organized anti-war rallies, protested police brutality, and continued running the free clinic they had set up under the Brown Berets.

---

[11] Gloria Arellanes Papers, *Resignation Letter*, February 1970, photograph, *John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, California State University, Los Angeles*, https://www.calstatela.edu/specialcollections/east-la-archives.

The free clinic established in the *barrio* of East Los Angeles was a great accomplishment for the Brown Berets, but especially for the women, because they did most of the clerical work, translating, and fundraising for it. *El Barrio* Free Clinic (1968–1970), run by Gloria Arrellanes (1946–2024), a political activist who was active with the Brown Berets, and eventually left to start *Las Adelitas de Aztlán*, provided affordable health care for the Mexican American community in East L.A. and provided family planning services for women. Shortly after the women left the Brown Berets, the clinic shut down. The building where the East L.A. free clinic once helped many people in need is now considered a historical monument and is concrete proof of how hard Chicana women worked for their communities.

Figure 2: El Barrio Free Clinic Poster.[12]

[12] Gloria Arellanes Papers, *El Barrio Free Clinic Poster*, photograph, *John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, California State University, Los Angeles*, https://www.calstatela.edu/specialcollections/east-la-archives.

Las Adelitas de Aztlán was created by Arrellanes, a former Brown Beret member, and sisters, Gracie and Hilda Reyes, in 1970. The *Adelitas* originally did not consider themselves a feminist group; rather, their goal was to provide a safe space for female expression. In a recent interview, Arrellanes stated that at the time, the women did not consider themselves to be feminists, but thinking about it now, she felt they were.[13] Their slogan was "*Porque somos una familia de hermanas*", which translates to "because we are a family of sisters." The slogan was meant to be a counter to the Chicano men whose slogan was "In the interest of *carnales*." The civil rights group was made up of lower-, middle-, and working-class Chicana women who varied in age, but the majority were college age. The women created a group that was not only a safe space for women but also created friendship, bonding, and a sisterhood, which was not felt or encouraged by the men in the Chicano Movement.

The *Adelitas* not only created a space where women's issues could be discussed but also raised awareness for issues such as police brutality and the war in Vietnam. On February 28, 1970, they organized the anti-war moratorium in which the women gathered in the park to protest the Vietnam War. That protest was the last they would organize, as the *Las Adelitas deAztlán* disbanded the same year it was created.

After *Las Adelitas de Aztlán* (1970)*,* there was the League of Mexican American Women (1973–), an organization that was founded in 1958 by Francisca Flores and Ramona Tijerina Morin. Both Flores and Tijerina Morin were experienced in the Chicano movement as they were both founders of the Los Angeles chapter of the Community Service Organization (CSO) and the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA). While both women were founders of these organizations, they were still not put in positions of leadership. They both noticed that while in these organizations,

[13] Dionne Espinoza, "'Revolutionary Sisters': Women's Solidarity and Collective Identification Among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967-1970", *Aztlán* 26, no. 1 (2001): 15–58.

women were not promoted to leadership positions, despite the women doing most of the work to get officials elected, such as stuffing envelopes, taking people to voting polls, and registering people to vote.[14]

Much like *Las Adelitas*, Flores and Tijerina Morin felt it was time to create a group that both appreciated and focused on women and encouraged them to get involved in politics. Tijerina Morin served as the president from 1958–1964, while Flores served as secretary. The league's members varied by age, and the women involved came from all walks of life, ranging from college women to stay-at-home mothers. The goals of the league were to create a safe space for women to discuss ideas and vent their frustrations in the male-dominated movement. The League not only provided a space where women could speak and vent but also provided women with the skills for problem-solving, leadership, and decision-making. Another goal of the league was to show women how they could create peace, end racism, and achieve equal socioeconomic opportunities for Mexican American women in their communities.[15]

The League of Mexican American Women held a banquet every year to honor women who were leaders in the Chicano movement and who were making a positive impact in their community. The banquets honoring the women were meant to show society that women were more than the stereotypical Mexican American woman who was dumb, barefoot, and pregnant. They proved that Chicana women were involved in politics, were intelligent, and were qualified to be in leadership positions. The league encouraged Mexican American women to be involved in both politics and their communities, while providing volunteer opportunities, social and cultural activities, educational programs, and grants. Many of the women involved in the league went on to

---

[14] Dionne Espinosa, María Eugenia Cotero, and Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas: New Narratives of Activism and Feminism in the Movement Era* (University of Texas Press, 2018), 36.

[15] Espinosa, Cotero, and Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas* ,38.

become politicians, professionals, and educational leaders. The League of Mexican American Women is still active today and continues to encourage women to get involved in social and political issues.

Furthermore, *La Comisión Femenil Mexicana Nacional* (CFNM, The National Mexican Women's Commission), created by Francisca Flores and Simmie Romero, was born at the 1970 Mexican American National Issues Conference. Their dedication was to economically and politically empower Chicana women throughout the United States. During the conference, the women attendees spoke out because they felt women's issues were not being addressed during the conference. They wanted to build an organization that was free from the sexism of the Chicano movement and free of the racism of the women's movement.

For funding purposes, Flores and Romero registered CFNM as a non-profit organization. Both women worked tirelessly to both set up chapters throughout the country and set up leadership training. They also set up Chicana conferences where they were able to recruit new women to the organization. In 1972, Flores attended the US Department of Labor women's conference and brokered a deal to fund a Chicana self-help and advocacy center for women's rights, which would be called the Chicana Action Service Center (CSAC). CFNM and CSAC contributed much to the women's movements, especially helping Chicana women get a job or a degree. In order to help them, they set up two childcare centers, called *Centro de Ninos* (center for the children), in Echo Park and East L.A.,where they assisted mothers while they were away at work or school. In addition to the work they were doing in the community, they also lobbied legislation for access to both legal abortions and birth control.

By 1975, there were chapters from southern to northern California, and, since the inception of the CFNM, presidents have all been women. Although many of the chapters disbanded, there is one thriving chapter in the San Fernando Valley that continues to

serve Chicana women by supporting them with scholarships and promoting higher education learning.[16]

Many conferences took place during the Chicano civil rights movement to address issues in the community. When women's issues were not being addressed, they decided to start having their own conferences. The women finding their voice and courage to build their own movement came at the same time as second-wave feminism in the United States. From breaking away from the men in the Chicano movement and starting their own organizations and trying to find where they fit in both in feminism and society, Chicana feminism was born. Chicana feminism was not the utopia the women envisioned, instead, it was filled with division amongst not only their community but their own sisters.

La Conferencia de Mujeres por la Raza or as it was also known, the Women's Conference for the Latino People, was sponsored by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and took place in Houston, Texas, from May 28–30, 1971, at Magnolia Park YWCA. The conference was historical in that this was the first time Chicanas and feminists came together from all over the United States to discuss issues in their communities. In attendance were over 600 Chicana women that included students, activists, community organizers, and nuns[17].

The women who attended the conferences came from different backgrounds and ages, and many of the women were college-age students. The conference had different workshops for each day, focusing on different topics such as family, higher education, legal abortions, birth control, and sexual liberation. They also spoke about how the Catholic Church was an instrument of oppression for Chicana women. On the third day of the conference, 40% of the women got up and left the conference and stated that the women should be discussing the issue of racism, not sexism.[18] They were also upset that the conference was sponsored

---

[16] Espinosa, Cotero, and Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas ,45.*

[17] *Las Hermanas* was a feminist group for Roman Catholic women ran by nuns.

[18] Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 108.

and took place on YWCA grounds as they felt that this organization was racist due to not having any Chicanos in their staff and felt they were elitist and bureaucratic; they argued "[Our enemy is the *gavacho,* not the macho] our enemy is the white man, not our men."[19] These ideas seemed radical for a large portion of the women who thought that they were supposed to be fighting a common enemy, not against each other.

Looking at Women from the Past for the Future

Chicana women drew inspiration and were influenced by women of the past, such as the Virgin Mary, *La Llorona, La Malinche*, and *Coyolxauhqui*. They were looking to take back narratives that were harmful to Chicana women, transforming them into symbols of Chicana empowerment. They were also able to figure out what issues mattered to them and how they wanted to resolve issues such as birth control, education reform, and welfare rights. Some of these issues intersected with other feminists, and they collaborated with feminists of different races. It would not be long before different factions would break off and cause a rift between women who once fought for the same side.

Upon successfully creating their own organizations and safe spaces, most Chicana women subscribed to calling themselves feminists. Being a feminist meant that women oversaw their futures; they were able to speak out and fight for their rights and against sexism, especially to find solutions for the most pressing issues for women at that time. Being a feminist meant that women were breaking away from the gender norms they were supposed to follow: those of being a wife and mother, as well as being seen as pure. Because the Mexican American community was predominantly Catholic, they had to deal with the dichotomy of the Madonna and the whore.

---

[19] Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (Longman, 2000), 348.

They dealt with the labels placed upon them by society by taking back narratives of *mujeres malas* (bad women) from history, such as *La Malinche, Coyolxauhqui,* and *La Llorona*, revising their image to be icons for the feminist movement. They also looked at the Virgin Mary as an icon, and using these women as role models, they were able to give these women a new look at history and analyze why Chicana women were historically seen by the binary of being a bad woman or a virginal woman.

Most notably, Malintzin Tenepal (1500–1529), also known as *La Malinche*, who was born into Aztec nobility. At age eight, she was sold by her mother into slavery. A few years later, she was given to the *conquistador* Hernan Cortes (1485–1547), who used Malintzin for her linguistic and diplomatic skills. She later started a relationship with him and had his son. It has been said that she helped Cortes in his conquest of the Aztec empire and therefore was seen as a traitor by her people and in the Mexican American community. Today, *La Malinch*e is a derogatory term to call a woman a traitor. *La Malinche* is considered the "Mexican Eve," and it has been argued that Mexican women are twice cursed as they bear both the sin of Eve and the sin of the *La Malinche*.[20]

The women wanted to show more depth to Tenepal and revise the image that had plagued her for so long. For instance, Adelaida Del Castillo, author, poet, and Associate Professor of Chicano studies at San Diego State University, wrote a poem in 1977 about Tenepal and wrote that people should consider her age, her background as a slave and forced conversion into Christianity before labeling her a traitor. Another poem by Lucha Corpi offers a softer and more compassionate look at *La Malinche* as she states that in her life, she did not have control of her future and was passed from one person to another because that was their culture, she was used and then discarded only to have a legacy of a traitor.[21]

---

[20] Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 106.

[21] Gutierrez, "Community, Patriarchy and Individualism", 59.

Other feminists also wrote poems and articles about her and said she was a "Prototypical Chicana feminist, who was a woman of intelligence, initiative and leadership." Through conversations and poems, Chicanas were able to show *La Malinche* in a different light; she was not the traitor her people believed her to be, rather, she was a woman who was a victim of societal norms and she was an active voiced woman who did not let her gender get in the way of participating in her community.[22]

In a separate case, *Coyolxauhqui* was the moon goddess in Aztec mythology, the daughter of *Coatlicue. Coatlicue* gave birth to the stars and the God of the sun and war, *Huitzilopochtli*. As the Aztec legend states, *Coyolxauhqui's* mother became pregnant (with the Aztec God *Huitzilpochtli)* after tucking ball feathers into her chest. She was repelled by her mother's pregnancy from a feather and, along with her brothers, plotted her mother's death. The legend went on to state that *Coyolxauhqui* beheaded her mother, and, from her body, *Huitzilopochtli* was born as an adult ready for battle. He killed many of his brothers, as well as *Coyolxauhqui*; he kicked her head to the sky, making her head the moon.[23] The myth of *Coyolxauhqui* is often interpreted as the struggle or dominance of the sun *(Huitzilopochtli)* over the moon (*Coyolxauhqui).* Much like *La Malinche's* legacy, *Coyolxauhqui* was remembered as a traitor for betraying and plotting her mother's death.

Both feminist writers and artists revised *Coulxauhqui's* legacy by comparing her story of betrayal with Chicana struggles. Writer, artist, cultural and queer theory scholar Gloria Anzaldua wrote, "To me she also embodies the resistance of the Chicana, Mexicana writer/artist…the cultural rebirth of the Chicana struggling to free herself from oppressive gender roles."[24] Writer

---

[22] Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 107.

[23] Mary Ellen Miller, *The Art of Mesoamerica: From Olmec to Aztec* (Thames & Hudson, 2019), 252.

[24] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands : the New Mestiza = La Frontera* (Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 63.

and poet Cherrie Moraga says, "Daughters must kill male-defined motherhood to save the culture from misogyny, war, and greed. But the son comes to the defense of patriarchal motherhood and kills the rebel woman and female power is eclipsed by the rising light of the sun/son. This *machista* myth is enacted every day of our lives, every day that the sun rises from the horizon and the moon is obliterated by the light."[25]

La Llorona is another example of a woman in Mexican mythology who has historically been villainized. Parallel to the story of Tenepal, *La Llorona* tells the story of a woman who had children with a conquistador who was married to another woman, promising that he was going to leave his wife and marry her. When the conquistador did not keep his promise, *La Llorona* took her children to the river and drowned them. She was so guilt-ridden that she killed herself, with her spirit roaming the river wailing, looking for her children. In this story, she is seen as a submissive and passive woman whose voice is silenced by her grief.

Writers such as Sandra Cisneros and Anzaldua have written short stories and poems about *La Llorona* and, not only compare her to *Coatlicue* (the Aztec Goddess of destruction) but also argue that she is perceived as a monster and that monstresses can be tied to the expectations and regulations of female sexuality. Chicana writers and poets took the folk tale of a woman who killed her children out of spite and tied her story to the oppression Chicana women were feeling with their sexuality, as well as dealing with the Madonna and whore binary Mexican American society had unwillingly placed on them.[26]

Lastly, *La Virgen Maria,* or the Virgin Mary, is an icon to Chicana women, but in contrast to previously mentioned women, she has a very different status in the Mexican American community. She is seen as virginal, compliant, submissive, and

---

[25] Cherríe Moraga, *The Last Generation* (South End Press, 1993), 55.

[26] Holly Lackley, "La Llorona's Invitation: Chicanx Feminist Literature and the Community of the Monstrous" (Honors Projects, 2020), 144, https://digitalcommons.spu.edu/honorsprojects/144.

passive. Her statues and pictures show her covered from head to toe, being the model for female decency. Her face does not show personal empowerment, with her praying hands representing her acceptance of her traditional female role.[27]

La Virgen Maria was reimagined, especially by Catholic Chicana feminists. Artists used her image to create a visual that women can relate to, in turn creating a relatable being that challenges the patriarchy but still ties in their Catholic faith. Chicana feminist printmaker, educator and artist, Yolanda Lopez, is portrayed as the Virgin Mary, which represents a working-class woman sewing her shawl (Figure 3). This visual shows her as a woman who is just like other Chicana women who are working and struggling. In various other depictions, she is shown as being sexy, nude, a superhero, and an everyday woman. Lopez changed the image of *La Virgen* and let women view her as someone they could relate to and see themselves in. All together, these icons from the past helped the women to speak up and fight as well as being able to express their grievances.

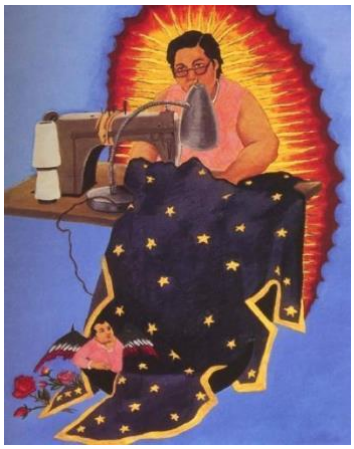


Figure 3: Yolanda Lopez, "Our Lady of Guadalupe."

[27] Amaia Ibarraran-Bigalondo, *Mexican American women, dress and gender: Pachucas, Chicanas, Cholas* (Routledge, 2019), 66

Welfare Rights & Forced Sterilization

The Chicana Welfare Rights Organization (CWRO) was founded by Alicia Escalante in 1967. Escalante grew up in East L.A. as a child of a single mother, witnessing firsthand the lack of empathy the social workers had with her mother. When she grew up, she became a single mother of five children and had to occasionally be on welfare to make ends meet. She was also involved in the Chicano rights movement and protested then-President Ronald Regan's (1911–2004) medical cutbacks.

Through her negative experiences with social workers and the entire welfare system, Escalante started attending National Welfare Rights Organization meetings. There, she realized that a lot of women in her neighborhood, who were mostly low-income, had the same issues as her: they were concerned about the cutbacks and were not aware of their rights, and so, the creation of the CRWO began. The CRWO was run by welfare recipient volunteers and provided services such as informing mothers of their rights, translating forms in Spanish and advocating for both the hiring of Spanish-speaking social workers and welfare offices in high need communities. The volunteers were able to inform themselves and other mothers of their rights by educating themselves on the welfare system and learning how to navigate the bureaucracy at the federal, local, and state levels.[28]

As Chicanas were working on welfare rights for women, the Tallmadge Amendment to the Social Security Act of 1973 was working its way into law.[29] They wrote to Congress and met with local leaders, but their efforts went unheard, and the act went into effect. A year later, the Supreme Court also ruled that welfare forms did not have to be translated into Spanish. Despite these setbacks, the women in the CRWO continued to provide services

[28] Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Gender and Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (University of Texas Press, 2015), 147-148.
[29] This Act would require women who were welfare recipients and had children under the age of six to register with the state employment office and check in every two weeks until they found a job. No options for childcare were provided.

for the women in their community. The organization achieved many things, such as building offices in communities where they were most needed, hiring bilingual social workers, and creating jobs in the welfare offices. Through meetings, the organization made a shocking discovery that led to a lawsuit against a hospital and its doctors.

In this example, during a community forum the CRWO held, a woman spoke and said she believed she had been sterilized against her will at Los Angeles County Medical Center the last time she gave birth. The rumors of sterilization and abuse from doctors to Chicana and Mexican immigrant women had been floating around the community, but no one had any proof.[30] At the same time, Dr. Rosenfeld, who worked at the county hospital, was trying to warn others of what was happening to Mexican and Chicana women inside the hospital, but no one wanted to listen. That is, until he walked into the Center for Law and Poverty and met with Antonia Hernandez, who decided to take the case.

The lawyers in charge of the class action lawsuit were young Chicanos Antonia Hernandez and Charles Nabarette (prosecutors at the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice). At the time, Hernandez had only been practicing law for about a year, and Nabarette was partially blind. Hernandez had the difficult job of trying to convince the women to join the class action lawsuit and of giving them the news that they had been sterilized. Some of the women either did not want to be part of the lawsuit for fear their husbands would find out what happened, or that the statute of limitations would run out. They were able to get ten women to join the lawsuit and give testimony about what happened to them and how the sterilization had affected them.

It appears the sterilization of Mexican women had been occurring since the early twentieth century under the eugenics movement. Forced sterilization was a law in nine states, and California performed one-third of the total sterilization with the

---

[30] Elena R. Gutierrez, *Fertile Matters: The Politics of Mexican-Origin Women's Reproduction* (University of Texas Press, 2008), 88.

majority being Mexican American women. A continuation of this program continued into the 1960s and early 1970s. Chicana feminists were pro-choice, and that included the choice for women to have the right to have as many children as they chose or none. One of the women said that after her sterilization was complete, her doctor said that he was saving the planet by preventing women from having more kids. The women were given forms to sterilize them while they were actively giving birth, were under sedation, or were forced to sign to have an emergency cesarean done. The women mainly spoke and read in Spanish, and the forms were in English; even if they were not under the pressure of giving birth, the women were not able to understand what they were signing or what the medical terms meant.[31]

After news of the forced sterilization reached the Chicano community, they organized a protest outside of the hospital and demanded accountability from the hospital. CFMN was also involved in the protest and supported the women and legal team in their lawsuit. The lawsuit filed, *Madrigal v. Quilligan,* went after the hospital, the doctors, the County of Los Angeles, the state of California, and the United States government. The class action lawsuit argued that the doctors at the county hospital violated the constitutional rights of women to procreate by not obtaining informed consent for permanent sterilization.[32]

During the hearing, the court heard various testimonies from the women as they expressed why they felt robbed of their choice to have any more children, the guilt they felt for not being able to tell their relatives why they were not having any more babies, and the shame that was associated with sterilization (some husbands believed the women had the sterilization done on purpose so they could be with other men and not have to worry about getting pregnant).

---

[31] *No Mas Bebes*, Rene Tajima-Pena, (Los Angeles: ITVS International, 2015).

[32] Jessica Enoch, "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse", *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2005): 6.

Despite their tearful testimonies, the judge ruled in favor of the doctors and hospital and cleared them of any wrongdoing and stated the doctors had signatures on the consent forms and there was no proof of doctors sterilizing women based on their race. If it were not for Chicana feminist groups that allowed women to openly discuss forced sterilization, who knows how much longer the practice would have continued.

The federal government agreed to have consent forms in both English and Spanish, and on a state level, they agreed to provide bilingual interpreters. Hernandez made sure she kept what happened to the women in the spotlight and that it was not forgotten. Black and Native women also built coalitions and protests because of the forced sterilization occurring in their communities. That was one example of different feminist organizations of other races coming together for a common goal and making a change in their communities and an early account of intersectional feminism.

The problem of sexism within civil rights groups was not just a problem that Chicana women had to deal with, the issue was the same for Black and Native women. These women also branched out and started their own organizations that focused on women's issues. They were all fighting for the causes, but, in some instances, they realized that race divided them on what they considered important to fight for. There were occasions where women of different races would unite and protest and fight together, but other times, they realized it was not that easy to work together.

As an example, before Alicia Escalante founded the Chicano Rights Welfare Organization, she was working with the Los Angeles County Welfare Rights Organization (LAWRO), which was an organization and leadership made up of both Black and Brown women from Los Angeles, whose initiatives included getting fair treatment from the department of social services. The president of LAWRO, Catherine Jermany, stated, “We were loud. We were out there. And basically, we wanted to be inclusive. We

wanted a bunch of little groups that could attack the biggest offices of the welfare department."[33]

On June 30, 1966, the LAWRO organized a march with more than one hundred women and children who marched on the County Hall of Administrators and denounced the system that kept them on welfare. They demanded that the system work with them and not against them. They stated they did not want to be on welfare and wanted job training programs, as well as an adequate amount of aid to assist with them finding childcare.[34] Both Black and Brown women were brought together because both communities felt they were stuck in an unfair system that did not support them.

While the women worked and protested for a common cause, there were differences in what racial issues they wanted to address. Escalante wanted LAWRO to advocate for bilingual interpreters and forms, but the Black women of LAWRO did not think it was a priority for them. There was also the Civil Rights Movement that was taking place at that time; Escalante was working closely with the Brown Berets on other issues in the Chicano community while the Black women of the LAWRO were working with civil rights groups to address issues in their community. At times, both racial identities and political priorities caused conflict between the women.[35]

However, Chicana feminist groups worked together with Black, Asian, and Native women at the Indochinese Women's Conference of 1971 in Vancouver, Canada. The four-day conference brought together a diverse group of women to address the antiwar effort. There were debates about whether they should include Anglo feminists in the conference or not, or if they should invite them to simply observe. As one woman at the conference mentioned, "The general consensus was that we wanted no observers, but a few individuals were insistent that it was wrong to

---

[33] Espinosa, Cotero, and Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas, 228.*

[34] Espinosa, Cotero, and Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas, 230.*

[35] Espinosa, Cotero, and Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas, 238.*

retain our racist attitude, and this was not revolutionary;" they ultimately decided to keep the conference for minority women.[36] The Chicana women who attended the 1971 conference felt that it was not a great experience, but it was great for them to be more involved in politics. It is easier to understand why conflicts with other feminist women would arise because of race or politics, but within the Chicano community, there was also tension that caused the Chicanas to break off into two separate factions.

Loyalist Vs. Feminist

The National Chicana Conference/Conferencia de Mujeres por La Raza (Women's Conference for the People) held in Houston, Texas on May 1971, was a pivotal conference in where Chicana women separated into two factions, loyalist and feminist women. The loyalists wanted to stay in the movement and support the men and accused the feminists of being anti-family. They believed Chicana feminists were traitors by breaking off from the movement, and that they were hindering the progress they had made. They viewed the Chicana feminists as anti-man, anti-Chicano movement, anti-family, and anti-culture, and that went against everything they stood for. For these reasons, they believed feminists could not be trusted.[37]

The loyalist women believed in traditional and cultural values, not going outside of the imposed gender roles. They considered issues that plagued the Chicano community their priority, such as the Vietnam War, police brutality, and farmworkers' rights, but did not recognize sexism as a legitimate issue. The views of Chicano men in the movement were similar to the loyalists, but their views were rooted in *machismo* (misogyny). Chicano men viewed machismo with cultural pride, a form of resistance. As much as Chicanos wanted to change how Anglo

---

[36] Espinosa, Cotero, and Blackwell, *Chicana Movidas,* 269.

[37] Alma M. Garcia*, Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (Routledge, 2014), 87.

men and women viewed them, they refused to acknowledge women could be equal to them and help in the movement by being politically active instead of following the gender roles they had always been assigned.[38] They regarded the women who became feminists, who went against the gender norms, and their feminist critique of the movement as an assault on their Mexican cultural past, power, and virility. They needed to remain unified and divisiveness would not be tolerated. They rejected the concept of women's liberation, as it was foreign to their community, and told them to put their race before their gender. As a way to try and insult feminist, the men accused them of being lesbians.

As a consequence, some women were concerned with the way they were viewed by men and would avoid joining any women's organizations out of fear of being labeled a feminist. The response from Chicana feminist women was that they were not traitors to their people and culture; they were instead active in the struggle for human liberation. The response proved to be somewhat false as the Chicana feminists left out another group of marginalized women: lesbians. They warned early on that they were not interested in queer liberation and would actively shut down lesbian women in the feminist movement. Not being able to have a voice with the loyalists or the feminists, Chicana lesbian women had to forge their own paths.

Chicana Queer Liberation

Within the Chicano movement, women's voices were silenced, and they were told that culture and race issues were far more important to discuss and resolve. In turn, Chicana feminists treated lesbian women the same way. Neither loyalist nor feminist women were interested in fighting for queer liberation. Chicana lesbian women were forced into creating safe spaces for themselves and used

[38] Alma M. Garcia, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Jun.,1989), 233.

poetry, essays, and art to convey to their community how they felt and what it meant to them to be a Chicana lesbian feminist.

Women's and gay liberation were affiliated with white society and was not part of the Chicana feminist movement.[39] Furthermore, from the perspective of loyalist women, lesbians were further breaking up the traditional family unit and were not procreating, thus not producing more Chicanos for the movement. Being a feminist and a lesbian put them severely at odds with the loyalists who did not want to hear anything about queer liberation and considered them traitors of their racial/ethnic community, accusing them of catching white women's disease.[40]

Lesbians had to choose between staying in their community or the feminist movement as closeted women or coming out and being ostracized by not only their community, but also by their family members. Both Mexican American men and women had a hard time accepting women's liberation and their fight to become independent. For lesbian women, coming out was truly a decision that would cause their families to disown them. "Once a woman opens herself to another woman, she never again redeems herself, not even through motherhood. Chicana lesbians who choose to become mothers are perceived as aberrations of the traditional concept of motherhood."[41]

Despite being shunned by other feminists, queer women created safe spaces for women like them and created art that expressed how they felt. Three of the most influential Chicana lesbian feminists of that time were Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Emma Perez. While there were women who felt comfortable to come out and speak about their experiences, after 20 years women created feminist newsletters and groups where

---

[39] Perlita R. Dicochea "Chicana Critical Rhetoric: Recrafting La Causa in Chicana Movement Discourse 1970-1979", *Frontiers (Boulder)* 25, no. 1(2004): 77-92, https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2004.0032.

[40] Aída Hurtado, *The Color of Privilege Three Blasphemies on Race and Feminism* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 23.

[41] Hurtado, *The Color of Privilege,* 60.

they included bisexual, trans, and other queer women to be a part of their community (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Gay & Lesbian Latinos Unidos March circa 1982.

Art & Murals

In the days before social media, feminist women had to use the avenues that were available to them to have their message sent to women all over the United States. They used art, murals, poems, and newspapers to express themselves. These forms of communication were utilized to convey their frustrations, anger, hope, and sisterhood to a community that wanted to keep their voices unheard.

Like any of the other spaces during the 1960s, the mural scene was largely dominated by men, while women in that space faced sexism and disrespect from their male peers. Murals were the chosen medium for artists who were politically engaged. The murals showed men and their fight in the movement, and women who were painted were either cast to the sidelines, sexualized, or were barely visible at all. It was rather difficult for women to create groups or discussions about women's issues because many of the women in the muralist circles were spouses or partners of

the male muralists, so they were not exactly there to discuss murals.

Some women were muralists and sought to create spaces for women to create and discuss issues in their surroundings. *Las Mujeres Muralistas* (the muralist women) consisted of a group of women who established a model for women of color for collective and collaborative activity in their communities. Women painted about more than just their gender; when painting, they looked at other racial, cultural, sexual, and indigenous heritages. What made the muralists different from their male counterparts was that they painted women as they saw them in real life. They gave women depth and dimension and showed women as more than just the oversexualized, vulnerable Aztec princess (Figure 5) or in the kitchen while the men were fighting.[42]

Muralist Judy Baca was an innovator in her field. She was one of the first female muralists in her community to paint a mural about her grandmother and was also commissioned to do the art on the Great Wall of Los Angeles (Figure 6). The project took seven years to complete, and in the mural, she showcases the history of Los Angeles. In the mural, there are different perspectives from indigenous people, the deportation of Mexican Americans, land rights, and sexual and gender minorities. Other notable muralists were Judithe Hernandez, Ester Hernandez, and Yreina Cervantez, who also painted women in non-traditional ways and also painted about politics and issues affecting the Chicano community.

[42] Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (University of Texas Press, 2008), 182.

Figure 5: Aztec God and Princess.[43]

Figure 6: Great Wall of Los Angeles 1976-1983.[44]

[43] Jesus Helguera, *Lq Leyenda de los Volcanes II o Grandeza Azteca,* 1943, oil on canvas, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/smithsonian-american-art-museum/2021/05/06/chicano-artists-challenging-history-and-reclaiming-cultural-memory/.

[44] Judith Baca, et al*., The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, 1974-present, Mural, Tujunga Wash Los Angeles California, https://latinomurals.wordpress.com/tag/sparc/.

Chicana Poems & Editorials

In addition, poetry written by Chicana women was used to articulate their opposition to machismo.[45] Poetry was also used as an outlet for the women to express the unresolved issues they had with their mothers, Chicana feminist icons, and queer identities. They felt their mothers were subservient to the patriarchal ideas and values the Mexican American community had always subscribed to. The short poem by Alma Villanueva titled "Blood Root" expressed her feelings in one short sentence: "I vowed to never grow up to be a woman and helpless like my mother." Chicana feminists were on the opposite side of those antiquated ideas their mothers held onto and caused anger and frustration within them that their mothers, whom they saw as strong and the glue of the families, would continue to subject themselves to oppression when a women's liberation movement was occurring.

In these poems, women tell the men that they know they are deceitful when they try to convince them that they are not the oppressors or that they are fighting the same war. In Marcela Christine Lucero-Trujillo's poem, "Machismo Is Part of Our Culture," she directly speaks to them, telling them they were her true oppressors and calling them out for being hypocritical. In Sylvia Gonzalez's poem, "I Am Chicana," she writes about Chicana feminist icon *La Malinche*, rewriting her story just as other Chicana feminist poets and writers of that time did.

Queer women also used poetry to express their feelings about their mothers, their sexuality, and fighting back against the oppressive Catholic Church. That was one of the few outlets they had at that time to show other women that they, too, had the same feelings as the men in the movement. In Gloria Ananzulda's poem, "*Del Otro Lado*", she speaks about her experience as both a Chicana and lesbian. Her poem uses harsh words to describe her

[45] Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 120.

disappointment with her mother being part of a patriarchal society, but also describes her mother's disgust with Gloria's sexuality.[46]

Lastly, poetry helped the women to get out the feelings and emotions of being a double, or in the case of queer women, triple minorities. They were able to articulate their complicated relationships with their mothers, the sexism, and men in the movement, and overall, what it meant to be a Chicana feminist at a time when so many people were trying to stop them from expressing those emotions and feelings.

Moreover, Newspapers and editorials were the most important form of communication in the movement. The newspapers focused on a variety of topics centered around women's issues, but more importantly, they were able to communicate with each other from across the country and publish works not just from Chicanas in California but from all over the United States. Many newspapers were circulating, such as *El Grito del Norte* (The Call from the North, New Mexico), *Las Cucarachas* (The Cockroaches, Colorado*)*, and *La Razon Mestiza* (The Mestiza Reason, California).

One of the most notable newspapers was *Hijas de Cuauhtemoc* (1971, Cauhtemoc's daughters), which was created by two Chicana feminist students, Ana Nieto Gomez (who became a Chicana feminist professor at California State University, Northridge) and Adeliada Castillo at California State University, Long Beach. The newspaper focused on a variety of issues that were central to the movement, but it also discussed why it was important for women to continue their education, women in prisons, and Mexican history. Through art, poetry, writing, and murals, women were able to create a dialogue with other women who were not in the same state, but they were also able to show people who may not have understood their struggles and pain why they were feminists.

Conclusion

[46] Ariana Vigil, "Heterosexualization and the State: The Poetry of Gloria Anzaldúa", *Chicana/Latina Studies* 16, no. 1 (2016): 99–100.

Despite what their own community said about them, Chicanas were not looking to create division in the movement or stop fighting for Chicano rights, they wanted a space where they could speak and discuss women's issues that were important to them and were equal to the men in the movement, not just background players. Chicana feminists showed their strength and ability in organizing conferences and political rallies. They also proved that women could be in leadership positions and be positive influences on young girls and women.

Chicana feminists were not inclusive of all sexualities or races, but the feminist movement has grown and is now involved with other feminist organizations as well as participating with their queer sisters in gay rights and, most recently, the women's march in 2025 that focuses on intersectionality and inclusion. Chicanas continue to create murals, photography, paintings, and writing to express what life is like for Chicanas today. The movement paved the way for Chicana feminists to speak and write openly about reproductive rights, sexuality, religion, and injustices. As Teresa Cordova stated, "Chicana feminists have struggled to find their voices- have struggled to be heard. Our struggle continues, but our silence is forever broken."[47]

[47] Ruiz, *From out of the Shadows*, 125.

Bibliography

Acuna, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos.* Longman, 2000

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera.* Aunt Lute Books, 2007

Blackwell, Maylei. *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Gender and Feminism in the Chicano Movement*. University of Texas Press, 2015

Dicochea, Perlita R. "Chicana Critical Rhetoric: Recrafting La Causa in Chicana Movement Discourse, 1970-1979." *Frontiers (Boulder)* 25, no. 1 (2004): 77–92..

Enoch, Jessica. "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2005): 5–30.

Espinoza, Dionne. "Revolutionary Sisters': Women's Solidarity and Collective Identification Among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967-1970." *Aztlán* 26, no. 1 (2001): 15–58.

Espinoza, Dionne, María Eugenia Cotera, and Maylei Blackwell. *Chicana Movidas: New Narratives of Activism and Feminism in the Movement Era*. University of Texas Press, 2018.

Garcia, Alma M. *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*. Routledge, 2014.

Gloria Arellanes Papers. *El Barrio Free Clinic Poster*. Special Collections & Archives, John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, California State University, Los Angeles. https://www.calstatela.edu/specialcollections/east-la-archives.

Gloria Arellanes Papers. *Resignation Letter*. February 1970. Special Collections & Archives, John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, California State University Los Angeles. https://www.calstatela.edu/specialcollections/east-la-archives.

Gutiérrez, Elena R. *Fertile Matters: The Politics of Mexican-Origin Women's Reproduction*. University of Texas Press, 2008.

Hurtado, Aida. *The Color of Privilege Three Blasphemies on Race and Feminism.* University of Michigan Press, 1996.

Ibarraran-Bigalondo, Amaia. *Mexican American women, Dress and Gender: Pachucas, Chicanas, Cholas.* Routledge, 2019.

Lackey, Holly, "La Llorona's Invitation: Chicanx Feminist Literature and the Community of the Monstrous." Honors Projects, 2020. https://digitalcommons.spu.edu/honorsprojects/144

Latorre, Guisela. *Walls of Empowerment Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California*. University of Texas Press, 2008.

Martinez, Vanessa and Barajas, Julia. "The Chicana Revolt*." Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 2020.

Miller, Mary Ellen. *The Art of Mesoamerica: From Olmec to Aztec*. Thames & Hudson, 2019.

Moraga, Cherríe. *The Last Generation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1993.

Munoz Jr., Carlos. *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. London: Verso, 2007.

Rodriguez Chavez, Maricela. "*Despierten Hermanas y Hermanos!: Women, the Chicano Movement, and Chicana Feminism in California, 1966-1981*". Phd. diss., Stanford University, 2004.

Tajima-Pena, Rene. *No Mas Bebes*. Los Angeles: ITVS International, 2015.

Vigil, Ariana. "Heterosexualization and the State: The Poetry of Gloria Anzaldúa", *Chicana/Latina Studies*, no. 1 (2016): 99–100.

Author Bio

Christian Rodriguez is a graduate student in the Master of Arts in History program at California State University, San Bernardino, where she also completed her Bachelor of Arts in History on the Pre-credential track in 2022. Her interests are in U.S history, specifically in Chicano history in California. Her current work examines the origins of Chicana feminism, which has inspired her MA thesis on the evolution of Chicana fashion and culture from the turn of the century to the present. She plans to become a high school history teacher and complete her degree in 2026. Outside of her studies, Christian enjoys spending time with her family, including her husband and children, Michael and Luna. She enjoys reading, going to concerts, gardening, and drinking coffee. Christian would like to dedicate this paper to all the strong Chicana women in her life and her children for being her biggest inspiration (Look, kids, Mama's published!)

Impact of Elite Patriot Women

By Anthony Luna

Abstract: *This research paper explores the overlooked yet pivotal contributions of elite patriot women had on the American Revolution. It argues that their participation in the revolution was instrumental in shaping its outcome through grassroots organizing, frontline support, and propaganda creation. While men like George Washington and Alexander Hamilton dominated popular narratives, women from influential families played critical roles by organizing boycotts, producing goods, delivering intelligence, and rallying financial and moral support for the Continental Army. This study investigates how elite women such as Mercy Otis Warren, Sarah Fulton, Esther DeBerdt Reed, and Martha Washington didn't just support the revolution from the sidelines, but they helped drive it forward. Drawing from primary sources, historical analysis, and scholarly interpretation, this paper will first provide the historical context of the British colonial policies after the Seven Years' War, then examine women's reactions through acts of protest and writing, and finally analyze their diverse contributions during the war. Ultimately, this work seeks to reframe the American Revolution in that it was not a war fought by men but a collective struggle that included women's sacrifices for the cause.*

When thinking about the American Revolution (1775–1783), many look at the historical figures such as George Washington (1732–1799), Alexander Hamilton (1755 or 1757–1804), and John Adams (1735–1826) and their impact on the revolutionary cause.

However, the roles of prominent patriot women in the revolution are often overlooked despite their significant contributions against a system that oppressed their fellow compatriots. Women laid the foundation for the revolution, yet their impact on the war was disputed. Not only did they spread the importance of boycotting British goods and circulated support for the revolution through literature, but some upper-class women assisted on the battlefield for a cause they believed in. Elite patriot women participated in public demonstrations and boycotts to express their disapproval of the British government over the American colonies. Thus, it is essential to note that women's voices were often marginalized during this period, and historians sometimes overlooked their contribution to the revolutionary cause. Examining female accounts provides a greater understanding of their roles in shaping American History. The term "elite" is used to refer to women from influential families in the colonies or those who were wealthy or married into affluent families.[1] This paper will focus on exploring the impact of elite patriot women on the American Revolution through different female perspectives, their responses to British legislation enacted after the Seven Years' War, and their actions to support the revolution.

This paper is structured to discuss how past and present scholars examine affluent patriot women and their impact on the American Revolution. It will then provide historical context leading up to the American Revolution, focusing on British legislation passed in response to the Seven Years' War. Following this, the paper will examine prominent patriot women's reaction to the laws enacted by Parliament, which levied taxes on the American colonies, ultimately leading to the Boston Tea Party. The British Parliament's response to the rebellion in Massachusetts resulted in harsh punishment through legislation known as the

[1] Susan Branson, "From Daughters of Liberty to Women of the Republic: American Women in the Era of the American Revolution," in The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues, edited by S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L Ruiz, (Rutgers University Press, 2007), 50–66, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hhxxp.7.

Intolerable Acts. The affluent patriot women reacted to the act by enacting a boycott of British goods to protest Parliament's mistreatment, which they followed up with a poem calling for a call to action among elite women to support the boycott. Finally, this paper will present various perspectives of elite patriot women during the American Revolution. Their contribution can be categorized into three main areas: the grassroots movement, the frontline support, and propaganda efforts.

American historians have varying perspectives on the role played by elite patriot women and their impact on the American Revolution. However, they generally agree that women's perspectives on the revolution were often overlooked since women did not share the same political rights as men. In recent years, more historians are diving deeper into the experience of elite women and their impact on the revolution. The first historian to discuss women during the American Revolution was Elizabeth Fries Ellet (1818–1877), who highlighted the diverse ways women supported the war effort. Ellet delves into the lives of elite patriot women such as Martha Washington (1731–1802) and Abigail Adams (1744–1818), as well as lower-class women who also contributed to the war effort. Ellet is the first historian to challenge the traditional narratives of the revolution, which were mainly surrounded by male figures. She emphasizes the importance of women in the revolution, which assisted in shaping the outcome of the war.[2] Later, historian Elizabeth Cometti discusses the contributions of women during the American Revolution into three general categories: the home front, public actions, and domestic production for the war.[3] Thus, many women stepped up during this time to help their families and communities. They took on responsibilities that men traditionally held; they participated in boycotts and agreed not to buy certain imported goods. Additionally, they

---

[2] Elizabeth Fries Ellet, "The Women of the American Revolution v.1 (1848)," https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/womenofamericanr11848elle.

[3] Branson, "From Daughters of Liberty to Women," 50–66. (For those who want to read Zagarri's work: Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution*, Wheeling, III.: Harlan Davidson, 1995).

contributed by spinning and sewing uniforms for the war effort.[4] Historian Rosemarie Zagarri, a George Mason University professor specializing in early American history, argues that the revolution helped unify women under a common cause.[5] Regardless of education or social class, they assisted the revolutionary cause through shared actions such as joining boycotts and producing uniforms for the Continental Army.[6] Meanwhile, popular historian David McCullough writes about John Adams' life and includes Abigail Adams, but that she was still masked in her husband's shadow.[7] This illustrates that while academic historians have long explored women's perspectives during the American Revolution, popular historians like McCullough have only more recently begun to give these perspectives serious attention, addressing a topic that was often neglected in mainstream historical narratives. Overall, with the assistance of past and present historians, they build upon each other's works to create a better understanding of elite patriot women in the American Revolution and help depict women in the public eye to allow recognition of their service.

The Treaty of Paris of 1763 ended the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) between Great Britain and France. The end result was that France had to give up their territories in North America.[8] The

---

[4] Branson, "From Daughters of Liberty to Women," 50–66. (For those who want to read Cometti's work: Elizabeth Cometti, "Women in the American Revolution," The New England Quarterly 20, no. 3 (1947): 329–46, https://doi.org/10.2307/361443).

[5] Rosemarie Zagarri, "Rosemarie Zagarri," Department of History and Art History, George Mason University, https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/people/rzagarri.

[6]Branson, "From Daughters of Liberty to Women," 50–66. (For those who want to read Zagarri's work: Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution*, Wheeling, III.: Harlan Davidson, 1995).

[7] Branson, "From Daughters of Liberty to Women," 50–66. (For those who want to read McCullough's work: David McCullough, *John Adams* (Touchstone, 2001)).

[8] "Treaty of Paris, 1763," *Office of the Historian,* https://history.state.gov/milestones/1750-1775/treaty-of-

war was costly, prompting the British government to be interested in ending the dispute since the government had to fund the war with debt, which led many creditors to doubt the ability of the British government to pay back its loans.[9] Thus, by the signing of the treaty, the British national debt went from £75 million in 1756 (with a conversion of about 21.2 billion USD in 2025) to £133 million in 1763 (with a conversion of about 37.7 billion USD), which left the national budget in a crisis since half of the budget was spent on interest payments and the continuation of military presence in North America.[10] The aftermath of the Treaty of Paris of 1763 led to the passage of the Proclamation of 1763, which King George III (1738–1820) passed. The passage states,

> And whereas it is just and reasonable and essential to Our Interest and the Security of Our Colonies, that the several Nations or Tribes of Indians with whom We are connected, and who live under Our Protection should not be molested or disturbed...no Governor...in any of Our other Colonies or Plantations in America, do presume for the present...to grant Warrants of Survey, or pass Patents for any Lands beyond the Heads or Sources of any of the Rivers which fall into the Atlantic Ocean.[11]

---

paris#:~:text=The%20Treaty%20of%20Paris%20of,well%20as%20their%20respective%20allies.

[9] "Treaty of Paris, 1763," *Office of the Historian*.

[10] P. Scott Corbett, et al, "Confronting the National Debt: The Aftermath of the French and Indian War," from US History I website, provided by OpenStax College, https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory1os2xmaster/chapter/confronting-the-national-debt-the-aftermath-of-the-french-and-indian-war/; For the purpose of this research, Currency Converter, Pounds Sterling to Dollars, 1264 to Present Java program was used, https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm.

[11] George III, "The Proclamation of 1763," Digital History, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook_print.cfm?smtid=3&psid=159.

To address the acquisition of new territory in North America, the proclamation stood to prevent any colonists from settling into the new territory west of the Appalachian Mountains.[12] The reasoning behind King George III's decision to restrict the movement of the colonists was to prevent further conflicts, particularly in light of the recent conflict with France; the proclamation aimed to avoid hostilities between the colonies and the Native tribes living on the land.[13] Thus, its goal was to prevent having to fund another conflict within the colony. Yet, the King's decision to restrict movement into the new territory faced much backlash from the colonists; this decision was one of many factors that led to the development of the American Revolution.

In response to the financial crisis the British government faced from the costly war, the Parliament began to pass several taxes on to the colonies. They did this to cut government spending and to ensure the American colonists contributed to the cause by reducing the significant debt the government had incurred.[14] These stages of taxation spanned from 1764–1768. The first taxation was known as the Sugar Act of 1764, which placed a tax on sugar and molasses imported to the colonies.[15] The second round of taxation was known as the Stamp Act of 1765; it was Parliament's first direct tax on the colonies, requiring colonists to pay a tax on printed materials such as newspapers, legal documents, and

---

[12] George III, "The Proclamation of 1763," Digital History.

[13] George III, "The Proclamation of 1763," Digital History.

[14] P. Scott Corbett, et al, "Confronting the National Debt: The Aftermath of the French and Indian War."

[15] "1764 to 1765 | Timeline | Articles and Essays | Documents From the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789," The Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/collections/continental-congress-and-constitutional-convention-from-1774-to-1789/articles-and-essays/timeline/1764-to-1765/#:~:text=Stamp%20Act.,%2C%20dice%2C%20and%20playing%20cards .

playing cards.[16] The last round of taxation during this period was the Townshend Acts in 1767, a law that imposed indirect taxes on British imports such as glass, lead, paint, paper, and tea, yet the tax act was repealed in 1770.[17] Three years later, Parliament passed a new legislation called the Tea Act of 1773; it was a legislative act brought forth by the British Parliament that gave the East India Company the sole right to ship tea to the American colonies.[18] In addition to granting the company a monopoly over tea and allowing them to bypass wholesalers to sell directly to distributors, this act increased British power over the colonies and was coupled with an increased tax on bohea tea (classified as black tea).[19] Thus, the act mainly targeted the American colonies, referred to as "His Majesty's colonies or plantations in America."[20] The act aimed to give the struggling East India Company a sole monopoly on the tea trade. Then, it allowed the East India Company to undercut the competition by selling directly to distributors, which lowered the price of tea compared to the cost of smuggled tea.[21] Beyond the monopoly and ability to undercut other purveyors of tea, the act gave the East India Company a tax reduction on tea and kept the tax on tea from the Townshend Revenue Act. The act reveals that the British Parliament not only removed customs duties on the East India Company on the export of tea but kept the tax on tea and

---

[16] 1764 to 1765 | Timeline | Articles and Essays | Documents From the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789," The Library of Congress.

[17] 1766 to 1767 | Timeline | Articles and Essays | Documents From the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789," The Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/collections/continental-congress-and-constitutional-convention-from-1774-to-1789/articles-and-essays/timeline/1766-to-1767/#:~:text=Townshend%20Acts.,paint%2C%20paper%2C%20and%20tea.

[18] Tea Act of 1773, Digital History, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3963.

[19] Tea Act of 1773, Digital History.

[20] Tea Act of 1773, Digital History.

[21] Tea Act of 1773, Digital History.

regulations from the previous act, which forced the colonies to purchase tea with the tax on top of their purchase. The passage states,

> An act to allow a drawback of the duties of customs on the exportation of tea to any of his Majesty's colonies or plantations in America… Not altered by this act, be liable to the same rules, regulations, restrictions, securities, penalties, and forfeitures, as tea penalties, and exported to the like places was liable to before the passing [of] this act.[22]

As a result, the Tea Act added more regulations on the tea trade and kept the remaining tea taxation from past legislation, which ignited fury among the colonists. It planted the seeds of rebellion throughout the colonies and was regarded as the catalyst for the American Revolution.

Reaction to the Tea Act was met with protest and distaste from the colonists, especially from a woman named Sarah Bradlee Fulton (1740-1835), an elite patriot who established the pathway for rebellion for her fellow compatriots. In 1773, Fulton, better known as the "Mother of the Boston Tea Party," orchestrated the Boston Tea Party in her home and made an elaborate plan in which the participants dressed up as Native Americans and ransacked a British merchant ship, destroying tea by tossing it over the harbor.[23] Fulton's action in the Boston Tea Party played a significant role in the American Revolution, which sparked support for the revolution among the colonists. Yet, Fulton's support did not stop only on the Boston Tea Party; during the American Revolution, she rallied her neighbors and gathered essential medical supplies following the Battle of Bunker Hill, transforming

---

[22] Tea Act of 1773, Digital History.

[23] Nancy B. Samuelson, "Revolutionary War Women and The Second Oldest Profession," Minerva, VII, no. 2 (1989): 16.

the common area into a vital field hospital.[24] Fulton also played a crucial role during the conflict in assisting the patriots by delivering letters in British-controlled territories.[25] To revisit the earlier point, Fulton's action in the Boston Tea Party led to retaliation from the British, who passed several legislation to punish the colonies for their act of rebellion. Furthermore, Fulton had an impact on the revolution by uniting colonists for the patriot cause, helping kickstart the American Revolution. Yet, due to her action in the Boston Tea Party, the British planned to punish the colonies, but fueled rebellion against them instead.

In response to the open rebellion started by Fulton and her compatriots, the British implemented a series of legislation known as the Intolerable Acts in 1774, which were enacted against the colonies. The first act issued in March 1774 was known as the Boston Port Act, which closed the port of Boston and mandated that the colonists of Boston be responsible for paying for the destroyed tea.[26] The passage states,

> It is therefore expedient that the officers of his Majesty's customs should be forthwith removed from the said town…it shall not be lawful for any person or persons whatsoever to lade put, or cause or procure to be laden or put, off or from any quay, wharf, or other place, within the said town of Boston, or in or upon any part of the shore of the bay, commonly called The Harbour of Boston.[27]

This demonstrates that the act's purpose was to punish the colonists for destroying tea; their punishment was the closure of the Boston port until the city paid for the damaged goods. The second round

---

[24] Samuelson, "Revolutionary War,"16.

[25] Samuelson, "Revolutionary War," 16.

[26] Boston Port Act, Digital History, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3967.

[27] Boston Port Act, Digital History.

of legislation issued on May 20, 1774, was known as the Massachusetts Government Act, which replaced the elected colonial government with a British-appointed governor and stripped the colony of the right to self-governance.[28] As the passage states, "An act for the better regulating the government of the province of the Massachuset's Bay, in New England."[29] This statement points out that the act was implemented to better regulate the colony of Massachusetts in response to the Boston Tea Party and to the damages incurred from the failure of the colonial government to prevent the event.

After the third round of legislation, the Administration of Justice Act was issued on May 20, 1774, to uphold the law and ensure fair trials for British officials separated from the Massachusetts court but held by a British court.[30] As the document states, "An act for the impartial administration of justice in the cases of persons questioned for any acts done by them in the execution of the law."[31] Thus, the purpose of this act was to delegate the judicial system separate from colonial courts for British officials charged with a crime in the colonies; therefore, many colonists opposed this legislation and called it the "Murder Act" since it limited the possibility of a fair trial in Massachusetts.[32] The last legislation passed was the Quartering Act of 1774, which expanded from the previous Quartering Act of

---

[28] The Massachusetts Government Act; May 20, 1774, American Battlefield Trust, https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/massachusetts-government-act-may-20-1774#:~:text=The%20Massachusetts%20Government%20Act%20was,Massachusetts%20Bay%2C%20in%20New%20England.

[29] The Massachusetts Government Act; May 20, 1774, American Battlefield Trust.

[30] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Administration of Justice Act | Definition & Facts," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 29, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Administration-of-Justice-Act-Great-Britain-1774.

[31] Administration of Justice Act, Digital History, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4101.

[32] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Administration of Justice Act.

1765 by allowing British troops to be quartered in private homes.[33] Overall, the goal of the Intolerable Acts was to stamp out the flames of rebellion within the colonies. Yet, the acts had the opposite effect and expanded the glowing embers of revolution for the mistreatment of the colonies.

As a reaction to the Intolerable Acts, North Carolina's First Provincial Congress organized and adopted a measure opposing the action implemented by Parliament, which instituted a boycott on British goods.[34] Thus, it influenced Penelope Barker (1728–1796) to coordinate the Edenton Proclamation (the female equivalent of the Boston Tea Party) with the collaboration of fifty-one women in Edenton, North Carolina, to sign a petition supporting the patriot cause.[35] They signed the Edenton Proclamation on October 25, 1774, in which they agreed to boycott British goods and pledge that they would not purchase or consume British tea.[36] The passage states,

> It is a duty which we owe, not only to our near and dear connections who have concurred in them, but to ourselves who are essentially interested in their welfare, to do everything as far as lies in our power to testify our sincere adherence to the same; and we do therefore accordingly subscribe this paper, as a witness of our fixed intention and solemn determination to do so.[37]

This exemplifies the dedication these elite women had for the patriots' cause to boycott British goods to protest the mistreatment

---

[33] Quartering Act of 1774, Digital History, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3964.

[34] Kelly Agan, "Primary Source: The 'Edenton Tea Party," NCpedia, 2018, https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-edenton-tea.

[35] Crista DeLuzio, *Women's Rights: People and Perspectives* (ABC-CLIO, 2010).

[36] Kelly Agan, "Primary Source: The 'Edenton Tea Party."

[37] NCpedia, "Edenton Proclamation," October 4, 1774, https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-edenton-tea.

by the British Parliament, which imposed harsh punishments on Massachusetts and their fellow compatriots. Thus, these women strayed away from British goods, which led them to organize public gatherings, called spinning bees, to produce homespun cloth and socialize with one another, keeping morale high for the patriot cause.[38] Their actions as women were significant since it was one of the earliest examples of women organizing to influence legislation during a time when politics was seen as only for men.[39] Additionally, their actions influenced the patriot cause, helping unite women under one cause to protest against British tyranny by uniting them through boycotts. Additionally, these women helped the revolutionary cause by starting patriot meetings to ensure women stayed away from British goods, ensuring the women would transition to using homemade goods. However, their decision faced strong opposition from men in London who portrayed the Edenton women in a bad light.

When news reached London regarding the Edenton Proclamation, an illustrator named Philip Dawne (1730–1832) produced a satirical drawing called "A Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton in North Carolina," which mocked the women for their patriotic actions.[40]

---

[38] Crista DeLuzio, *Women's Rights: People and Perspectives*.

[39] Kelly Agan, "Primary Source: The 'Edenton Tea Party."

[40] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Attributed to Philip Dawe | a Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton in North Carolina," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, March 25, 1775, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/388959.

Figure 1: "A Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton in North Carolina".[41]

The image depicts a satirical scene of the Edenton Proclamation, which characterizes elite patriot women as unattractive, neglecting their domestic duties, and acting scandalously with other men. Additionally, the image surrounding the African American servants in the background may represent how the boycott movement was hypocritical due to a society that benefited from a slave economy. The satirical drawing aimed to undermine the women's efforts and discredit their political activism. Despite their

[41] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, attributed to Philip Dawe, printed for R. Sayer & J. Bennett, March 25, 1775.

attempt to undermine women's efforts, many other elite women advocated for the patriot cause.

Later in 1774, an elite patriot woman, Mercy Otis Warren (1728–1814), wrote a poem called "To the Ladies," directing attention to elite women who were not taking part in the British boycott.[42] Warren argued that women should reject the luxuries influenced by European fashion and stop desiring British clothing.[43] Warren called for ladies to join a movement that boycotted British goods and embraced a new fashion centered around homespun fabric to show support for the patriot cause.[44] She wrote,

> With ruffles stamped, and aprons of tambour, tippets and handkerchiefs at least threescore . . . Add feathers, furs, rich satins and ducapes, and head-dresses in pyramidal shapes . . .Yet Clara quits the more dressed negligee and substitutes the careless polanee. Until some fair one from Britannia's court. Some jaunty dress or newer taste import. This sweet temptation could not be withstood. Though for her purchases paid her father's blood.[45]

This poem was meant to persuade the elite women towards the patriot movement by creating a narrative of them abandoning their desire for British goods and considering it a noble sacrifice. Yet, the poem pressured women to recognize that those who still wanted British goods despite the boycotts must be aware that enjoying their luxury goods came at the expense of their liberties,

---

[42] Neil Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*, (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018).

[43] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

[44] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

[45] Mercy Otis Warren, "To the Ladies," quoted in Neil Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*, (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018) 212-213.

as well as the blood and lives of those who fought for freedom.[46] The poem aimed to influence Great Britain to bring favorable change to the colonies by leveraging the pressure of a boycott. Thus, Warren's part in the American Revolution was influential as a patriot poet since her actions helped bring others to support the revolutionary cause.[47] Warren's support did not stop only in her literary work; she also assisted the first Massachusetts Committee of Correspondence two years before writing "To the Ladies," which was for a meeting held in her home.[48] During this meeting, Warren helped spread revolutionary ideas with her fellow patriots, years before the outbreak of the revolution.[49] Overall, Warren had an impact on the revolution by establishing a grassroots movement with her poem to persuade elite women to stray away from British goods, to take part in the boycott to force Britain to bring favorable change that supported the colonies, and later spread revolutionary philosophy during patriot gatherings. Yet, unlike Warren's support for the revolution through her poem, the outbreak of war occurred a year later, in 1775, transforming how elite women supported the patriot cause.

During the American Revolution, supplies were dwindling among the Continental Army until an elite patriot woman, Esther DeBerdt Reed (1746–1780), took the initiative and began a campaign to collect donations to assist the army in fighting for their liberty.[50] Reed published "The Sentiments of an American Woman" to encourage support for the Continental Army. Reed argued that women should contribute to the cause by selling their

---

[46] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

[47] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

[48] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

[49] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

[50] Sheila L. Skemp, "Women and Politics in the Era of the American Revolution," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History, 9 Jun. 2016, https://oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-216.

jewelry and donating the proceeds or by giving any amount they could afford to help the army.[51] Reed wrote,

> Animated by the purest patriotism, they are sensible of sorrow at this day, in not offering more than barren wishes for the success of so glorious a Revolution. They aspire to render themselves more really useful; this sentiment is universal from the north to the south of the Thirteen United States…All Women and Girls will be received without exception, to present their patriotic offering; and, as it is absolutely voluntary, everyone will regulate it according to her ability, and her disposition.[52]

Reed expressed that many women felt they were not assisting the cause enough, despite their desire to be more helpful. Reed challenges the notion that women could be useful for the revolutionary cause by donating any money they could afford through regular donations or the sale of their jewelry. By doing so, Reed's donation campaign influenced thirty-six elite Philadelphia women.[53] So not only did these women sell their jewelry, but they went door to door collecting money for the army; this action was seen as "unfeminine" and shocked some, while others supported their action.[54] These women accumulated over $7,000 in specie (coin money, with inflation, is about $160,900); additionally, they also organized similar movements in other cities.[55] General George Washington later recognized Reed's action through a letter for

---

[51] Skemp, "Women and Politics."

[52] Esther Reed, "Sentiments of an American Woman," Women & the American Story, https://wams.nyhistory.org/settler-colonialism-and-revolution/the-american-revolution/sentiments-of-an-american-woman/.

[53] Skemp, "Women and Politics."

[54] Skemp, "Women and Politics."

[55] Skemp, "Women and Politics."

assisting the army with her campaign to encourage women to donate to the patriot cause.[56] Washington's letter reads,

> I have received [it] with much pleasure . . . the amount of the subscriptions already collected for the use of the American Soldiery. This fresh mark of the patriotism of the Ladies entitles them to the highest applause of their Country. It is impossible for the Army, not to feel a superior gratitude, on such an instance of goodness.[57]

This letter depicts General Washington's gratitude towards Reed for her support in gathering donations for the Continental Army. It demonstrates Reed's impact on the revolution by advocating for other women to assist in the revolution through donations. The elite patriots' women's donations were critical when the army's supplies were dwindling, and some soldiers were, at times, dying of hunger on the frontlines.[58] Their donation allowed the military to purchase food to feed its soldiers or buy necessary war equipment for the revolution. Overall, Reed had an impact on the revolution by establishing a grassroots movement among other women to gather donations and support for the Continental Army through the sale of their jewelry or through contributions made door to door. Reed was not alone in encouraging other women to donate money to the military; other elite patriot women started their donation campaigns to assist the revolution.

Another elite patriot woman who wanted to support the revolution was Mary Morris (1749–1827), who was from an influential Philadelphia family.[59] Morris sent a letter to Catherine

---

[56] University of Virginia Press, "Founders Online: From George Washington to Esther De Berdt Reed, 14 July 1780," https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-27-02-0093.

[57] Virginia Press, "Founders Online."

[58] George Washington's Mount Vernon, "Continental Army," https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/continental-army.

[59] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

Livingston (1751–1813) of New Jersey, another member of an influential family; the purpose of the letter was that financial resources were critical in funding the revolution and their mission to support the soldiers.[60] This letter states,

> Instead of waiting for the donations being sent, the ladies of each ward go from dore to dore and collect them and I am one of those harrowed with this business. Yesterday, we began our tour of duty and had the satisfaction of being successful . . . Of all absurdities— the ladies all going about for money exceeded everything; they were so extremely importunate that people were obliged to give them something to get rid of them.[61]

This demonstrates that instead of waiting for donations for the army, women of each household should go door to door collecting donations. These women would be persistent in collecting donations for the revolution to the point where people would give these women the money to leave them alone. Morris later discusses that it was their duty to provide Continental troops with uniforms for their service for the cause, and each woman, at their own choice, could convert their money to hard money to give to the soldiers.[62] The letter explains,

> An idea prevails among the ladies that the soldiers will not be so much gratified by bestowing an article to which they are entitled from the public, as in some other method which will convey more fully the idea of a reward for past services and an incitement to future duty. Those who are of this opinion propose the whole

---

[60] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

[61] Mary Morris, "The Voice of Aristocracy," quoted in Neil Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*, (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018) 205.

[62] Gould, *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*.

> of the money to be changed into hard dollars and giving each soldier two; to be entirely at his own disposal.[63]

What this evidence proves is that women should provide their support for their soldiers by sewing uniforms as their main service to the revolution. Then, women, of their own free will, could help the war effort by changing money into hard currency and giving it to soldiers since soldiers hadn't been paid for their actions. Overall, Morris had an impact on the revolution through their collaboration with Livingston to establish a grassroots movement among women to support the army by manufacturing uniforms and gathering donations to give to soldiers for fighting for the cause.

During the American Revolution, there were elite patriot women who participated in the battle for independence, such as Rebecca Motte (1737–1815), a member of one of the wealthiest families in Charleston, South Carolina.[64] On May 12, 1780, a Continental Army soldier named Daniel Green was captured by the British after the Siege of Charleston (March 29–May 12, 1780); a year later, Green managed to escape and ended up at Motte's plantation.[65] Motte assisted Green and the other fugitives by housing them in her estate and supplying them with food and water; then, she assisted her servant in helping Green and the other fugitives escape capture.[66] Green wrote,

> [To think] of one so accomplished showing so much kindness and attention to us, of late so unused to humane treatment! … we were ragged, dirty, rough-looking fellows; yet notwithstanding our forlorn

---

[63] Morris, quoted in Neil Gould, 205.

[64] Susan Casey, *Women Heroes of the American Revolution: 20 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Defiance, and Rescue*, (Chicago Review Press, 2015) 95-100.

[65] Elizabeth Fries Ellet, "The Women of the American Revolution v.3 (1850)," New York: Baker and Scribner, https://doi.org/10.5479/sil.161394.39088006856009.

[66] Casey, *Women Heroes*, 95-100.

> condition, they treated us as equals, spoke to us kindly, and made us feel that we had not served our country in vain.[67]

This demonstrates the friendly treatment Motte has shown to Green. Despite being rugged and covered with filth, Motte still treated Green as an equal, with respect, and supported Green's service in the Continental Army. After Green departed from Motte's plantation, the same year in 1781, her home was seized by the British army and converted into Fort Motte due to the strategic position it had over the Congaree River.[68] Later, Motte assisted the Continental Army by giving Francis Marion arrows to burn down Fort Motte to ensure a quick victory for the patriots.[69] Finally, at the war's end, Motte provided dinner for the British and the American officers to help lower tension and assist both sides of the conflict in turning over a new leaf.[70] Overall, Motte's assistance in the revolution influenced the war by ensuring safe passage for Green during his escape from British capture. Then, her assistance in defeating the British at Fort Motte ensured a swift victory for the Patriots. Yet Motte was not alone in assisting the Continental Army; other elite patriot women also assisted the army on the front lines.

Martha Washington was another elite patriot woman who assisted the Continental Army. In the American Revolution, Martha frequently joined her husband, General Washington, at the military camps, including the harsh winters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and her presence within the military camps boosted morale among soldiers.[71] Despite being the General's wife, she had

---

[67] Daniel Green, "Interaction with Rebecca Motte," quoted in Susan Casey, *Women Heroes of the American Revolution: 20 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Defiance, and Rescue*, (Chicago Review Press, 2015) 96.

[68] Casey, *Women Heroes*, 95-100.

[69] Casey, *Women Heroes*, 95-100.

[70] Casey, *Women Heroes*, 95-100.

[71] Mary V. Thompson,"'As If I Had Been a Very Great Somebody': Martha Washington's Revolution," In *Women in the American Revolution: Gender,*

to make sacrifices for the revolution, enduring hardship on the battlefield and experiencing the loss or separation from loved ones.[72] Within the Continental Army, there had been a significant number of soldiers infected with smallpox; thus, for the patriot cause, she had to undergo inoculation despite her fears of what could go wrong.[73] Martha took part in vaccination to ensure the Continental Army had a better chance of surviving the disease and give the revolution a better opportunity to fight against the British.[74] She served as the army's secretary, supported the Continental Army in raising funds, interacted with foreign dignitaries in a public role, and traveled to military headquarters every winter to be closer to the frontline.[75] Overall, Martha had an impact on the revolution by boosting morale among the soldiers with her presence in the military camps and then taking the initiative to start the vaccination program for the soldiers to ensure their health during the war. Additionally, she supported revolutionary efforts through activities like fundraising campaigns. Martha wasn't alone in facing hardship in the name of revolution.

Lucy Knox (1756–1824) also had to make sacrifices as an elite patriot woman in the name of the revolution. Knox originally came from a loyalist family but married into a patriot family.[76] Knox details her experience of being on the home front alone with a child and how the war effort affected the economy, causing food prices and other essentials to skyrocket.[77] Only the elite were able

---

Politics, and the Domestic World, edited by Barbara B. Oberg, (University of Virginia Press, 2019) 128–46, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfc56hw.11.

[72] Thompson,"As If I Had Been a Very Great Somebody,"128–46.

[73] Thompson,"As If I Had Been a Very Great Somebody,"128–46.

[74] Thompson,"As If I Had Been a Very Great Somebody,"128–46.

[75] Thompson,"As If I Had Been a Very Great Somebody,"128–46.

[76] Kristen Dear, "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women," Master of Arts in History, (University of West Georgia, 2022).

[77] Dear, "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women."

to purchase these goods, and in her case, she had to prioritize what to buy for survival.[78] Knox wrote,

> Indeed, it is difficult to get the neccessarys of life here at any price, the evil increases daily. Beef is at eight pence a pound. If you will take half an ox neck, skins, and all, you may get it for seven pence. For butter we give ten shillings a pound, for eggs two pence a piece, and for very ordinary Lisbon wine, twenty shillings a gallon.[79]

This experience shows the sacrifices the women faced for the war effort and the privilege they had in regard to being affluent enough to purchase goods at inflated prices. Knox had an impact on the revolution by reporting on various movements of British soldiers and generals in the city.[80] Despite her dedication to the revolution, the war had an emotional effect on Knox. Her husband, Henry Knox (1750–1806), was an officer of the Continental Army, and she worried about his whereabouts since he was frequently stationed on the frontlines.[81] Knox wrote,

> We hear nothing of the movements of the army, and poor [me] I am constantly sick with anxiety. Oh, horrid war, how hast thou blasted the fairest prospect of happiness, robbed of parents, of sisters, & brother, thou

[78] Dear, "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women."
[79] Dear, "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women."
[80] Dear, "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women."
[81] Dear, "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women."

> art depriving me of the society of my husband, who alone could repair the loss.[82]

This illustrates Knox's emotional turmoil on the home front, as she is overwhelmed by the anxiety and stress of losing family members and uncertain about her husband's fate, which highlights the personal sacrifices she endured for the revolution. Overall, Knox had a significant impact on the revolution by informing the Continental Army about the location of combatants within the city. However, her involvement in the patriot cause came at an emotional cost for her family on the home front, causing anxiety over her husband's safety and the well-being of her children. Yet, some elite patriot women took a different approach to support the revolution.

By the latter end of the American Revolution, Annis Boudinot Stockton (1736–1801), a propagandist who supported the patriotic cause against the British, used her literary work to promote a patriotic spirit to bolster support for the independence of the American colony.[83] Despite Stockton's reputation as a suspected loyalist due to her husband's ties to Britain, she used her social status to support the patriot movement by publishing her poems and raising funds for the Continental Army.[84] When news reached New Jersey about the patriot's victory over the British, Stockton wrote a poem called "Lucinda and Aminta, a Pastoral, on the Capture of Lord Cornwallis and the British Army, by General Washington, (1782)" which detailed the decisive victory of the

---

[82] Dear, "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women."

[83] Martha J. King, "'A Lady of New Jersey': Annis Boudinot Stockton, Patriot and Poet in an Age of Revolution," In *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World*, edited by Barbara B. Oberg, (University of Virginia Press, 2019) 103–27, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfc56hw.10.

[84] King, "'A Lady of New Jersey,"103–27.

Continental Army over the British forces in the Battle of Yorktown.[85] The poem declares,

> The news arrives of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and his army to General Washington. A shepherdess who tends her sheep in a more retired part, hearing some demonstrations of joy, comes hastily to her friend and enquires the reason; which leads them into a conversation on the several events that had occurred since the beginning of the war.[86]

This reveals the exciting news that Lord Charles Cornwallis (1738–1805) and his army have surrendered to General Washington, and that the news connects individuals during a time of conflict. As a propagandist, Stockton helped unite colonists over the patriot victory and boosted morale for the revolution with her poem.

In closing, scholars such as Zagarri describe the different factors, such as education, marital status, social class, and region, that influence women's experiences of the revolution.[87] Despite those differences, upper-class women were all united under one common goal, which was to assist the revolution through three different methods: the grassroots movement, frontlines, and propaganda. These prominent women had an impact on the revolution through their methods of assisting the cause by

---

[85] Robert A. Selig, "The Washington - Rochambeau Revolutionary Route in the State of New Jersey, 1781 - 1783 an Historical and Architectural Survey," Vol. I (2006), https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/documents/publ/Volume%20I.pdf#:~:text=Figure%203:%20Annis%20Boudinot%20Stockton%2C%20%22Lucinta%20and,british%20army%2C%20by%20General%20Washington.%22%20In:%20Only.

[86] Annis Stockton, "Lucinda and Aminta, a Pastoral, on the Capture of Lord Cornwallis and the British Army, by General Washington," quoted in Robert A. Selig, "The Washington."

[87] R. Zagarri, "Introduction," in *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World* edited by B. B. Oberg (University of Virginia Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfc56hw.5.

gathering donations to fund the Continental Army. They boycotted their goods and subsidized them with homemade products to ensure the British economy did not flourish. These elite patriot women formed a grassroots movement, the Daughters of Liberty, to ensure each other's commitment to the revolutionary cause.[88] There was frontline support among affluent patriot women to support the Continental Army with morale backing, well-being, weaponry, and information on the battlefield. These influential patriot women had an impact on the revolution by helping to win battles, ensuring the health of soldiers, and providing information on enemy positions. Lastly, with the support of propagandists, they had an impact on the American Revolution to boost morale support for the war; to ensure colonists supported the Continental Army and donated to the cause.[89] These women are often overshadowed or undermined by their husbands, as in the case of Martha Washington; recently, these women are getting the recognition they deserve for their services in the revolution.[90] Without these women, the Continental Army may have never succeeded in its battle for independence.

---

[88] Kendall F. Haven, *Voices of the American Revolution: Stories of Men, Women, and Children Who Forged Our Nation*, (Libraries Unlimited, 2000).
[89] King, "'A Lady of New Jersey," 103–27.
[90] Zagarri, "Introduction."

Bibliography

"Administration of Justice Act." Digital History. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4101.

Agan Kelly. "Primary Source: The 'Edenton Tea Party." NCpedia. 2018. https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-edenton-tea.

Branson, Susan. "From Daughters of Liberty to Women of the Republic: American Women in the Era of the American Revolution." In The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues. edited by S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz. Rutgers University Press. 2007. http://www.istor.org/stable/i.ctt5hhxxp.7.

"Boston Port Act." Digital History. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3967.

Casey, Susan. *Women Heroes of the American Revolution: 20 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Defiance, and Rescue*. Chicago Review Press. 2015.

Corbett, P. Scott, and et al, "Confronting the National Debt: The Aftermath of the French and Indian War," from US History I website, provided by OpenStax College, https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory1os2xmaster/chapter/confronting-the-national-debt-the-aftermath-of-the-french-and-indian-war/.

Dear, Kristen. "How the American Revolution Affected the Lives of Colonial Women." Master of Arts in History. University of West Georgia. 2022.

DeLuzio, Crista. *Women's Rights: People and Perspectives*. ABC-CLIO. 2010.

Ellet, Elizabeth Fries. "The Women of the American Revolution v.1 (1848)." https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/womenofamericanr11848elle.

——. "The Women of the American Revolution v.3 (1850)." New

York: Baker and Scribner, https://doi.org/10.5479/sil.161394.39088006856009.

George Washington's Mount Vernon. "Continental Army." n.d. https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/continental-army

Gould, Neil *The American Revolution: Documents Decoded*, Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2018.

"Quartering Act of 1774." Digital History. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3964.

Haven, Kendall F. *Voices of the American Revolution: Stories of Men, Women, and Children Who Forged Our Nation*. Libraries Unlimited. 2000.

King, Martha J. "'A Lady of New Jersey': Annis Boudinot Stockton, Patriot and Poet in an Age of Revolution." In *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World*. edited by Barbara B. Oberg. University of Virginia Press. 2019. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfc56hw.10.

NCpedia. "Edenton Proclamation." October 4, 1774. https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-edenton-tea.

Reed, Esther. "Sentiments of an American Woman." Women & the American Story. https://wams.nyhistory.org/settler-colonialism-and-revolution/the-american-revolution/sentiments-of-an-american-woman/.

Samuelson, Nancy B. "Revolutionary War Women And The Second Oldest Profession." Minerva. VII, no. 2 (1989): 16.

Selig, Robert A. "The Washington - Rochambeau Revolutionary Route in the State of New Jersey, 1781 - 1783 an Historical and Architectural Survey Vol. I." 2006. https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/documents/publ/Volume%20I.pdf#:~:text=Figure%203:%20Annis%20Boudinot%20Stockton%2C%20%22Lucinta%20and,british%20army%2C%20by%20General%20Washington.%22%20In:%20Only.

Skemp, Sheila L. "Women and Politics in the Era of the American

Revolution." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History. 9 Jun. 2016. https://oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-216.

"Tea Act of 1773." Digital History. https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3963.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Administration of Justice Act | Definition & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica.* January 29, 2018. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Administration-of-Justice-Act-Great-Britain-1774.

"The Massachusetts Government Act; May 20, 1774." American Battlefield Trust. https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/massachusetts-government-act-may-20-1774#:~:text=The%20Massachusetts%20Government%20Act%20was,Massachusetts%20Bay%2C%20in%20New%20England.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Attributed to Philip Dawe | a Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton in North Carolina." The Metropolitan Museum of Art. March 25, 1775. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/388959.

Thompson, Mary V. "'As If I Had Been a Very Great Somebody': Martha Washington's Revolution." In *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World*. edited by Barbara B. Oberg. University of Virginia Press. 2019. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfc56hw.11.

"Treaty of Paris, 1763." Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1750-1775/treaty-of-paris#:~:text=The%20Treaty%20of%20Paris%20of,well%2Oas%20their%20respective%20allies.

University of Virginia Press. "Founders Online: From George

Washington to Esther De Berdt Reed, 14 July 1780." https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-27-02-0093.

Zagarri, R. Introduction. In B. B. Oberg (Ed.). *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World* . University of Virginia Press. 2019. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvfc56hw.5.

——"Rosemarie Zagarri." Department of History and Art History, George Mason University. https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/people/rzagarri.

1764 to 1765 | Timeline | Articles and Essays | Documents From the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789.The Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/collections/continental-congress-and-constitutional-convention-from-1774-to-1789/articles-and-essays/timeline/1764-to-1765/#:~:text=Stamp%20Act.,%2C%20dice%2C%20and%20playing%20cards.

1766 to 1767 | Timeline | Articles and Essays | Documents From the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789. The Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/collections/continental-congress-and-constitutional-convention-from-1774-to-1789/articles-and-essays/timeline/1766-to-1767/#:~:text=Townshend%20Acts.,paint%2C%20paper%2C%20and%20tea.

III, George. The Proclamation of 1763. Digital History. https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook_print.cfm?smtid=3&psid=159.

Author Bio

Anthony Luna will graduate from California State University, San Bernardino, in May 2025, where he pursued a Bachelor of Arts in pre-credential history. He comes from a first-generation background with hard-working immigrant parents who sacrificed a lot to give him and his siblings the best life possible. His university journey was different as he began as a sociology major during his first year and later transitioned into a history major during his junior year. His reason for the change was his passion for history, which he has had since a young age. This passion was sparked by a fascination with American history, especially the American Revolution, the Civil War, and both World Wars. His journey into historical research was to shed light on the impact women had in the American Revolution, as they were often forgotten. This ties into his goal as a future educator to create an inclusive environment where students can connect the past to the present and see themselves reflected in history. Anthony wishes to thank his professor, Alicia Gutierrez-Romine, for persuading him to submit his paper, and his gratitude to his editorial staff, which includes his editor, Erin Herklotz, for her hard work in shaping this paper to its best form. In the future, Anthony would like to expand on this paper to obtain his master's degree in history. Finally, Anthony wants to express his gratitude for the opportunity to have his paper published on a topic he is passionate about.

In Memoriam

A Champion of Human Rights: Remembering Jimmy Carter

By Marlet Felix

Figure 1: Jimmy Carter, official presidential portrait, 1977.[1]

> [I want to be remembered] as a champion of human rights. Human rights are more than just freedom of speech, the right to elect one's own leaders, and freedom of assembly.

[1]Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, Naval Photographic Center, *Presidential Portrait of James Earl "Jimmy" Carter*, May 1, 1977.

> They also include the right to a home, access to adequate health care, and to live in peace.
>
> – Jimmy Carter, in a 2013 Washington Post interview, answering a question about how he would want to be remembered.[2]

On February 18, 2024, the United States and the world lost one of the most unique figures in modern American political history: Jimmy Carter.[3] From his humble beginnings in sleepy Plains, Georgia, to being the 39th President of the United States, James Earl Carter Jr.'s legacy transcended his single term in office, continuing to shape global politics long after his presidency. Throughout his life, Jimmy Carter was defined by his unwavering commitment to peace, human rights, and international diplomacy, which he implemented in his presidency and his post-presidency. His actions have included expanding the implications of human rights policies, quelling global conflicts, and mending foreign policies.

With passionate determination, a steadfast personality, and utmost religious faith, he dedicated his life to public service. Jimmy Carter's presidency is remembered for its focus on human rights, a commitment that extended beyond his time in office. His post-presidency work with Habitat for Humanity and The Carter Center impacted global health and human rights initiatives, solidifying his impact globally.

---

[2] David Brooks, "Jimmy Carter, Now 88, on Aging and Health," *The Washington Post*, May 3, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/jimmy-carter-now-88-on-aging-and-health/2013/05/03/84f67db8-9ae8-11e2-9bda-edd1a7fb557d_story.html.

[3] The Carter Center. "Jimmy Carter," https://www.cartercenter.org/about/experts/jimmy_carter.html

The Early Years: The Foundation Toward Service

Born on October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia, to Lillian, a registered nurse, and James Earl Carter Sr., a farmer and businessman, young Jimmy Carter was raised in a modest and tight-knit family that would deeply influence his character and approach to life.[4] In the rural heart of Georgia, Carter's character was shaped by the land and the community around him. Carter was born and raised in a modest farming community, Archer, a small town outside of Plains. His family's house lacked the essential amenities, such as electricity and indoor plumbing.[5] His deep love for the outdoors would come from his early childhood, ingraining a keen interest in business and an eventual passion for civil rights as he worked in his father's fields. The physical labor from farm work fostered his empathy for the struggles of the Civil Rights movement. Furthermore, managing the family farm provided Carter with valuable business experience.

Carter's upbringing on the family farm provided him with a grounding in the physical and economic realities of rural life. He worked alongside his family, performing the labor-intensive tasks necessary for sustaining the farm. His childhood was marked by long hours in the fields—from mopping cotton, a dreaded yet essential task, to hauling produce to the local market.[6] Carter's formative years were marked by quiet determination and an unwavering moral compass, solidified by his hometown and relationships, that would define his journey in life. As a young man, his commitment to integrity and service was evident. Growing up, Carter developed a deep connection to his community and a strong work ethic, actively participating in his family's farm and engaging in community activities with his siblings and peers.

---

[4] The Carter Center. "Jimmy Carter," https://www.cartercenter.org/about/experts/jimmy_carter.html.

[5] "Life in Brief: Jimmy Carter," Miller Center, University of Virginia, https://millercenter.org/president/carter/life-in-brief.

[6] National Park Service. "Early Life." *Jimmy Carter National Historic Site*, https://www.nps.gov/jica/learn/historyculture/early-life.htm.

Carter reminisces about this time on the farm very fondly, despite the grueling tasks he and his siblings would participate in.

> My black playmates were the ones who joined me in the field work that was suitable for younger boys. We were the ones who "toted" fresh water to the more adult workers in the field. We mopped the cotton, turned sweet potato and watermelon vines, pruned deformed young watermelons, toted the stove wood, swept the yards, carried slop to the hogs, and gathered eggs- all thankless tasks. But we also rode mules and horses through the woods, jumped out of the barn loft into huge piles of oat straw, wrestled and fought, fished, and swam. The early years of my life on the farm were full and enjoyable, isolated but not lonely. We always had enough to eat, no economic hardship, but no money to waste. We felt close to nature, close to members of our family, and close to God.[7]

He developed a strong work ethic, helping his family run their peanut farm. This instilled a profound appreciation for hard work and the value of a community. This, coupled with the education from his high school teacher, Ms. Julia Coleman, would push him toward a career in public service. Carter fondly remembers a quote that Ms. Coleman would tell each of her classes: "Study hard. One of you could become the president of the United States."[8] A strong sense of responsibility and intellectual curiosity marked his adolescence.

Carter's affinity with the world came from his uncle Tom Gordy, who had joined the United States Navy, sending postcards to the Carter family. Carter was fascinated with all the places that his uncle would visit, which started his dream of joining the Navy

---

[7] National Park Service. "Early Life." *Jimmy Carter National Historic Site*, https://www.nps.gov/jica/learn/historyculture/early-life.htm.

[8] *"The Early Years."* Jimmy Carter Tribute, https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/early-years.html.

when he became an adult.[9] He attended Plains High School and graduated as a valedictorian in 1942, and attended Georgia Southwestern College and Georgia Tech University before being appointed to the United States Navy in Annapolis, Maryland.[10] He would graduate from the United States Naval Academy in 1946. He came home to marry his love, Rosalynn Smith (1927–2023), on July 7th later that year after his graduation.

For the next seven years, Carter became a submariner, serving in the Atlantic and Pacific fleets. During his time in the Navy, he was under the command of Admiral Hyman Rickover (1990–1986), Carter's taskmaster, who profoundly affected his life. After being chosen by Admiral Rickover for the nuclear submarine program, he was assigned to Schenectady, New York, where he pursued graduate studies in reactor technology and nuclear physics at Union College. Carter also served as a senior officer on the pre-commissioning crew of the Seawolf, the second nuclear submarine.[11] Jimmy Carter became the engineering officer on the Seawolf until his resignation in 1953. His time in the Navy was not without its challenges. Carter's quiet nature and introspective personality did not always fit into the rigid regimen. Yet he scaled the ranks, becoming a lieutenant, demonstrating resilience and adaptability that would later be recognized through his leadership. His service in the Navy allowed him to travel and experience different parts of the world, broadening his worldview and deepening his understanding of international relations and its complexities. This would prove useful from his perspective as president in engaging with other nations through his navigation of complex global politics.

---

[9] "Life Before the Presidency: Jimmy Carter," Miller Center, University of Virginia, https://millercenter.org/president/carter/life-before-the-presidency.

[10] "James Earl Carter, Jr.," National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, https://www.nps.gov/people/james-earl-carter-jr.htm.

[11] Carter Center. "Jimmy Carter," https://www.cartercenter.org/about/experts/jimmy_carter.html; The second nuclear submarine was one of the first to operate on atomic power, a variant of Nautilus, the first nuclear submarine.

His seven years in the military would end in his resigning his commission in 1953 after his father died of cancer, and he returned to his hometown to take over the family peanut business. Carter's life would take a significant turn, as this would allow him to connect with his former roots, which was a step toward his political career. Carter took over his father's farm and would operate Carter's Peanut Warehouse alongside Rosalynn. While handling his father's farm and turning the Carter Warehouse into a successful production, Carter would follow his father's example and become involved in communal affairs with the help of his wife. In Plains Baptist Church, he became a deacon and a Sunday school teacher.[12] Carter would also play a key role in his community's local civic boards before winning the election for Georgia's State Senate for two separate terms, in 1962 and 1964, respectively. By 1971, he had become the Governor of Georgia.[13] Jimmy Carter's service moved forward, pushed by a determination to engage in issues that were controversial at the time — racial discrimination and government waste. By 1972, he was the Democratic National Committee campaign chairman for the 1974 congressional elections.[14]

Carter's Presidency

The 1970s were rough for the American people. There was a severe distrust of the American government after the Watergate scandal earlier in the decade. By the 1976 election, voters were divided by which direction the country was headed, with 50% of voters believing it was headed fairly well and 44% believing it was

---

[12] Strong, Robert A. "Jimmy Carter: Life in Brief." Miller Center, University of Virginia, https://millercenter.org/president/carter/life-in-brief.

[13] Jimmy Carter Tribute. "Biography," https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/index.html.

[14] Carter Center. "Jimmy Carter," https://www.cartercenter.org/about/experts/jimmy_carter.html.

going badly.[15] Carter's obscurity put him in favor with the American public, which led to his being elected president on November 2nd, 1976, serving from 1977 to 1981. His presidency was marked by significant domestic and international policy challenges and was often depicted as a period of economic struggle and political frustration. With his unique background, Carter entered office after placing his peanut farm in a blind trust for someone else to manage before assuming the presidency, facing several challenges throughout his time as president.

One of the most significant challenges he faced was the energy crisis of the late 1970s. Triggered by the 1973 Arab oil embargo under Richard Nixon (1913–1994) and exacerbated by OPEC's (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) actions, such as production cuts and price control, the United States saw soaring oil prices, inflation, fuel shortages, and economic uncertainty among the American people.[16] In response to the oil crisis and the economic turmoil it caused, Carter responded with initiatives that aimed to conserve energy. He signed legislation that created the U.S. Department of Energy in 1977, aimed to develop alternative energy sources, and would ban new power plants from using gas or oil.[17] However, these measures weren't sufficient to alleviate the crisis, impacting his popularity. Soaring inflation and economic stagnation became a defining factor when remembering his administration, eroding his public image despite his attempts to address the issues.

Despite the economic turmoil, Carter would prove successful with the Camp David Accords in 1978, a peace treaty between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat (1918–1981) and Israeli

---

[15] Roper Center. "1976 Presidential Election," https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/1976PresidentialElection.

[16] Corbett, Michael. "Oil Shock of 1973-74." *Federal Reserve History*, November 22, 2013, https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/oil-shock-of-1973-74.

[17] Adam S. P. Miller, "Jimmy Carter's Energy Policy Legacy," *Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy*, https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/jimmy-carters-energy-policy-legacy.

Prime Minister Menachem Begin (1913–1992).[18] This treaty established a major step toward resolving the long-standing dispute in the Middle East. The Camp David Summit proved to be a significant moment in history with Carter's determination for peace. This diplomatic success demonstrated Carter's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution among foreign entities while also showing his ability to engage in high-stakes negotiations.

On the domestic front, Carter focused on issues such as environmental protection, deregulation, and improving the federal government's efficiency. He pardoned draft dodgers from the Vietnam era, a controversial move, helping the nation move on from the turmoil of the Vietnam War.[19] Furthermore, Carter passed the Emergency Natural Gas Act in 1978, authorizing the national government to allocate interstate natural gas.[20] Additionally, as mentioned before, he passed legislation to create the Department of Energy, which sought to regulate energy, fund alternatives for new sources of energy (specifically wind and solar), and much more.[21] His commitment to renewable energy was further demonstrated by the installation of solar panels on the White House.

Carter's presidency was a compilation of unwavering commitment and utmost efforts to promote peace, clashing with the economic difficulties and foreign policy setbacks, which became a marker when remembering his time in office. However, political opponents used the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis to present Carter as weak and unable to address an emergency. This would

---

[18] "Camp David," *Office of the Historian*, U.S. Department of State, accessed April 3, 2025, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/camp-david.

[19] Miller Center, "Domestic Affairs," *Miller Center*, https://millercenter.org/president/carter/domestic-affairs

[20] U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *H.R. 2500: A Bill to Authorize Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1978 for Military Activities of the Department of Defense, for Military Construction, and for Defense Activities of the Department of Energy.* 95th Cong., 1st sess. (1977), https://www.congress.gov/bill/95th-congress/house-bill/2500.

[21] Miller Center, "Domestic Affairs," *Miller Center*, https://millercenter.org/president/carter/domestic-affairs.

damage his reputation significantly, resulting in his defeat by Ronald Reagan in 1980. While his administration faced significant challenges and fell short in many ambitious goals, Carter's legacy extends beyond the successes and failures that resulted from his presidency. His post-presidency work, particularly, has cemented his place as a significant figure in American and international history.

Post-Presidency

Carter's presidency, despite the hardships and complexities, serves as a prelude to an impactful chapter in his life: his post-presidency, which was marked by global engagement, humanitarian work, advocacy for human rights, and so much more. His actions profoundly influenced the world and inspired many. One of the defining features of Carter's post-presidency was his commitment to Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that helps low-income families in the United States and other countries renovate and build homes.[22] Carter worked hands-on in building homes for low-income families, demonstrating his commitment and dedication to serving people in more ways than one; former President Carter and former First Lady Carter were huge advocates for Habitat for Humanity, participating in active fundraisers and hands-on construction, rallying volunteers. Until 2020, he and his wife would volunteer at least one week a year to the organization.[23] His involvement with the organization exemplifies his belief in the power of a community and its actions. His legacy transcends the limitations of his time in office, leaving more of an impact than he had compared to when he was President of the United States.

Beyond Habitat for Humanity, Carter marked his post-presidency with an extensive range of activities, dedicating himself

---

[22] "Citizen Carter: The Post-Presidency Years," *Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum*, https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/citizen-carter-the-post-presidency-years.html.

[23] The Carter Center, "Jimmy Carter," https://www.cartercenter.org/about/experts/jimmy_carter.html.

to promoting peace, democracy, and advocating for human rights. The Carter Center, a non-profit organization, dedicated itself to resolving global conflict, disease prevention, and the promotion of democracy on an international level.[24] In 1982, President Carter became a distinguished professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and, in partnership with the university, he and his wife founded the Carter Center.[25] The Carter Center's interventions came into contact with different conflict zones and in various forms, such as disease eradication efforts. They led the international campaign to eradicate Guinea worm disease, drastically reducing cases.[26] In 1986, the disease was estimated to have affected 3.5 million people; by 2022, it was reported by the Center and its partners that the number of cases was thirteen.[27] The Carter Center partners with regional authorities to control diseases like river blindness (onchocerciasis), globally distributing Mectizan, a medication to combat it. The Center helped establish healthcare delivery systems in African communities while also observing elections in different countries, such as Panama and

---

[24] *The Carter Center*, https://www.cartercenter.org.

[25] "Citizen Carter: The Post-Presidency Years," *The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum*, https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/citizen-carter-the-post-presidency-years.html.

[26] Guinea Worm disease (Dracunculiasis) is a parasitic infection caused by the Guinea worm. It is transmitted through contaminated drinking water, causing painful blisters and worm emergence; Hopkins, Donald R., Adam J. Weiss, Sarah Yerian, Yujing Zhao, Sarah G.H. Sapp, and Vitaliano A. Cama. "Progress Toward Global Dracunculiasis (Guinea Worm Disease) Eradication, January 2023–June 2024." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 73, no. 44 (November 7, 2024): 991–998. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7344a1.htm.

[27] Hopkins, Donald R., Adam J. Weiss, Sarah Yerian, Yujing Zhao, Sarah G.H. Sapp, and Vitaliano A. Cama. "Progress Toward Global Dracunculiasis (Guinea Worm Disease) Eradication, January 2023–June 2024." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 73, no. 44 (November 7, 2024): 991–998, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7344a1.htm.

Nicaragua.[28] Human rights were a constant push for Carter during his presidency, and that didn't change post-presidency. The Carter Center served as a beacon, aiding the Carters in advancing human rights throughout the world, advocating for the release of political prisoners, women's rights, and promoting gender equality.

Carter and the Center would go on "unofficial diplomatic missions" while advocating for peace internationally. Just as he had done during his presidency during the Camp David Accords, Carter would serve as a mediator between several nations, advocating for peace, or help ease tensions between nations such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, Liberia, North Korea, etc.[29] Carter, with permission from President Bill Clinton (1946–), would travel to North Korea on a peacekeeping mission in the summer of 1994. The North Korean government had withdrawn its membership from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which led the United States to begin to push for sanctions against the foreign entity. Carter broke the impasse between the two nations after two days of negotiations, when President Kim Il-sung (1912–1994) agreed to stop his nuclear program and, in exchange, they would begin their negotiation with the United States once more.[30] Former President Carter, with the help of the Carter Center, was able to aid multiple countries and their people. The Carter Center embodies his belief in the importance of international cooperation, the potential for positive change, and the need for public service.

In response to his efforts, Jimmy Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, standing as a testament to his positive

---

[28] "Citizen Carter: The Post-Presidency Years," *The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum*, https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/citizen-carter-the-post-presidency-years.html.

[29] "Citizen Carter: The Post-Presidency Years," *The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum*, https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/citizen-carter-the-post-presidency-years.html.

[30] King, Robert R. "Jimmy Carter's Post-Presidency Role in U.S.-North Korea Relations." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 6, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/jimmy-carters-post-presidency-role-us-north-korea-relations.

global impact in his post-presidential endeavors. He was awarded the prestigious award for undertaking peace negotiations worldwide, his advocacy and commitment to human rights, and working for the welfare of the people. This prize cemented Carter's status as a global icon for international peace and humanitarianism, a figure whose influence extended beyond American politics, positively influencing the world with his work. The award was a validation of his work and commitment to building a more just and peaceful world, inspiring leaders and activists worldwide.

Jimmy Carter's post-presidency represents a unique chapter in his life and American history. Carter's commitment to service, his advocacy for peace and human rights, and the impact of the Carter Center have redefined him as a person. The Nobel Peace Prize, his work with Habitat for Humanity, and the efforts done by the Carter Center stand as testaments to his unwavering commitment to building a better world.

Bibliography

"Biography," Jimmy Carter Tribute. https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/index.html.

"Early Years," Jimmy Carter Tribute. https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/early-years.html.

Columbia University Energy Policy, "Jimmy Carter's Energy Policy Legacy." https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/jimmy-carters-energy-policy-legacy/.

Columbia University Energy Policy, "The 1973 Oil Crisis: Three Crises in One and the Lessons for Today."

https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/publications/the-1973-oil-crisis-three-crises-in-one-and-the-lessons-for-today/.

Corbett, Michael. "Oil Shock of 1973-74." *Federal Reserve History*, November 22, 2013. https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/oil-shock-of-1973-74

David Brooks, "Jimmy Carter, Now 88, on Aging and Health," The Washington Post, May 3, 2013. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/jimmy-carter-now-88-on-aging-and-health/2013/05/03/84f67db8-9ae8-11e2-9bda-edd1a7fb557d_story.html.

Defense Logistics Agency, "In Memoriam: President Jimmy Carter (1924-2024)." https://www.dla.mil/About-DLA/News/News-Article-View/Article/4023702/in-memoriam-president-jimmy-carter-1924-2024/.

Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, Naval Photographic Center, Presidential Portrait of James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, May 1, 1977.

Hopkins, Donald R., Adam J. Weiss, Sarah Yerian, Yujing Zhao, Sarah G.H. Sapp, and Vitaliano A. Cama. "Progress Toward Global Dracunculiasis (Guinea Worm Disease) Eradication, January 2023–June 2024." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 73, no. 44 (November 7, 2024): 991–998. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7344a1.htm.

Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, "Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files." https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/archives/digital-library/cos/hamilton-jordans-confidential-files.

Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, "Human Rights Policy."

https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/pdf_documents/digital_library/cos/142099/34/cos_142099_34b_04-Human_Rights_Policy.pdf.

Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum. https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov.

Jimmy Carter Tribute, "Citizen Carter: The Post-Presidency Years." https://www.jimmycartertribute.org/biography/citizen-carter-the-post-presidency-years.html.

King, Robert R. "Jimmy Carter's Post-Presidency Role in U.S.-North Korea Relations." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 6, 2025. https://www.csis.org/analysis/jimmy-carters-post-presidency-role-us-north-korea-relations

Miller Center, "Campaigns and Elections," Miller Center. https://millercenter.org/president/carter/campaigns-and-elections.

Miller Center, "Domestic Affairs," Miller Center. https://millercenter.org/president/carter/domestic-affairs.

Miller Center, "Impact and Legacy," Miller Center. https://millercenter.org/president/carter/impact-and-legacy.

Miller Center, "Life in Brief," Miller Center. https://millercenter.org/president/carter/life-in-brief.

National Park Service, "History and Culture," Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. https://www.nps.gov/jica/learn/historyculture/index.htm.

National Park Service, "James Earl Carter Jr." https://www.nps.gov/people/james-earl-carter-jr.htm.

National Park Service, "Jimmy Carter National Historic Site, https://www.nps.gov/jica/index.htm.

National Park Service, "Stories," Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. https://www.nps.gov/jica/learn/historyculture/stories.htm.

Nobel Prize, "Jimmy Carter - Facts," NobelPrize.org. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2002/carter/facts/.

Naval History and Heritage Command. *Jimmy Carter*.

https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/presidents/carter.html

Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "Short History of the Carter Administration." https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/carter.

Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, "The Carter Administration: Foreword." https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/foreword.

Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, "1976 Presidential Election." https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/1976PresidentialElection.

Securities and Exchange Commission Historical Society, "Timeline: 1970." https://www.sechistorical.org/museum/timeline/1970-timeline.php.

The Carter Center. https://www.cartercenter.org.

The Carter Center. "Jimmy Carter." https://www.cartercenter.org/about/experts/jimmy_carter.html

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *H.R. 2500: A Bill to Authorize Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1978 for Military Activities of the Department of Defense, for Military Construction, and Defense Activities of the Department of Energy.* 95th Cong., 1st sess. (1977). https://www.congress.gov/bill/95th-congress/house-bill/2500

Author Bio

Marlet Felix is a first-generation first-year graduate student in the Master of Arts in History program at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). She earned her Bachelor of Arts in History with a pre-law minor from CSUSB in Spring 2023. Her academic interests focus on American foreign policy, domestic affairs, and the influence of media on politics both nationally and internationally.

She extends her gratitude to the editorial board and Dr. Jones for the opportunity to publish the *In Memoriam*, as well as to her editor, Moises Leon, for guiding her through the process of publishing her first journal piece. Marlet also thanks her family and friends for their ongoing support throughout her academic journey. She hopes her writing honors the legacy of former President Jimmy Carter. While the future holds many possibilities, she aspires to continue her path in the fields of history or law.

Taking It to the People: Nikki Giovanni (1943-2024)

By Cameron Smith

Figure 1. Nikki Giovanni (1943–2024). Courtesy of Brett Weinstein, Wikimedia Commons.[31]

In 2004, scientist Dr. Robert Baker (1942–2018), one of the most influential figures in the study of mammals, named a species of bat that he had discovered after Nikki Giovanni.[32] The scientific title of the animal is *Micronycteris giovanniae*; its common name is

[31] Brett Weinstein, "Yolande Cornelia - Nikki Giovanni speaking at Emory University on 6 February 2008," *Wikimedia Commons,* https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=Nikki+giovanni&title=Special:MediaSearch&type=image.

[32] Hugh H. Genoways, Bradley, Robert D., Schmidly, David J., et.al. Obituary: Robert James Baker (1942-2018), *Journal of Mammalogy*, Volume 99, Issue 4, 13 August 2018, pp. 981-1012, https://doi.org/10.1093/jmammal/gyy072.

"Giovanni's Big-eared Bat."[33] Dr. Baker was a fan of the poet. This honor is indicative of Giovanni's influence over a large spectrum, encompassing those from the scientific world to R&B/Rap stars, for example, Tina Marie (1956–2010), who rhymed her name in their own lyrics. Nikki Giovanni was humbled by this distinction. Addressing the naming of the bat, she wrote a few lines in her poem, "Biography":

> There is a bat
> In Chile named
> Micronyteris giovanniae
> Dr. Robert Baker named it
> After me. He discovered it
> While studying bats
> And thought the big ears
> Were just like me
> Maybe if the bat wrote
> She would be
> A poet.[34]

In her lifetime, which contained a multitude of lives, Giovanni was a prolific and world-renowned poet, author of many books, including children's literature and poetry, a self-described militant, and a quietly fierce debater. She was a countercultural polymath whose range of topics covered not just every pertinent issue as they pertained to the Black condition, but also cultural issues as they pertained to many marginalized groups, a testament to the poet's knowledge and far-reaching influence. She was an advocate not only for Black people but for gender equality as well. She spearheaded the Black Arts Movement and was also a professor at Virginia Tech University.

---

[33] U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, https://www.fws.gov/species/giovannis-big-eared-bat-micronycteris-giovanniae.

[34] Nikki Giovanni, "Biography" from Make Me Rain. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2020, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/161883/biography-65a930709ccc5.

Too late for the Harlem Renaissance and too early for the advent of hip-hop, Nikki Giovanni existed somewhere in between the antiquity of linear Black history and the modernity of current Black ideology. She fit in as a Black, gay, revolutionary woman. Her work demonstrated this "in-betweenness," as she penned poems that were odes to the grand poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou (1928–2014), as well as hip-hop legend Tupac Shakur (1971–1996). At the same time, Giovanni took risks to make those observations.

According to her biography, Yolande Cornelia Giovanni, Jr., was born at Knoxville General Hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee, on June 7, 1943, to Jones "Gus" Giovanni and Yolande Cornelia Giovanni (née Watson). Named after her mother, Yolande received the nickname of "Nikki" from her older sister, Gary Ann Giovanni. The Giovanni family later moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. Her parents taught in various capacities at a variety of schools; her father eventually became a probation officer, while her mother worked for the welfare department. Nikki and her sister completed their education, including a stint at St. Simon school, where Nikki found influence and eventual friendship with one of the nuns. She briefly moved back to Tennessee to live with her grandparents.[35]

The roots of the "revolutionary" Giovanni can be found in the influences in her life. From her sister protesting the vile comments made by a teacher over the death of Emmett Till by walking out of the classroom to her grandmother, who was involved in various charitable and political endeavors, she developed an understanding of the need to fight against injustice.[36] She eventually earned her undergraduate degree in history from Fisk University, but not without complications. At the tender age of seventeen, Giovanni was expelled from Fisk. Although one might interpret this as an early sign of a rebellious spirit, the argument can be made that she received unjust punishment, as she

---

[35] Virginia C. Fowler "Chronology." nikki-giovanni.com, https://nikki-giovanni.com/biography/chronology/.

[36] Fowler, "Chronology."

was removed from school for visiting her ailing grandparents over the holidays without having received permission.[37] As the first of many testaments about her ability to gather herself, rebound, and persevere, Giovanni would later re-enroll at Fisk University and graduate. Significantly, this is also the breeding ground for the Black Arts Movement, of which Giovanni would be an intrinsic part.

In her dissertation entitled, "I Ain't No Joke: Women poets of the Black Arts Movement and the Definition of Voice," Brittany S. Hull defines the movement as:

> A social and cultural movement connected to the Black Power Movement (BPM). No longer willing to accept the racist treatment of African-Americans in society, members of the BPM sought to take matters into their own hands by fighting for equality. BPM members carried guns for protection against those racist whites who felt they could physically harm blacks on a daily basis, and as far as they were concerned, the dominant white society would be given a run for their money the next time they felt they could treat blacks as such. Similarly, when it came to the arts, the BAM [Black Arts Movement] sought to dismiss everything creatively related to the dominant white culture.[38]

As an integral part of her legacy, it is crucial to understand Giovanni's poetry, lectures, activism, and impact in the context of the external forces of which she could be seen as a product. Her brand of poetry evolved from being centered around Black love to revolution and Black identity. Some of her children's poetry is

---

[37] Virginia Fowler, ed. *Conversations With Nikki Giovanni*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1992, 14.

[38] Brittany S. Hull, *"I Ain't No Joke: Women Poets of the Black Arts Movement and the Definition of Voice."* Ph.D diss., West Chester University, 2013. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/i-aint-no-joke-women-poets-black-arts-movement/docview/1824725031/se-2

contained in books titled *The Genie in the Jar* (1996)*, I Am Loved* (2018), and *Hip Hop Speaks to Children* (2008). There is a certainty to her fiery words and observations, which gave way to some of the most important dialogue of the post-Civil Rights era. Her first book was entitled *Feeling Black, Black Talk* (1968). One of the poems, "Nikki-Rosa," examined Black life. She writes:

> …and if you become famous or something
> they never talk about how happy you were to have
> your mother
> all to yourself and
> how good the water felt when you got your bath
> from one of those
> big tubs that folks in Chicago barbecue in
> …and I really hope no white person ever has cause
> to write about me
> because they never understand
> Black love is Black wealth and they'll
> probably talk about my hard childhood
> and never understand that
> all the while I was quite happy[39]

Giovanni's contributions to the Black Arts movement are significant. It places her amid an era where the emergence of the importance of Black culture boosted the pride of a people. Trudier Harris, in her article on Giovanni's impact on literature, writes that,

> "From the beginning of her career, Giovanni was concerned with power and politics, which she interpreted in many ways, and which was informed by the lessons she learned from her family and friends. Throughout her career, she has focused on the emotional and political health of

[39] Nikki Giovanni, "Nikki-Rosa," Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48219/nikki-rosa.

> African Americans, which means that she has also, at times perhaps, inadvertently made the health of the United States her focus as well."[40]

Colleague Marita Golden, whose work was included in a Giovanni anthology, said:

> "She did something very special for poetry. She made poetry this home, this place for people to live in. …Nikki was brilliant because she was deep. She was symbolic. She was funny. And she was accessible. …Her poetry had this pulse, this life. She was very authentic. She spoke her mind and took a lot of risks in what she said, risks in what she did. Her poems were like living things. And I think that's why people were drawn to it, drawn to her."[41]

Considering this statement, it is easy to understand how she became such an influential figure and why she appeals to both older and younger generations.

Not only was Nikki Giovanni's evolution in written form, but it was also evident in the manner in which she spoke, specifically her gift of gab and her relationship to words. For example, Giovanni's 1973 sit-down with the late James Baldwin (1924–1987) was framed as a conversation but was executed in the fashion of an amicable and very engaging debate. She challenged him on a variety of issues, including slavery, interracial marriage, and police brutality.[42] For Baldwin, whom she affectionately called

---

[40] Trudier Harris, "Nikki Giovanni: Literary Survivor Across Centuries." *Appalachian Heritage 40*, no. 4 (2012): 34-47, Fall. The University of North Carolina Press, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/aph.2012.0106.

[41] Curtis Bunn, "Nikki Giovanni's legacy lives through the writers who knew and were inspired by her" NBC News, December 12, 2024, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/nikki-giovannis-legacy-lives-writers-knew-inspired-rcna183834

[42] Virginia Fowler, ed. *Conversations With Nikki Giovanni*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1992. 86-95.

"Jimmy," she stated that she would walk to London to speak with him.[43] Her willingness to be viewed by a live audience while addressing various social issues that were not only pertinent at the time, but still just as significant in the twenty-first century is yet another testament to how pivotal Giovanni's presence was in America and why her brand of blackness, feminism and militance was just as vital as the likes of an Angela Davis or Maya Angelou. She showed, in her own way of perceiving the world, that the Black experience, as well as the experiences of those marginalized in this country and worldwide, is far from monolithic, but rather a multi-faceted one.

There were some aspects of Giovanni's life about which she remained fiercely private. In 1969, she gave birth to her only child, Thomas Watson Giovanni. She refused to name Thomas's father. As with anyone, she, too, faced tragedy and sorrow. In 1995, she was first diagnosed with lung cancer. In 2005, she lost her mother and sister, and also mourned the death of Rosa Parks (1913–2005). Sadness continued in 2006 as she lost more family and close friends.[44] However, in 2016, she married her long-time partner, Virginia Fowler (1948–), who was also a Virginia Tech professor.

In an interview with a British journalist about love and marriage, a then seventy-year-old Giovanni was asked about expectations and how to get around the idea that there is a certain way people are perceived and are supposed to be in life. Giovanni responded,

> "I don't think I pay much attention to what people have to say about me. I've been lucky with that." She continued talking about aging, and her basic tenets of life.

---

[43] Penguin Books UK, "Nikki Giovanni on the iconic James Baldwin", posted September 2024 by Penguin Books UK, YouTube, 5:17, https://youtu.be/x19GvG6SONg?si=fi8np-VMuwFGriyE.

[44] Nikki Giovanni, "Chronology," https://nikki-giovanni.com/biography/chronology/.

> "But I like being 70, and I do talk about it, because we in America, we don't like old age. And we always treat it as if somehow something is wrong with you. And I think that it's a good idea to grow old. I mean we're all, you're born with an expiration date. You know, just like the milk you buy, or the olive oil you have, you know, the wine you drink. Everything has an expiration date. …One day you won't be here. So the time that you are here should be I think ethical. I think ethical makes you a good person, and it makes you a giving person. And I think smiles are important, I think it's important to laugh. …Laughter is the best medicine. …If you can find a way to laugh at some of these situations, you will survive it and you will have yourself."[45]

For decades, Giovanni led by example, using her influence not just to be a revolutionary but to be a brilliant light, casting a positive impression on all with whom she interacted. She taught people to express themselves, not only as composers of the written word, but as a true person. She writes:

> I was only twenty-six when I wrote *Gemini*. Now I'm forty-two, and I'm different. I've learned the lesson that I teach my students: things aren't always what they appear to be. Young writers tend to look at things in terms of good and bad. The hallmark of a good writer is to make the worst person in the book understandable and sympathetic. Toni Morrison can do this so well.[46]

Even through her illness, Giovanni continued to work. As the University's Distinguished Professor Emerita, she returned to

---

[45] Huffington Post Live, "Poet Nikki Giovanni Talks Love, Marriage," posted 2014 by Huffington Post, YouTube, 2:20, https://youtu.be/vgBacPtZIYU?si=UtmcLkeC5WndLtNA.

[46] Virginia Fowler, ed. *Conversations With Nikki Giovanni*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1992. 176.

the campus to participate in the presentation of the Giovanni-Steger Poetry Prize Award to undergraduate students. The competition was created in 2006 by Giovanni and Virginia Tech President Charles W. Steger (1947–2018). During the ceremony, she spoke of the importance of speaking out, of having a voice. She said:

> "We can never let words be silenced. We can never let words be taken away from us. We can never let people, because they don't like what we're saying, shut us up. Words are the most important things that human beings have. And no matter what the situation, we must always remember to use them."[47]

Giovanni received numerous awards and honors throughout her career. In addition to more than two dozen "keys to the cities," including New York, Miami and Los Angeles, she was an honorary member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, was named one of Oprah Winfrey's 25 Living Legends, Woman of the Year for *Ebony* Magazine, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Mademoiselle* Magazine. She was awarded seven NAACP Image Awards and was the first recipient of the Rosa Parks Women of Courage Award. As recently as 2024, she won an Emmy for exceptional merit in documentary filmmaking for "Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Project."[48]

Nikki Giovanni succumbed to her third battle with cancer in 2024. Her longtime friend, poet Kwame Alexander, confirmed

---

[47] Jenny Kincaid Boone "In Memoriam: Nikki Giovanni Renowned Poet, Activist, and Virginia Tech Legend," Virginia Tech News. https://news.vt.edu/articles/2024/12/clahs-giovannimemoriam.html#:~:text=In%202010%2C%20Giovanni%20and%20Virginia,in%20the%20Department%20of%20English.

[48] Curtis Bunn, NBC News. "Nikki Giovanni's legacy lives through the writers who knew and were inspired by her," Dec. 12, 2024. Accessed April 7, 2025, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/nikki-giovannis-legacy-lives-writers-knew-inspired-rcna183834.

the news of her passing. He offered his gratitude for his friend, saying, "We will forever be grateful for the unconditional time she gave to us, to all her literary children across the writerly world."[49] She is survived not just by her son, granddaughter, wife, close family and friends, but by every artist, essayist, poet, and revolutionary, as well as the neophytes just beginning their journey with her. Her last book of poetry, titled *The Last Book*, is due to be published in the fall of 2025.[50] The end of her poem, "Biography," seems a fitting culmination of Giovanni's legacy:

> I'm also lucky
> To have awards and daydreams
> Or is that
> Daydreams
> And awards
> And I'm lucky to be happy
> At what I do
> And how I do it
>
> So that is this
> Bio
> I'm here
> And if I mist
> On emotional soil
> A weed will
> Grow
>
> Make me rain
> Let me be a part
> Of this needed change.[51]

---

[49] Bunn, "Nikki Giovanni's Legacy Lives through the Writers Who Knew and Were Inspired by Her."

[50] Bunn, "Nikki Giovanni's Legacy Lives through the Writers Who Knew and Were Inspired by Her."

[51] Nikki Giovanni, "Chronology," accessed April 6, 2025, https://nikki-giovanni.com/biography/chronology/.

Bibliography

Boone, Jenny Kincaid. “In Memoriam: Nikki Giovanni, Renowned Poet, Activist, and Virginia Tech Legend.” Vt.edu, December 10, 2024. https://news.vt.edu/articles/2024/12/clahs-giovannimemoriam.html.

Bunn, Curtis. “Nikki Giovanni’s Legacy Lives through the Writers Who Knew and Were Inspired by Her.” NBC News, December 12, 2024. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/nikki-giovannis-legacy-lives-writers-knew-inspired-rcna183834.

Fowler, Virginia C. “Chronology.” nikki-giovanni.com. https://nikki-giovanni.com/biography/chronology/.

Fowler, Virginia C., ed. Conversations with Nikki Giovanni. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992.

Genoways, Hugh H, Robert D Bradley, David J Schmidly, Lisa C Bradley, James J Bull, Karen McBee, Meredith Hamilton, and Peter A. Larsen. “Obituary: Robert James Baker (1942–2018).” *Journal of Mammalogy* 99, no. 4 (July 20, 2018): 983–1012. https://doi.org/10.1093/jmammal/gyy072.

Giovanni, Nikki. “Biography.” Poetry Foundation, March 27, 2024. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/161883/biography-65a930709ccc5.

Hull, Brittany S. 2013. ""I Ain't no Joke": Women Poets of the Black Arts Movement and the Definition of Voice." Order No. 10157007, West Chester University of Pennsylvania. http://libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/i-aint-no-joke-women-poets-black-arts-movement/docview/1824725031/se-2.

———. “Nikki-Rosa.” Poetry Foundation, 1968. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48219/nikki-rosa.

Harris, Trudier. “Nikki Giovanni: Literary Survivor across

Centuries." *Appalachian Heritage* 40, no. 4 (2012): 34–47. https://doi.org/10.1353/aph.2012.0106.

\Huffington Post Live. " Poet Nikki Giovanni Talks Love, Marriage." Youtu.be, December 16, 2016. https://youtu.be/vgBacPtZIYU?si=UtmcLkeC5WndLtNA.

Penguin Books UK. "Nikki Giovanni on the Iconic James Baldwin." YouTu.be, 5:17. August 1, 2024. https://youtu.be/x19GvG6SONg?si=fi8np-VMuwFGriyE.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "Giovanni's Big-Eared Bat (Micronycteris Giovanniae) | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service." FWS.gov, 2025. https://www.fws.gov/species/giovannis-big-eared-bat-micronycteris-giovanniae.

Weinstein, Brett. "Yolande Cornelia – Nikki Giovanni Speaking at Emory University on 6 February 2008." Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=Nikki+giovanni&title=Special:MediaSearch&type=image.

Author Bio

Cameron Smith is a senior at Cal State San Bernardino and a published author with ambitions of completing his bachelor's degree in history. A self-described learning enthusiast, his varied interests include reading a good book or article, political banter, gaming, writing, learning about the cosmos, and spending time with loved ones. Cameron has always been open to new ideas and believes strongly in self-discovery while being a strong advocate for education. A student of life, music, and culture, the idea for paying homage to Nikki Giovanni's legacy was inspired by his mother as well as a desire to learn more about the late poet's impact and who she was.

Notes From the Archives

A Familiar Taste: Considerations on Honey in California's Historical Record

By Ahlys Gandara

California is primarily known as an agricultural state, with the major economic sector stemming from agricultural production, and its identity has developed around the idea of being an agricultural wonderland. Many of the primary sources pre-twentieth century emphasize this position as it was a conscious choice that was made during the founding of the state, as well as being a genuine belief of the incoming American settlers. In my preliminary research on this booster propaganda, I have noticed a lack of recognition of the beekeeping industry, which did have a significant historical presence in the state. The production of honey was a unique business venture for settlers that required the utilization of environmental knowledge, and in modern scholarship, it offers insight into the realm of the history of senses, particularly taste. In this article, I discuss two of these sources, *The California Culturalist* and *California Copy*, in the hopes of sparking further interest in these topics.

The California Culturalist was a nineteenth-century publication that focused on the development of Californian agriculture, horticulture, "mechanism," and mining. In the July 1859 issue, two articles appeared related to beekeeping: "Bees and Bee-Keeping" and "Honey Bees." The first article, "Bees and Bee-Keeping," focuses on the physiology of bees, explaining the different roles in a hive and stating that it was "now well known"

that workers are "imperfectly developed females."[1] This was an introduction to the work done in a hive, providing a scientific baseline for the article to follow. The second article, "Honey Bees," was more of a rumination on the nature of the bee, a consideration of their hives, as well as a recommendation to start keeping them. The article opens by noting that a nationwide interest in "bee culture" had been developing.[2] The article addresses the question of whether bees are domesticated - it is assumed not - and readers are warned that most commercial bee hives on the market are ineffective.[3] This is clearly a more economically focused article, with the assumed audience being readers who have an interest in the developing industries of California, as well as a willingness to try and learn new ventures that may prove profitable.

As a contrast, the August 1860 issue of *California Culturalist* is less pointed towards beginner apiarists (beekeepers), although by no means did they expect to be dealing with experts. The presence of the article, "Management of the Apiary for August," suggests that there was a calendar column that helped beekeepers stay on schedule for hive care, but it also gave information on honey quality.[4] While this may seem natural, given that the primary product of beekeeping is honey, it suggests the commercialization of the trade and a shift away from the more intuitive knowledge of farming, toward a sense of professionalization. The assumption that a beekeeper would know the different seasons and types of honey by taste is no longer valid, and instead, there is an assumption that these skills must be taught. Interestingly, in this issue there is also an advertisement for live bees, bred in Alameda County, that could be sent to anywhere in

---

[1] W. Wadsworth, ed., *The California Culturalist*, (Towne & Bacon, 1860), 20, https://archive.org/details/californiacultur02sanf/page/19/mode/1up.

[2] Wadsworth, *The California Culturalist*, 21.

[3] Wadsworth, *The California Culturalist*, 21-23.

[4] "Management of the Apiary for August," *The California Culturalist* 3 (August 1860), 56.

"California, Oregon, Washington Territory, or British Columbia."[5] While this may seem natural from a modern perspective, it represents a distinct departure from the traditional method of acquiring bees: finding a swarm in the wild and claiming the land it is on, or luring the swarm into a new hive.

In the Library of Congress's collection, California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849–1900, there is the book *California Copy*. *California Copy* is the memoir of George F. Weeks, a reporter born in 1852 in New York who was forced to head to California due to his tuberculosis diagnosis, where he lived at a sanatorium near San Bernardino before working at the San Francisco Chronicle and other papers in Bakersfield and Alameda.[6] While much of his memoir is devoted to his experiences as a reporter, Weeks does delve into his time as a beekeeper in San Bernardino. His account reveals the interconnected belief that nature and human health went hand in hand as well as the necessity of "healthful food." Weeks also reveals an insight into the interconnectedness of industry and taste.

In *California Copy,* the San Bernardino Valley is defined via its natural aspects, primarily in the agricultural sense. At first sight, Weeks admires the valley for its beauty, which he quickly links to its orchards and vineyards, claiming that the fruit from this valley is "famous around the world."[7] This is done hand in hand with his enjoyment of the flowers of the area, particularly the white sage. Weeks describes its smell as "intoxicating," claiming that he was unsurprised to find the honey made from these flowers to have "no equal in any respect."[8] He also mentions the chamiso plants as being a "honey producer of the highest order," while "pepper honey" from the pepper tree was not very appetizing.[9] With

---

[5] "Bees! Bees!! Bees!!!," *The California Culturalist* 3 (August 1860), 53.

[6] George F. Weeks, *California Copy* (Washington College Press, 1928), https://www.loc.gov/item/42048196/.

[7] Weeks, *California Copy*, 32.

[8] Weeks, *California Copy*, 33.

[9] Weeks, *California Copy*, 31-34.

hindsight, Weeks frames his experiences through honey, using taste for his recollection and connecting a good taste with a good experience. Honey, a substance that he loves, has become how he views and experiences the natural world.

Understandably, chapter eight is dedicated to the use of honey as part of the cure for tuberculosis and his own knowledge of bees. Weeks had no prior conception of the sheer number of bees there were in the world, as well as the amount of honey that is produced.[10] There was apparently little common knowledge about bees, and it seems readily apparent that Weeks' interest in bees stemmed from his extraordinary love of honey. Once again, bees are conceptualized around his experiences as a consumer. He notes that as a child, he had been limited to an inch of honeycomb with any one meal, but that when he found himself suddenly in charge of literal pounds of it, with only himself to handle rationing, he ate it voraciously. He specifies that, "At noontime it was my regular practice to eat entire combs of unripened and uncapped honey, with mayhap a little bread or some cold flapjacks left over from breakfast."[11] He claims that this diet of pure honey, so close to the source, was what cured his tuberculosis, along with the hot air of San Bernardino.

Weeks also mentions the story of one of the "neighboring" beekeepers in a nearby isolated canyon, who, upon finding wild bees in a growth, took up the claim and began keeping them. After he shipped his first years' honey to San Francisco, he learned that there was a peculiar taste that left it unsellable, upon research he found that the wild growth the bees patronized was wild horehound and the honey was then sold as is to a druggist who wrote an annual contract with him to maintain a supply that was then packaged and sold as cough syrup.[12] The taste of the honey influenced its market aspects, and because he was unfamiliar with the industry or terrain, he failed to produce a proper product.

---

[10] Weeks, *California Copy*, 56-57.

[11] Weeks, *California Copy*, 59.

[12] Weeks, *California Copy*, 61.

However, with skilled marketing, the narrative shifted from a failed honey to a health product. Terrain had a large effect on the sale of the finished product, with plant knowledge a necessity in divining what markets would buy what honey. Chamiso and greasewood apparently yielded a thin, clear honey with no distinct taste, which could be used as an unnoticeable and much cheaper substitute for "Island sugar" from Hawaii. This was in widespread use for apparent reasons.[13] While a certain standard had to be met to make a product desirable, the end result could be made more desirable with proper labeling and marketing.

While these were only two sources, the bee industry in California did have a significant presence within the state and offered new perspectives on agriculture. The history of agriculture in California is rather narrowly focused on the cultivation of crops and the lives of laborers, while overlooking less conventional industries and entirely neglecting the driving forces behind human tastes. Beekeeping is an interesting industry that bridges the gap between animal husbandry and farming. To keep bees was a relatively easy venture to get into and was attractive to incoming settlers with little experience in agricultural ventures. Furthermore, the recollections of different honey tastes can reveal the preferences and sensibilities of the time.

Bibliography

"Bees! Bees!! Bees!!!," *The California Culturist* 3 (August 1860).
"Management of the Apiary for August," *The California Culturalist* 3 (August 1860).
Wadsworth, W., ed. *The California Culturalist*. San Francisco:

[13] Weeks, *California Copy*, 61-62.

Towne & Bacon, 1860. https://archive.org/details/californiacultur02sanf/page/19/mode/1up.

Weeks, George F. *California Copy*. Washington College Press, 1928, https://www.loc.gov/item/42048196/.

Author Bio

Ahlys Gandara is a second-year Master's student who is graduating in the Spring of 2025. They have published their thesis, *The Proverbial Milk and Honey: Frontier, Racial Lines, and the Development of California Foodways*, on the relationship between Californian cuisine and Americanization. After getting their Associate Degrees in History and English at Pasadena City College, she earned her Bachelor's in History at CSUN before going to CSUSB for her Master's in History. At CSUSB, they specialized in the American West and Food History and refuse to entertain the idea of an academic career post-graduation.

Travels Through History

Megastructures: Forced Labor and Massive Works in the Third Reich

By Randi Stoner

In July 2024, I took the National World War II Museum's "Megastructures: Forced Labor and Massive Works in the Third Reich" tour, which goes through northern Germany and Poland.[1] The tour has subsequently changed its name to "What They Fought Against: Scars of the Nazi War Machine" to emphasize the role that forced labor played in creating and operating these megastructures that supported the Nazi war machine. The tour was led by Dr. Alexandra Richie, Władysław Bartoszewski, co-chair of History and International Studies at the Collegium Civitas in Warsaw, Poland. Our able tour manager, who came with an MA in History and who made sure no one got lost on any of the excursions, was Barbara Bieniek.

The tour began in Hamburg, Germany, where the first day was spent focusing on Operation Gomorrah, the Allied fire bombings of July 1943. Given the vortex of fire that the bombings created, this is perhaps a moment to remember the biblical injunction: "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."[2] We began the day at the Ohlsdorf Cemetery, where we visited the mass graves of the German victims that Operation

[1] "What They Fought Against: Scars of the Nazi War Machine | the National WWII Museum | New Orleans," The National WWII Museum | New Orleans, https://www.nationalww2museum.org/events/educational-travel/megastructures-forced-labor-and-massive-works-third-reich.

[2] Hoesa 8:7 King James Version (KJV).

Gomorrah created. The mass graves are separated based on what part of the city their remains were recovered from. We also visited a smaller section of the cemetery containing the graves of British and Commonwealth Royal Air Force (RAF) aviators who had died fighting in the Hamburg area. From there, we visited the bombed-out ruins of the St. Nicholas Church, which is maintained as a memorial to the victims of not only the Allied bombing of Hamburg but also to the victims of the German bombings of civilian areas in Poland and other countries. After seeing the results of the bombing raids, we went to the district of Hamm, close to the city center, to see how one of the ways the population tried to protect themselves from the bombers, an underground, four-chambered, air raid shelter built to hold two hundred people, that has been restored to its original state. It is difficult to imagine what it must have been like to shelter there on the bench seat, hearing and feeling the explosions and hoping that no direct hit lands on you. As she did every day after we returned to our hotel, Dr. Richie presided over an informal discussion of what we had seen that day and other topics of interest over a glass of wine or other beverages.

Figure 1: Hamburg Air Raid Shelter.[3]

[3] Randi Stoner, *Hamburg Air Raid Shelter*, photograph.

The next day was devoted to Nazi medical experiments and was one of the most emotionally wearing days of the trip. We began by visiting the dissection theater at the Medical School of Hamburg, where we also saw an exhibit about those medical experiments and some of the doctors who conducted them. We then went to the Bullenhuser Damm Memorial, a still active German day care center, where twenty Jewish children were murdered along with their caregivers, to cover up their use in medical experiments while prisoners at Neuengamme Concentration Camp. Some of the SS troops who took part in the murders were hanged, but not all were punished.[4]

Showing how effectively the Jewish people had been *othered* by Nazi propaganda, Doctor Kurt Heissmeyer, who conducted the experiments on the Bullenhuser Damm children, was asked at his trial why he did not use Guinea Pigs. He said, "For me there was no basic difference between human beings and guinea pigs;" he then corrected himself: "Jews and guinea pigs."[5] Finally, we visited the Neuengamme Concentration Camp itself, where more than half of the approximately 100,000 prisoners did not survive the war.

---

[4] Iris Groschek and Kristina Vagt, *The Bullenhuser Damm Memorial – The Site, the Victims and the History of Commemoration* (N.D.), trans. Georg Felix Harsch, (published by Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, 2011) 42-51.

[5] Lawrence L. Langer, (1995) *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays*, Oxford University Press, 66.

Figure 2: Bullenhuser Damm Memorial.[6]

After the horrors of medical experimentation, concentration camps, and aerial bombing, the third day of the trip focused on the still brutal, but less genocidal, U-Boat war with a visit to Kiel, home of the *Kriegsmarine,* the German Navy. We visited the German Naval Memorial, which was originally dedicated to the

[6] Randi Stoner, *Bullenhuser Damm Memorial*, photograph.

members of the Imperial ßnavy who died in the First World War, but was co-opted by the Nazis to celebrate their naval program and to promote the *Dolchstoß,* the claim that Germany was not really defeated, but had been stabbed in the back. Since the war, it has become a memorial for everyone lost at sea. Perched on dry land next to the memorial is the submarine U-995, one of the only surviving German U-boats from the Second World War and one that was used extensively by the set designers of the movie Das Boot (1981).[7]

Figure 3: U-995.[8]

The fourth day found us in Binz, a resort city on the Baltic Sea Island of Rügen, where we spent two nights. On that day, we hopped onto a small power boat and sailed to Peenemünde. There, Dr. Werner von Braun and other German scientists, many of whom were smuggled to the United States at the end of the war to keep them out of Soviet hands as part of Operation Paperclip,

[7] *Das Boot* (Bavaria Film, 1981).

[8] Randi Stoner, *U-995*, photograph.

designed and built the V-1 cruise missile, along with the V-2 rocket. The V-2 rocket was the first object to leave the Earth's atmosphere and enter outer space, giving birth to the Space Age. The size of the Peenemünde works is immense, and the construction of those works, as well as the V-1s and V-2s, were performed by a vast corps of slave labor, the responsibility for which was overlooked in choosing the scientists who would be part of Operation Paperclip. In fact, in 1983, one of those scientists, Arthur Rudolph, renounced his United States citizenship and returned to Germany in connection with his use of forced labor from the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp to make V-1s and V-2s at the Mittelwerk underground factory.[9] The conditions where the V-2 was built were so bad that it was said that it was unique in that "more people died producing it than died being hit by it."[10]

[9] Michael J. Neufeld, "Werner von Braun, the SS, and Concentration Camp Labor: Questions of Moral, Political, and Criminal Responsibility", *German Studies Review*, 25 no. 1 (2002), 57-78.

[10] Asif A. Siddiqi, "Russians in Germany: Founding the Post-War Missile Program" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 8, (December 2004): 1137.

Figure 4: V-2 Rocket Motor, Peenemünde.[11]

On the fifth day, we went to what is now known as the Colossus of Prora, which was one of the pre-war projects directed by the Strength through Joy organization (Kraft durch Freude, KdF) and was intended to provide organized vacations on the Baltic Sea, along with mass Nazi indoctrination, to German workers. Although this nearly three-mile-long structure was never completed, because, much like the KdF-Wagen, later known as the Volkswagen, its resources were shifted to military purposes. It is still standing, and some of the incomplete guest rooms have been renovated and sold as expensive, beach-front condominiums.

After we left Prora, we left Germany as well and entered Poland. One of the interesting things about this tour is that it not only visits well-known, can't-miss sites such as Peenemünde, but also smaller sites that are being portrayed as labors of love by local history buffs. One such site we visited was a small museum

[11] Randi Stoner, *V-2 Rocket Motor, Peenemünde*, photograph.

located in the area of the former Hydrierwerke Pölitz factory, where forced labor worked at producing synthetic gasoline to supply German aviation with high-octane fuel for its piston-powered airplanes.[12] The importance of this factory was recognized by the Allies, who bombed it repeatedly, and the museum contains artifacts from the planes of the Allied forces that were shot down while attacking the factory. We stayed that night and the next in the city of Szczecin, the capital of the province of West Pomerania. It was formerly known as Stettin.

The following day, we went to Zalesie, near Międzyzdroje, to visit a test site for the V-3, the final Vengeance Weapon, a super cannon designed to be able to shell London from Pas-de-Calais, France. Although I was aware of the existence of the V-3 program, I did not realize until this trip that the weapon had actually been operative and was used to shell Luxembourg from December 1944 to February 1945.[13] The site consists of a bunker and some concrete piers that had supported the cannon, as it went up the side of a large hill. Having long-ago seen relics of the V-1 and V-2 programs, it was interesting to finally see physical evidence of the V-3 program. Afterwards, we went to see Battery Goeben, an observation tower and associated gun positions, which never saw combat, built by the Germans along the Baltic coast in 1938.

---

[12] Anthony N. Stranges, "The U.S. Bureau of Mines' Synthetic Fuel Program, 1920-1950s: German Connections and American Advances," *Annals of Science*, vol. 54 (1994): 49. Operation Paperclip also brought some of the scientists involved in converting coal into gasoline to the United States after the War. *Id. at 30-31.*

[13] Max Gadney, "V-3, The Vengeance Weapon" *World War II*, Vo. 23, No. 2. (Jun/Jul 2008): 68-69.

Figure 5: Battery Goeben Observation Tower.[14]

On the seventh day, we visited the Walcz Open Air Museum at the Pomeranian Wall. The Pomeranian Wall was built by the Germans along the pre-war German-Polish border and was the site of battles against Soviet troops in January 1945. We were able to go inside one section of the bunkers, which had been damaged enough to make it useless as a fortification, but still impressive as a piece of history.

[14] Randi Stoner, *Battery Goeben Observation Tower*, photograph.

Figure 6: Bunker at Pomeranian Wall.[15]

After lunch, we went to the Exploseum, built around the Dynamit Aktien Gesellschaft (DAG) Fabrik Bromberg (Dynamite Stock Corporation Factory Bromberg), a Nobel/I.G. Farben company, which were two huge corporations jointly producing large quantities of explosives for the war. Soon after the Germans

[15] Randi Stoner, *Bunker at Pomeranian Wall*, photograph.

occupied Bydgoszcz in 1939, it was decided to build an explosives plant in the nearby forest, which offered good camouflage, as well as access to large quantities of water from the Vistula River, and a diversity in elevation, which assisted in the construction of the required buildings. It was claimed that one-third of all the high-explosive shells used by the German forces on the eastern front were produced at the factory. This factory has been the subject of several television shows that explain how nitroglycerine and smokeless powder were produced there and the precautions taken, such as glass blast walls, to limit the damage if any explosions occurred.

Figure 7: Glass Blast Wall at Exploseum.[16]

On the eighth day, we left Bydgoszcz and headed for Warsaw, stopping along the way first in Szubin to visit Oflag 64, a prisoner of war (POW) camp for American officers from 1943–1945, where our group laid a wreath at its monument. We then

[16] Randi Stoner, *Glass Blast Wall at Exploseum*, photograph.

visited the house of Copernicus (1473–1543) in Torun, tried the city's famous gingerbread, and ate lunch. Then, we drove to Warsaw to the Bristol Hotel, where we stayed. Previously, I was led to believe that the Bristol Hotel had been the SS headquarters for Warsaw; however, on this trip, I learned it had actually been turned into an SS brothel after Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) learned that his SS troops were fraternizing with non-Aryans. That evening we had a champagne reception and a private Chopin (1810–1849) concert in one of the hotel's salons. We were told that immediately after the German occupation of Warsaw, Hitler banned Chopin's music and that Chopin's monument in Warsaw was the first one to be destroyed by the Nazis, so it was especially pleasurable to be able to hear a live performance of Chopin in Warsaw.

The next morning, we visited a memorial to the victims of the Katyn Forest Massacre (1940) and two prison facilities in Warsaw, used to suppress the Poles; one was used by the Germans and the other by the Russians. At the one used by Russians, we visited the cell occupied by Dr. Richie's father-in-law, Władysław Bartoszewski, who had the distinction of being imprisoned there by the Russians after the war and in Auschwitz by the Germans during the war. Later that day, we went to the site of the Treblinka II death camp, which began operating in July 1942 and was closed down in November 1943. During that time, it is estimated that 900,000 people, mostly Polish Jews, were murdered there with carbon monoxide gas.[17] The large number of victims, combined with the short time of operation, and the small number of survivors, seventy-six, caused Dr. Richie to opine that it was the worst of all the death camps.

[17] Eva Budde, Felix Hansen, and Jonathan Sokolowski, *Treblinka: Treblinka II The Death Camp*, trans. Andrzej Dabrowski, and Siegfried Kremeyer, 2016 Muzeum Regionalnego w Siedlcach, 7.

Figure 8: Tile from Treblinka Death Chamber.[18]

Figure 9: Treblinka Memorial at Site of the Death Chamber.[19]

On the tenth and final day of the tour, we visited the

[18] Randi Stoner, *Tile from Treblinka Death Chamber*, photograph.
[19] Randi Stoner, *Treblinka Memorial at Site of the Death Chamber*, photograph.

Ringelblum Archive, which contains documents created by Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum (1900–1944) and the Oneg Shabbat (Joy of the Sabbath) organization, disclosing the fate of the Jews under the German occupation. The Archive is contained in one of the only buildings of the Warsaw Ghetto that survived the war. Next, we visited the Warsaw Zoo, along with the villa of Jan Zabinski (1897–1974) and Antonina Zabinski (1908–1971), who were recognized by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, as Righteous Among the Nations for helping to save Jewish people from the Nazis and were the subject of the film *The Zookeeper's Wife*.[20]

Later, we had a farewell reception and dinner at Dr. Richie's house on the outskirts of Warsaw. Dr. Richie shared the history of her house with us, from the expulsion of its Polish owners and their replacement by Germans in the aftermath of the invasion, to its use as the headquarters of the 5th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Viking" during the Battle of Radzymin, the last great tank battle of World War Two in 1944, at the conclusion of Operation Bagration (1944). She and her husband purchased the house in a substantially ruined state and restored it. At the farewell dinner, not only did we have a wonderful time discussing the sights we had seen on the tour, but Dr. Richie's husband, who is the Under Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs for Poland, gave a not-for-publication discussion of the state of the world as seen from his office. All in all, even after around fifty years of studying Nazi Germany, I was able to learn a great amount of new information on this tour and would not hesitate to recommend it or its companion tour, The Rise and Fall of Hitler's Germany, to anyone who is interested in the history of Nazi Germany.

[20] *The Zookeeper's Wife* (Scion Films, 2017).

Bibliography

Budde, Eva, Felix Hansen, and Jonathan Sokolowski. *Treblinka: Treblinka II The Death Camp*. Translated by Andrzej Dabrowski, anSiegfried Kremeyer. 2016 Muzeum Regionalnego w Siedlcach,
Das Boot. Bavaria Film, 1981.

Gadney, Max. "V-3, The Vengeance Weapon" *World War II*. Vo. 23, no. 2. (Jun/Jul 2008): 68-69.

Groschek, Iris and Kristina Vagt, *The Bullenhuser Damm Memorial – The Site, the Victims and the History of Commemoration* (N.D.) Translated by Georg Felix Harsch. Published by Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, 2011.

The Holy Bible, King James Version (KJV).

Langer, Lawrence L. *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Neufeld, Michael J. "Werner von Braun, the SS, and Concentration Camp Labor: Questions of Moral, Political, and Criminal Responsibility." German Studies Review, 25 no. 1 (2002): 57-78.

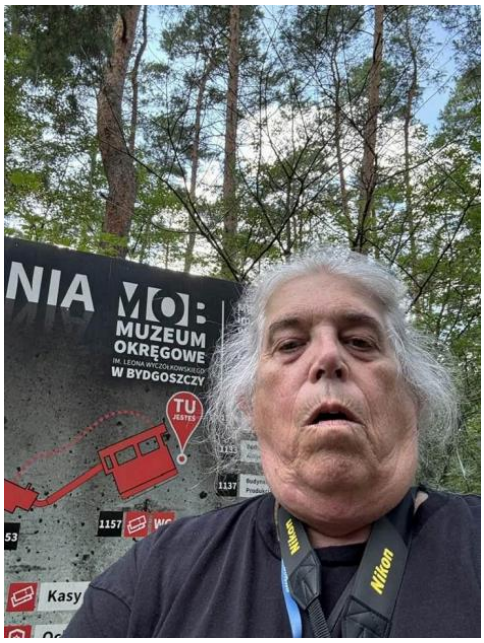
Siddiqi, Asif A. "Russians in Germany: Founding the Post-War Missile Program" *Europe-Asia Studies*. Vol. 56, No. 8, (2004): 1131-1156

Stranges, Anthony N."The U.S. Bureau of Mines' Synthetic Fuel Program, 1920-1950s: German Connections and American Advances."*Annals of Science*, vol. 54(1994): 29-68.

The National WWII Museum | New Orleans. "What They Fought Against: Scars of the Nazi War Machine | the National WWII Museum | New Orleans." https://www.nationalww2museum.org/events/educational-travel/megastructures-forced-labor-and-massive-works-third-reich.

The Zookeeper's Wife. Scion Films, 2017.

Author Bio



Jerry Garcia, or somebody, said that those who remembered the 1960s didn't live through them. I think that applies even more strongly to the 1970s, and that is the reason for the gap between my high school graduation to cheers of "Randi the Red", some vague memories of living in a chicken coop in Petaluma, and my 1989 graduation from CSU Northridge with a BA in History. That was followed by a fun three years at what is now UC Law San Francisco, and then several years discovering that I hated practicing law, a fate from which I was rescued by an opportunity to perform legal research for the judges of the San Bernardino Superior Court, a position from which I retired in 2019. I will hopefully be graduating from CSU San Bernardino with an MA in History this spring.

Reviews

Film Review: Wicked Part 1

By Isai Martinez

Figure 1: Cynthia Erivo as Elphaba and Ariana Grande as Glinda.[1]

[1] (@gileskeyte), "Wicked" Part One Director Jon M. Chu directs Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo)," Instagram, November 16, 2024. https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.instagram.com/p/DCdwNtXtUUm/?hl%3Den&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1747669120779334&usg=AOvVaw0sJmzVdhB4IavfGQLHqTZ8.

"Something has changed within me." [2] On November 22, 2024, the world transformed as Cynthia Erivo (1987–) and Ariana Grande (1993–) appeared on screens, performing the iconic song" Defying Gravity." After several years of shifts in production, cast, producers, and directors, this beloved Broadway musical finally witnessed an adaptation of one of its most celebrated works. The show is inspired by the book, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* (1900), which centers around Elphaba, also known as the Wicked Witch of the West, from the classic 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, based on L. Frank Baum's (1856–1919) 1900 novel, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

The Land of Oz has long been a key element of American culture and identity. Its narrative is closely tied to American literature, manifesting through numerous adaptations across books, films, television, and other media. The Land of Oz captivates audiences globally, featuring richly detailed characters like Dorothy, Glinda, and the Scarecrow. The timeless storyline involves following a yellow brick road to reach the Wizard of Oz. Wicked serves as a prequel to *The Wizard of Oz* and the book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, enhancing the established narrative with original music and new perspectives. Yet, this story holds a deeper history and meaning beneath the surface. Since its inception, Oz has evolved, mirroring the societal context of each adaptation. *The Wizard of Oz* has consistently sparked discussions, using its setting to address current issues, making it just as pertinent today as it was over a century ago. Many elements of the Wicked films seem to resonate with the current American political climate. Thus, this review of *Wicked Part 1* (2024) will explore the historical and social commentary of three works: *The Wizard of Oz*, the original opening of *Wicked* in 2003 on Broadway, and Wicked Part 1 as a musical film, highlighting their significance and how they express their themes and social critiques through various media.

---

[2] Stephen Schwartz, "Defying Gravity," performed by Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande, on *Wicked: The Soundtrack* (Universal Studios, 2024), streaming audio, https://open.spotify.com/track/5QMrH5nszZZR3nefIj6Mar.

History of Oz and Adaptations

In 1900, we were introduced to the magical world of Oz in L. Frank Baum's book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Baum's story stood out significantly from the previously popular, darker European fairy tales. Distinctive for its characters, the central plot is straightforward: a young girl named Dorothy and her dog, Toto, are swept away by a tornado from their Kansas home to the extraordinary land of Oz, where Dorothy embarks on a quest to return home. Along the way, she visits the Emerald City to meet the Wizard with her friends, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion, and together they confront the Wicked Witch of the West. Ultimately, the truth about the Wizard is that he is just an ordinary man, as it is Glinda who aids Dorothy in returning home by having her click her silver shoes together. Baum does not stop there; he continued to craft stories about Oz, initially publishing them as serials in newspapers before compiling them into book form. He authored fourteen complete books, finishing in 1920, featuring vibrant stories, cherished characters, and a deeper exploration of the Oz universe.[3] The series thrived, and with the later release of *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939 and the silent film in 1910, the Oz universe became increasingly vivid and real. The well-received book series resonated strongly with audiences through the narrative of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Baum's story was more than just a children's fantasy novel; it was also a conversation and reflection of American society that many scholars were able to attribute to political allegories and a reflection of the world of production. Oz became an even more popular story and was considered a cultural phenomenon, like the famous 1939 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film did all over again later. Over the decades, Oz has always been evolving and reimagined constantly within theatre, television, and popular culture. The land

[3] Elisabeth Bronfen, "'There's No Place like Home' - The Aporia of Homecoming *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming)," *Parallax* 6, no. 3 (2000): 49–62, https://doi.org/10.1080/135346400422457.

of Oz has been adapted into very different iterations that have made the world of Oz become more apart of the mainstream world like films like *The Wiz* (1978), books like *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* by Gregory Maguire, and television adaptations such NBC's *Emerald City* (2017).

The world of Oz has been explored multiple times and examined from various perspectives. When *Wicked* was made into a film, there was already a huge fandom, connection, and people willing to explore the world of Oz in its complexity. The audience is not just returning to a familiar fantasy but also engaging with a layered interpretation that invites them to question previously accepted narratives from the world of Oz and tackle the world around them.

Wizard of Oz (1930s Social Commentary)

The cultural phenomenon of Oz originates from the success of MGM's *The Wizard of Oz,* featuring Judy Garland (1922–1969). This film has become one of the most widely recognized movies around the globe, cherished by audiences everywhere. It transforms Baum's story into a vibrant new adaptation of the beloved book series. Nonetheless, the film's significance in history extends beyond this; it also conveys deeper themes through its narrative.

Figure 2: Tin Man, Cowardly Lion, Dorothy, Scarecrow, and Glinda from The Wizard of Oz (1939).[4]

The film itself was a revolutionary piece of cinema history. It is often remembered for its Technicolor dazzle, memorable characters, and standout musical numbers, which have been enjoyed for decades to come. However, beneath all of the glamour and glitz that the film presents, there is a deeper commentary on the social and economic struggles of the time.

During this period, the Great Depression (1929–1939) was on the audience's minds. At the time of its release, the economic hardship was highly relevant to the story. The 1930s were plagued by the Great Depression, widespread unemployment, bank failures, and the Dust Bowl. Along with these issues, social concerns like isolationism and the civil rights of people of color were on the

[4] Insomnia Cured Here from Flickr, https://miro.medium.com/v2/resize:fit:640/format:webp/0*cdm0EHIU043PD-Zw.jpg.

rise.[5] The on-screen contrast between the dull, sepia-toned Kansas and the colorful, adventurous Oz symbolized the era's yearning for escapism and hope for change.[6] In 1900, Baum created a universe that was visually brought to life in the 1939 film, which cleverly allegorized historically significant issues, specifically the Populist Party and movement of the 1890s, and monetary allegories.

The political movement called the People's Party (1892–1909), also known as the Populist movement, was a third-party campaign primarily representing the agrarian class, striving to combat the bankers and business leaders in America. Frank L Baum, the writer of original material, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* was a supporter of this movement. This third-party political campaign, rooted in agrarian America, sought to challenge the dominance of bankers and industrialists while advocating for economic reform and greater equity. Baum's support for the Populist cause subtly permeates the narrative, particularly through symbols tied to monetary policy and populist ideals.[7] Although the 1939 film adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* deviated from the original political allegories in the novel, it still reflected the emotional turmoil of the 1930s. The sepia color choice in the opening scenes of Kansas depicted a dry, barren landscape that resonated with audiences during an economically devastating time. Kansas has always been known as part of the breadbasket of America, especially during this period; thus, the portrayal of the Dust Bowl's effects was significant to the story.[8] Dorothy lived in rural despair, amidst environmental catastrophe and a Depression-era lifestyle. This evokes sentiments of a desire to escape, to reach

---

[5] Robert A. McLeman et al., "What We Learned from the Dust Bowl: Lessons in Science, Policy, and Adaptation," *Population and Environment* 35, no. 4 (2013): 417–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-013-0190-z.

[6] Hugh Rockoff, "The 'Wizard of Oz' as a Monetary Allegory," *Journal of Political Economy* 98, no. 4 (1990): 739–60, https://doi.org/10.1086/261704.

[7] Joel P. Rhodes, "Telling History: Wizard of Oz – Populist Allegory," *KRCU Public Radio*, January 13, 2025, https://www.krcu.org/show/telling-history/2025-01-13/telling-history-wizard-of-oz-populist-allegory.

[8] Hugh Rockoff, "The "Wizard of Oz" as a Monetary Allegory."

a higher purpose, and to be swept away to a vibrant, fantastical land, just like Dorothy. The audience followed not only Dorothy's journey from sadness and despair to happiness and hopefulness, but also the collective experience of the population of the United States.

Similarly, the setting and characters also matter to the narrative. Henry M. Littlefield's article, "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism," presents an intriguing perspective on the various aspects that both the film and novel explored in order to effectively base their allegories. In both the novel and the film, the Wicked Witch of the West represents uncontrollable evil arising from natural phenomena such as weather, insects, floods, and other unpredictable issues. When Dorothy's house lands on the Wicked Witch of the East, she is able to end her reign of troubles that was taking all of the Munchkins' possessions and only working for her, which was against the agrarian Ozian economy.[9] For both the book and film, the Scarecrow symbolizes the farmers, while the Tin Woodman/Tinman embodies the factory workers who constituted the majority of the Populist supporters. The story represents how both were meant to be dehumanized, instilling self-doubt and ignorance, because of the quality of life that capitalism imposed on them.[10] The Cowardly Lion's role primarily symbolizes Populist leader William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925), who lost the race against President William McKinley (1843–1901) with differing policies on economics, such as bimetallism (the coining of both gold and silver) versus capitalism.[11] This rounded up Dorothy's crew that accompanied her to see The Wizard of Oz in the Emerald City as they followed the Yellow Brick Road, which took them throughout the world of Oz. Littlefield believed that the yellow

---

[9] Henry M. Littlefield, "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism." *American Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1964): 47–58, https://doi.org/10.2307/2710826.

[10] Peter Liebhold, "Populism and the World of Oz," *National Museum of American History*, November 2, 2016, https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/populism-and-world-oz.

[11] Rockoff, "The "Wizard of Oz" as a Monetary Allegory."

brick road represented the existing gold standard, which led to the Emerald City (Washington D.C.), where the Wizard (only a man) was in charge.[12] The allusion made refers to the President of the United States and how the Emerald City and the Wizard of Oz are separated from the rest of the people (Oz).[13] Even the quest to see the Wizard, only to discover that he is a powerful figurehead hiding behind mirrors, smoke, and staging, can reflect the public's disillusionment with political leadership during the economic crisis. Although there was music and magical visuals, the 1939 film is rooted in the portrayal of the hopes, frustrations, and realities of Americans living through one of the harshest decades in American history.

Wicked (2000s Broadway Production & Social Commentary)

Premiering in 2003, *Wicked* reimagined the Oz narrative by focusing on the backstory of the "Wicked" Witch of the West, now named Elphaba. As previously stated, the musical was based on Maguire's book, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West,* which delved deeper into the story of Oz by exploring the characters of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West (using the initials of L. Frank Baum/L.F.B), and Glinda the Good Witch. The story portrays the misunderstood "Wicked Witch" from a darker, politically focused perspective on the Oz narrative.[14] Maguire examined the concepts of good and evil, oppression, identity, and corruption. He explored what it meant to be the despised character of the Wicked Witch of the West, who was green-skinned, in the

---

[12] Littlefield, "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism."

[13] Littlefield, "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism."

[14] Paste Magazine, "The Very Weird, Very Adult Novels Behind *Wicked* the Movie," last modified November 2024, https://www.pastemagazine.com/books/gregory-maguire/wicked-series-explained-books-that-inspired-musical.

world of Oz. The book was an adult novel that addressed how the narrative contrasted with the famous *Wizard of Oz* film.[15]

In 1998, renowned composer Stephen Schwartz took a walk with Maguire to secure the rights for adapting the book into a stage production.[16] He enlisted Winnie Holzman to craft the book for the musical, leading them to collaborate with lead producer Marc Platt on developing the story.[17] Much of the new stage production's inspiration is linked to the social climate at the time of writing. Holzman discussed the presidencies from 1998 to 2001, under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, who influenced their work. She stated,

> When we started writing WICKED in early 1998, the Bill Clinton scandal had just broken out. Everyone was reeling with the absurdity and horribleness of what we'd all been through with that scandal. And we ended up talking about the Wizard a little bit like Clinton, somebody who had these weaknesses. Then, while we were developing the script, George W. Bush took power. And the Wizard changed. He became more dangerous. We were just responding to what was going on around us. I mean, in the middle of writing, New York City was attacked on September 11. And you would have to have been living under a rock not to see what was going on around you. We already had a story that had to do with power and the nature

---

[15] Paste Magazine, "The Very Weird, Very Adult Novels Behind *Wicked* the Movie."

[16] Stephen Shwartz is known for composing music for projects such as: The Prince of Egypt (1998), The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996), Godspell (1973) and other well-known projects.

[17] Winnie Holzman (b. 1954) is a screenwriter who has done stage, film and television media, best known for television show, *My So-Called Life* (1994-1995) and the original script of *Wicked* (2003). Marc Platt (b.1957) is a successful producer who has a long list of successful production such as: *La La Land* (2016), live action *The Little Mermaid* (2023), and *The Girl on the Train* (2016).

> of using power. We had to ask, 'What does it mean to be powerful?[18]

They also attributed the characters of Doctor Dillamond and other animals within the world as a context to reference the Nazi German and Jewish issues that led to the Holocaust (1939–1945).[19] The "outcasting" and eventual takeover of rights are very allegorical, which was an added bonus to the interesting connection that the world of Oz is under a fascist regime.[20] Schwartz and Holzman were not shy to explore the different themes around them. In the world post 9/11, America slowly fell into a pattern of pointing fingers at other races and cultures. *Wicked,* the musical, was written at a time when the government was abusing its power and subtly alluded to the dangers that such power could bring.[21] The show centers on humanizing Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West, challenging the conventional narrative of Oz. It delves into the societal influences that shape her character, critically examining how communities determine morality and villainy. The musical boldly addresses themes of discrimination, propaganda, and political corruption, transforming the whimsical world of Oz into a reflection of real-world injustices. The plight of sentient animals in Oz, who are denied their voices and rights, stands as a compelling allegory for systemic issues like racism and xenophobia.

The early 2000s were characterized by an increase in fear, government surveillance, and the use of propaganda to sway public opinion. In the Broadway production, the Wizard's regime employs misinformation and scapegoating to maintain control, supported by Madame Morrible and the Wizard. This reflects real-

---

[18] David Coté, Joan Marcus, and Stephen Schwartz, *Wicked: The Grimmerie* (Hyperion, 2005), 36.

[19] Marcus Coté, and Schwartz, *Wicked: The Grimmerie*, 36.

[20] Coté, *Wicked,* 36.

[21] Crisanti Carlin and Jennifer Merolla, "Effects of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks on American Public Opinion and Behavior," *Political Science*, February 26, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199756223-0270.

world concerns regarding authoritarianism and the decline of civil liberties. The situation mirrors the aftermath of 9/11 when the American government broadened surveillance through the Patriot Act (2001) and fostered a climate of fear, particularly targeting Muslim and Middle Eastern communities as scapegoats. Like in *Wicked*, fear serves to justify oppressive measures; during the post-9/11 period, democratic societies struggled with the extent of freedom they were willing to sacrifice for security.[22]

Truthfully, most of the characters represent societal ideas. Glinda's character, especially the rise of power versus the demonization of Elphaba, illustrates the ideology that conformity and image management are rewarded within corrupt political systems. Glinda conforms to societal expectations and manages her image carefully to be rewarded in a corrupt or authoritarian system. This is explored in "Face-work, social movement leadership, and Glinda the Good: A textual analysis of the character G(a)linda in the musical Wicked," showing how Glinda's effort to maintain a favorable image for those around her is aimed at gaining favor and power within the Wizard's regime. Her ascent is directly tied to her ability to fit into and promote the political narrative, even though it requires her to let go of her friendship and closeness with Elphaba. Glinda's need to maintain "face-work" is evident throughout the musical.[23] In contrast, Elphaba is demonized for her outward appearance, as well as her refusal to conform and challenge the regime's ideology. While Elphaba's moral integrity leads to her persecution, Glinda is celebrated and granted political power due to her status and appearance.

---

[22] Ilir Disha, James C. Cavendish, and Ryan D. King, "Historical Events and Spaces of Hate: Hate Crimes against Arabs and Muslims in Post-9/11 America," *Social Problems* 58, no. 1 (2011): 21–46, https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2011.58.1.21.

[23] Valerie Lynn Schrader, "Face-Work, Social Movement Leadership, and 'Glinda the Good': A Textual Analysis of the Character G(a)Linda in the Musical *Wicked*," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 8, no. 1 (2014): 43–58, https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.8.1.43_1.

Meanwhile, there is Elphaba, who does not conform to the status quo because she does not hide her beliefs.[24]

The stage production showcased much of *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* mythos on stage while still making it relevant to twenty-first-century audiences and concerns. The musical has been a huge success, and as of December 2024, Wicked has grossed approximately $1.727 billion on Broadway, surpassing 14.8 million attendees over 8,310 performances spanning 21 years.[25] The show has won three Tony Awards: Best Actress in a Musical (Idina Menzel), Best Scenic Design, and Best Costume Design, six Drama Desk Awards, and Best Musical Theater Album at the 2005 Grammy Awards. It is considered one of the most influential musicals of the twenty-first century, and truthfully, the leading actresses, Idina Menzel and Kristen Chenoweth, who originated Elphaba and Glinda, have been very influential in the world of theatre. These roles are coveted and important as they are vocally demanding and require emotional range. Glinda's emblem of privilege and journey toward self-awareness is portrayed through humor, glitz, and glamour, while the show also showcases the other side with Elphaba, a misunderstood outsider who challenges authority and dares to be different.[26] As a result, the show has become a cultural touchstone, inspiring countless revivals, international productions, and a devoted fan base.

---

[24] Sharon D. Kruse and Sandra Spickard Prettyman, "Women, Leadership, and Power: Revisiting the Wicked Witch of the West," *Gender and Education* 20, no. 5 (2008): 451–64, https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250701805797.

[25] Zachary Stewart, "Wicked Becomes First Broadway Show to Gross Over $5 Million in One Week," *TheaterMania*, January 2, 2025, https://www.theatermania.com/news/wicked-becomes-first-broadway-show-to-gross-over-5-million-in-one-week_1759343/.

[26] Paul R. Laird, 'It Couldn't Happen Here in Oz': Wicked and the creation of a 'critic-proof' musical. *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 5(1) (2011). 35-47, https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.5.1.35_1.

Figure 3: Idina Menzel, Cynthia Erivo, Ariana Grande, and Kristin Chenoweth at the premiere of Wicked Part 1. [27]

Wicked Pt 1 (Importance of Social Commentary)

Why is *Wicked Pt. 1* extremely important to discuss now more than ever? The present state of the American political landscape has many divided and confused. Beyond its entertainment value, *Wicked Pt. 1* showcases the power of storytelling as a means of social critique. By reframing the traditional Oz narrative, the musical film highlights aspects of the musical stage that could be explored in a larger medium.

Wicked Pt. 1, directed by Jon M. Chu, is the first installment of a two-part film adaptation of the *Wicked* stage performance. The film stars Cynthia Erivo as Elphaba and Ariana

[27] Steve Granitz from the Los Angeles Premiere Of Universal Pictures, November 9, 2024, "Wicked," https://assets.teenvogue.com/photos/6730bd5cc3e5e12292bd58ea/master/w_1600,c_limit/2183933355.

Grande as Glinda, bringing to life the complex relationship between the two witches of Oz. The cast also includes Jonathan Bailey as Fiyero, Jeff Goldblum as the Wizard, Michelle Yeoh as Madame Morrible, Peter Dinklage as Dr. Dillamond, Ethan Slater as Boq, and Marissa Bode as Nessarose. Production began in December 2022 in England but was put on hold in July 2023 due to the SAG-AFTRA strike, resuming and completing in January 2024.[28] The film was released on November 22, 2024, and received many positive reviews, garnering numerous award nominations and becoming one of the highest-grossing films of the year. The sequel, *Wicked: Part Two*, will be released in November 2025.[29]

The musical film being split into two parts allows the story of Wicked to be told effectively without time constraints. By reframing the timeline, the musical film enchants the audience with vibrant settings and wonderful storytelling to deliver profound commentary on societal structures and the marginalization of dissenting voices. The story follows a beat-by-beat progression with the Broadway production and the so-called "Wicked Witch of the West" narrative that Elphaba has been known for since time immemorial, as well as among the citizens of Oz.[30] The narrative challenges the conventional trope of good versus evil, illustrating how those in power often manipulate narratives to villainize those who oppose the majority, in this case, the Wizard and his regime. Elphaba's transformation into a figure of fear, as perceived by the

---

[28] The SAG-AFTRA strike from the organization and actors occurred from July 14, 2023 and ended 118 days later on, November 9, 2023. This strike was focused on fighting against better compensation, residuals in the streaming era, regulations against AI, and viewership data access.

[29] NBCUniversal Media, "Everything You Need to Know About 'Wicked' Ahead of the Universal Pictures' Movie," November 14, 2024, https://www.nbcuniversal.com/article/everything-you-need-know-about-wicked-ahead-universal-pictures-film.

[30] Paul R. Laird, "'It Couldn't Happen Here in Oz': *Wicked* and the Creation of a 'Critic-proof' Musical," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 5, no. 1 (March 31, 2011): 35–47, https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.5.1.35_1.

citizens of Oz, does not stem from inherent malice. During the opening sequence of the film, Glinda the Good Witch arrives to greet the Munchkins in Munchkinland, singing, “No One Mourns the Wicked". The entire sequence showcases how the world of Oz views Elphaba, while people like Glinda, who recognize the “real” Elphaba, remain reserved.[31] The fact of the matter is that the Munchkins are fully burning the effigy of The Wicked Witch of the West. Elphaba becomes a representation of good when life paints her as bad. Her viewpoint of the world is complex due to her own trauma and her yearning to find a sense of belonging. Regardless of public opinion, the hate Elphaba receives stems from her resistance to oppressive regimes and her advocacy for marginalized groups, notably the Sentient Animals in Oz, who are stripped of their rights and voices.[32] Elphaba mirrors real-world instances from the past few decades of individuals who have been marginalized, vilified, or misunderstood due to their identity, beliefs, or resistance to oppressive systems. Elphaba's green skin sets her apart from the rest of the world, leading to prejudice, isolation, and even a degree of self-isolation. Similarly, primarily Black women often face societal biases and are stereotyped when they assert themselves or challenge norms. Elphaba's story resonates with the metaphor of how Black women are frequently vilified when they refuse to conform to expectations or be controlled.[33]

---

[31] *Wicked: Part One,* directed by Jon M. Chu (Universal Pictures, 2024), streaming on Peacock*,* 10:45-12:07.

[32] Kruse and Prettyman, Women, leadership, and power revisiting the Wicked Witch of the West. 451-464.

[33] Jacinta Kent, “Scapegoating and the ‘Angry Black Woman’,” *Group Analysis* 54, no. 3 (2021): 354–71, https://doi.org/10.1177/0533316421992300.

Figure 4: Munchkinland from Wicked Part 1.[34]

Many people's automatic connection between the film and real-life thoughts was the Wizard and his control, mirroring the 2024 election season.[35] Elphaba genuinely believes in the Wizard at the beginning of the story, especially with her powerful song, "The Wizard and I, " and thinks that with his help, she can change the world. However, the reality of Elphaba's desires shifts when the Wizard turns out to lack genuine power, leading her to seek to change the system. Elphaba's struggle to bring justice for the Sentient Animals, through the character of Dr. Dillamond, the history goat professor, mirrors the need for scapegoats in a fascist society. This connects to the larger themes of the story regarding the use of propaganda and the mechanisms that illustrate how misinformation is spread to dehumanize and control. The combination of fear and propaganda can create division. The

---

[34] Giles Keyte/ Universal Pictures, from Architectural Digest, "How the Set Design of the New Movie Wicked Ventures Off the Beaten Yellow-Brick Road," September 17, 2024, https://media.architecturaldigest.com/photos/66e47992978f015e8fa9d811/16:9/w_1600,c_limit/AD1024_WICKED_1%20copy.jpg.

[35] Michael Woolf, "The New Movie 'Wicked' Is a Parable of Our Politics of Scapegoating," *Religion News Service*, November 25, 2024, https://religionnews.com/2024/11/25/the-new-movie-wicked-is-a-parable-of-our-politics-of-scapegoating/.

Wizard's manipulation of public perception to label Elphaba as a threat echoes tactics used by authoritarian regimes to suppress dissent. Madame Morrible's echoing, chilling speech at the end of the film showcases the idea of control through scapegoating a larger threat while preserving their own image. This is reminiscent of how figures like Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein (1937–2006), during the Second Gulf War (2003–2011), which was focused in Iraq, escalated in the Bush administration, were demonized to justify political actions by Western powers, as noted by Gregory Maguire.[36] This strategy, he argues, reflects how easily a governing power can construct a public enemy to validate its own agenda and actions against any form of opposition. Elphaba's opposition to the oppressive regime's treatment of Animals leads to her being labeled as "wicked."[37]

Figure 6: Jeff Goldblum as the Wonderful Wizard of Oz and Michelle Yeoh as Madame Morrible.[38]

---

[36] Constance Grady, "Why *Wicked*'s Politics Feel so Bizarrely Timely," *Vox*, November 27, 2024, https://www.vox.com/culture/388522/wicked-politics-explained-movie-musical-wizard-trump.

[37] Constance Grady, "Why *Wicked*'s Politics Feel so Bizarrely Timely."

[38] From the official movie site for *Wicked*, Universal Studios, 2024, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wickedmovie.com/gallery/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1747669120779013&usg=AOvVaw3gKPtYH3vt0ZbuRN_13iWs.

The film, releasing a couple of weeks after the Trump administration won the election on November 5, 2024, created a new sense of disturbing relevancy on its own. The film's release during an administration that focused on a campaign of hate, scapegoating, and othering various parts of the American populace provided a fresh perspective on its meaning. President Trump's favorite tactic in his previous administration and political strategies was scapegoating. Trump's agenda has scapegoated immigrants, the transgender community, and the media, among others. [39] His scapegoating has fostered fearmongering and distrust among different sides of the political spectrum, as well as among the citizens of America. Much like the Wizard, Trump has been accused of employing misinformation to shape public perception, discredit opposition, and strengthen loyalty among his followers.[40] The parallels between Trump and the Wizard illustrate how quickly societies can be swayed by fear and reveal an allegory of the dangers posed by charismatic political leaders. Shifting the blame for issues in the country onto minority groups creates national distrust to unite people. Just like the Wizard states, "everybody knows that the best way to bring folks together is to give them a real good enemy." [41]

In the end, Glinda also represents a significant parallel to the political landscape regarding power, privilege, and performative politics. Glinda, in particular, serves as a nuanced symbol of privilege and performative virtue in order to maintain power. In *Wicked Pt. 1,* Glinda is bubbly and fully conscious of her image. She showcases this in her full song, "Popular," which

---

[39] Odette Yousef, "Trump's Anti-Trans Effort Is an Agenda Cornerstone with Echoes in History," *NPR*, February 6, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/02/06/nx-s1-5288145/trump-anti-trans-executive-order.

[40] Ramya Krishna, "'Wicked: Part I' Shows Us How Fascism Is Already on Its Way," *Medium*, December 5, 2024, https://medium.com/%40ramyakrishna2592/wicked-part-i-shows-us-how-fascism-is-already-on-its-way-6db9bddda668.

[41] *Wicked: Part One*. 02:10:01-02:10:12.

illustrates the belief that success based on perception is more important than substance.[42] Glinda's journey in the film also highlights the complexities of accepting different perspectives and developing allyship, also known as solidarity, in the context of race and the dangers of superficial activism. Her initial support for Elphaba and the Animals is often driven by personal gain or fear of losing status. She changes her name from "Galinda" to "Glinda" to demonstrate her allyship to Dr. Dillamond, which earns her praise from those around her. This lacks a deep understanding of systemic oppression and stands as a performative act of solidarity. This performative solidarity is reminiscent of "white liberal" activism, where support for marginalized groups is conditional and self-serving. "White liberalism" can come in different forms, such as white people outwardly expressing antiracist sentiments but not taking action, ignoring intersectionalities, and white individuals having defensive or uncomfortable reactions towards racism or race. Glinda chooses to be in solidarity, but when things become difficult and serve her own purpose, she is willing to prioritize comfort over genuine help. Glinda represents those with the power, the looks, and the information to bring about change, but ultimately choose not to. [43]

---

[42] *Wicked: Part One*. 01:23:21-01:23:46.

[43] Valerie Lynn Schrader, "Face-Work, Social Movement Leadership, and 'Glinda the Good': A Textual Analysis of the Character G(a)Linda in the Musical *Wicked*," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 8, no. 1 (2014): 43–58, https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.8.1.43_1.

Figure 7: Image provided by Universal Pictures from the official movie site for Wicked.[44]

Conclusion

The film has become a cultural phenomenon with memes, TikTok trends, and people receiving it very well. However, the film is more than just a visually stunning musical adaptation. It focuses on the lens of identity and power, challenging the audience to question who gets to control the narrative and why. *Wicked Pt. 1* rests on the shoulders of its predecessors. The story of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has been adapted and reworked with different themes and ideas over the past century into*The Wizard of Oz,* 2003's *Wicked,* and 2024's *Wicked Pt. 1.* Each of these projects has always used the land of Oz to comment on contemporary issues of propaganda, power, and change. The 2024 film extends this tradition, highlighting the dangers of systemic oppression and the rewriting of history, applying it to a social allegory of modern politics. The illusion needed to control Oz is quickly dispelled by Elphaba's own courage to "defy gravity" and go against the Wizard and his regime. It is up to the audience to realize that one voice can change a regime. With the amazing

[44] From the official movie site for *Wicked*, Universal Studios, 2024, https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.wickedmovie.com/gallery/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1747669120779013&usg=AOvVaw3gKPtYH3vt0ZbuRN_13iWs.

performances from Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo, the remarkable direction from Jon M Chu, and many more bonuses to the film, *Wicked Pt. 1* reimagines a world and familiar characters in a way that confronts the truth of the story that everyone knows and loves, forcing the audience to redefine who the real enemy and the real hero are. This film is one of those once-in-a-lifetime events that carry so much meaning and dedication, giving the film a very profound significance and allowing people to "hold space" for this film.

Bibliography

Bronfen, Elisabeth. "'There's No Place like Home' - The Aporia of Homecoming *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming)." *Parallax* 6, no. 3 (2000): 49–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/135346400422457.

Carlin, Crisanti, and Jennifer Merolla. "Effects of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks on American Public Opinion and Behavior." *Political Science*, February 26, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199756223-0270.

Chu, Jon M., dir. *Wicked: Part One*. Universal Pictures, 2024. Streaming on Peacock.

Coté, David, Joan Marcus, and Stephen Schwartz. *Wicked: The Grimmerie*. New York: Hyperion, 2005.

Disha, Ilir, James C. Cavendish, and Ryan D. King. "Historical Events and Spaces of Hate: Hate Crimes against Arabs and Muslims in Post-9/11 America." *Social Problems* 58, no. 1 (2011): 21–46. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2011.58.1.21.

Grady, Constance. "Why *Wicked*'s Politics Feel so Bizarrely Timely." *Vox*, November 27, 2024. https://www.vox.com/culture/388522/wicked-politics-explained-movie-musical-wizard-trump.

Kent, Jacinta. "Scapegoating and the 'Angry Black Woman'."

Group Analysis 54, no. 3 (2021): 354–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/0533316421992300.

Krishna, Ramya. "'Wicked: Part I' Shows Us How Fascism Is Already on Its Way." *Medium*, December 5, 2024. https://medium.com/%40ramyakrishna2592/wicked-part-i-shows-us-how-fascism-is-already-on-its-way-6db9bddda6.

Kruse, Sharon D., and Sandra Spickard Prettyman. "Women, Leadership, and Power: Revisiting the Wicked Witch of the West." *Gender and Education* 20, no. 5 (2008): 451–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250701805797.

Laird, Paul R. "'It Couldn't Happen Here in Oz': *Wicked* and the Creation of a 'Critic-proof' Musical." *Studies in Musical Theatre* 5, no. 1 (March 31, 2011): 35–47. https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.5.1.35_1.

Liebhold, Peter. "Populism and the World of Oz." *National Museum of American History*, November 2, 2016. https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/populism-and-world-oz.

McLeman, Robert A., et al. "What We Learned from the Dust Bowl: Lessons in Science, Policy, and Adaptation." *Population and Environment* 35, no. 4 (2013): 417–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-013-0190-z.

Paste Magazine. "The Very Weird, Very Adult Novels Behind *Wicked* the Movie." Last modified November 2024. https://www.pastemagazine.com/books/gregory-maguire/wicked-series-explained-books-that-inspired-musical.

Rhodes, Joel P. "Telling History: Wizard of Oz – Populist Allegory." *KRCU Public Radio*, January 13, 2025. https://www.krcu.org/show/telling-history/2025-01-13/telling-history-wizard-of-oz-populist-allegory.

Rockoff, Hugh. "The 'Wizard of Oz' as a Monetary Allegory." *Journal of Political Economy* 98, no. 4 (1990): 739–60. https://doi.org/10.1086/261704.

Schrader, Valerie Lynn. "Face-Work, Social Movement

Leadership, and 'Glinda the Good': A Textual Analysis of the Character G(a)Linda in the Musical *Wicked*." *Studies in Musical Theatre* 8, no. 1 (2014): 43–58. https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.8.1.43_1.

Schwartz, Stephen. "Defying Gravity." Performed by Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande. On *Wicked: The Soundtrack*. Universal Studios, 2024. Streaming audio. https://open.spotify.com/track/5QMrH5nszZZR3nefIj6Mar.

Stewart, Zachary. "Wicked Becomes First Broadway Show to Gross Over $5 Million in One Week," *TheaterMania*, January 2, 2025, https://www.theatermania.com/news/wicked-becomes-first-broadway-show-to-gross-over-5-million-in-one-week_1759343/.

Woolf, Michael. "The New Movie 'Wicked' Is a Parable of Our Politics of Scapegoating." *Religion News Service*, November 25, 2024. https://religionnews.com/2024/11/25/the-new-movie-wicked-is-a-parable-of-our-politics-of-scapegoating/.

Yousef, Odette. "Trump's Anti-Trans Effort Is an Agenda Cornerstone with Echoes in History." *NPR*, February 6, 2025. https://www.npr.org/2025/02/06/nx-s1-5288145/trump-anti-trans-executive-order.

Author Bio

Isai J. Martinez is a second-year student in the History Master's program at California State University, San Bernardino. His academic interests include a combination of East Asian history, film and media studies, imperialism around the world, and East Asian diaspora in Latin America. He hopes to earn his PhD eventually and be able to teach at the university level and inspire new students to fall in love with history, cinema, and the world of learning. He is an avid Korean and Chinese drama watcher, writes scripts, loves playing Dungeons and Dragons, and listens to a rotation of K-pop, musicals, Pop from the 2010s, and indie pop. Isai would like to thank Dr. Murray, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Jones, and the rest of the CSUSB History Department for providing a space for students to share their passions. Also, a special thanks to his parents, Victor and Ruth Martinez, Anais, his sister, and Tita for always supporting my educational endeavors. He would also like to thank his support system for giving him a safe space to relax after writing

Book Review: *Coexistence: Stories*

By Gabrielle Velazquez

Coexistence: Stories (2024), by Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree Nation), an Associate Professor in Indigenous Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia, is a collection of short stories. The book is 154 one-hundred and fifty-four pages, split into ten short stories; certain stories connect, but not all of them intertwine. Belcourt explores themes such as grief, colonization, boarding schools, genocide, "the silent Native generation," shame, queerness, religion, incarceration, fatherhood, COVID-19, and Catholic missionary presence. These themes are seen and viewed through Indigenous characters, providing an Indigenous perspective.

Coexistence was published on May 21, 2024; coincidentally, seven months later, on October 25th, 2024, President Joseph Biden (1942–) stepped onto a stage at Gila Crossing Community School in Laveen Village, Arizona. At 10:44 A.M. MST, he became the first U.S. president to formally apologize for the government's involvement in boarding schools. After 150 years, the United States government eventually stopped the program, but the federal government has never formally apologized for what happened until today. "I formally apologize as president of the United States of America for what we did. I formally apologize, and it's long overdue."[45] President Biden goes on to repeat himself by saying, "I have a solemn responsibility to

[45] President Joseph Biden Jr., "Remarks by President Biden on the Biden-Harris Administration's Record of Delivering for Tribal Communities, Including Keeping His Promise to Make this Historic Visit to Indian Country" (speech, LaVeen Village, Arizona, October 25, 2024), The White House, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/10/25/remarks-by-president-biden-on the-biden-harris-administrations-record-of-delivering-for-tribal-communities-including-keeping-his-promise-to-make-this-historic-visit-to-indian-country-lavee/.

be the first president to formally apologize to the Native peoples – Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Native Alaskans [at] Federal Indian Boarding Schools. It's been long, long, long overdue. Quite frankly, there's no excuse that his apology took 50 years to make."[46] While this apology was made by an American president, it coincides with Belcourt's two stories in *Coexistence*.

Coexistence has two stories, "One Woman's Memories" and "Summer Research," which deal with boarding schools and missionary presence. "One Woman's Memories" is a story that involves a mother and a son, Louise and Paul. Louise is a widow and lives alone in the subarctic on the reserve, a tract of land used by First Nations Indigenous Peoples that was given by the Canadian government. Louise realizes she is growing older, and she wants to talk about her past with Paul, who is away at college. She decides to tell him about her time at a boarding school. Paul realizes Louise has never spoken about her past, let alone her boarding school experiences. In "Summer Research," the narrator, working on his dissertation while focusing on how twentieth-century violence still impacts people today, is house-sitting for his parents; the recently purchased home sits on a plot of land that was used as lodging for nuns who operated a boarding school down the road. This story explores the evil and horrific theme that was characteristic of boarding schools. The narrator expresses hearing and seeing spirits in his parents' home and consults a medium to discover more about these experiences.

Coexistence is a fictional work, but the issues and context Belcourt writes about are non-fictional. To dive deeper, these issues are actions within colonial contexts that became issues for Indigenous Peoples, not only in Canada, as Belcourt's characters are set in, but throughout the United States. The issue at hand in the two stories, "One Woman's Memories" and "Summer Research," is the fact that both speak of boarding school experiences and explore the concept of "the silent Native generation," Catholic missionary presence, shame, and ultimately,

[46] Biden Jr., "Remarks."

both genocide and colonization. Both stories combined are thirty-one pages, and in those pages, Belcourt spells out the contemporary effects of boarding school experiences. The issue of boarding schools and survivors' experiences is not obsolete, but rather anachronistic. Belcourt does an excellent job of expressing this, while also indicating to readers that these experiences not only plague elder survivors but also their children. This creates generational trauma within Native families and communities, not to mention the trauma from previous generations and going back time immemorial, before Native Peoples were struck with colonization; in this case, English and French hands in Canada.

Yet, Biden stepped onto a stage in "Indian country" to utter an apology that was heard throughout the United States. Can only one apology from an American president erase generations of trauma, colonization, and genocide? The United Church of Canada said in 1988, "To those individuals who were physically, sexually, and mentally abused as students of the Indian Residential Schools in which The United Church of Canada was involved, I offer you our most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong. You were and are the victims of evil acts that cannot under any circumstances be justified or excused."[47] In Canada, Indigenous people have received numerous apologies since the 1990s. During the 1990s, "Canadian churches started to publicly apologize for their role in the residential school system."[48] The Anglican Church of Canada offered an apology by Archbishop and Primate Michael Peers (1934–2023) on August 6, 1993, saying, "I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We

---

[47] "Apology to Former Students of United Church Indian Residential Schools, and to Their Families and Communities," Bora Laskin Law Library, The United Church of Canada, accessed November 10, 2024, https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/apologies-response-crest.pdf.

[48] "Apologies," Bora Laskin Law Library, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, accessed November 10, 2024, https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=527189&p=3698521.

failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God."[49] In an example of a church seeking forgiveness and acknowledging its sins, the Presbyterian Church in Canada produced an apology with seven points on June 9, 1994. Point Seven states, "We ask, also, for forgiveness from Aboriginal peoples. What we have heard we acknowledge. It is our hope that those whom we have wronged with a hurt too deep for telling will accept what we have to say. With God's guidance, our Church will seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people."[50]

The churches were the first to start apologizing in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and it grew to include apologies being given by Pope Francis (1936–2025). His most historic apology, on July 25, 2022, was made in Maskwacis, near Edmonton, Canada; he stated, "I am sorry. I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians against the Indigenous peoples."[51] While the Catholic church and Pope initially began giving their apologies first, "more recently, Canadian federal and provincial governments formally apologized for the development of the schools, the abuses suffered at the schools, and for the negative effects caused by the schools."[52] Through the timeline of Canadian apologies, it can be shown that actions were taken, whereas in the U.S., no actions have been taken; the first apology was barely muttered months ago in October.

---

[49] "The Anglican Church of Canada's Apology for Residential Schools," Truth and Reconciliation, The Anglican Church of Canada, accessed on November 10, 2024, http://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology.

[50] "The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada," The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, accessed November 10, 2024, https://presbyterian.ca/healing/.

[51] Scott Neuman, "The Pope's Apology in Canada was Historic, but for Some Indigenous People, Not Enough," *NPR News*, July 25, 2022, https://www.npr.org/2022/07/25/1113498723/pope-francis-apology-canada-residential-schools-indigenous-children.

[52] "Apologies," Bora Laskin Law Library, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, accessed November 16, 2024, https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=527189&p=3698521.

Moreover, Belcourt is a poet who teaches Indigenous Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia and has a Phd in English and film studies from the University of Alberta. While he is not a historian, and his work is written in a non-historical style, he still uses an Indigenous platform to express Indigenous History and experiences. Through his fictional characters, Native Peoples throughout Turtle Island will find traces of their mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, brothers, sisters, cousins, and, even lovers, husbands, wives, boyfriends, and girlfriends; or chaotic Indigenous love, as Belcourt writes on page thirty-one, "My friends and I joke that Indigenous love is the most chaotic force in the world."[53] Belcourt's book has opened a door with his short stories. Through this door, Native Peoples will find them relatable (which is usually difficult to find in literature and history books for Native Peoples of any age). Walking deeper through this door, Native pasts, experiences, and memories are exposed and kept alive, whether detrimental or much less morbid, even gentle and soft, and somewhere in the middle. Belcourt's *Coexistence* is not missing anything because he puts Native Peoples at the forefront of his work; he offers the Native experience (dare I say historical context) in a different light, in a more personal way.

Belcourt's contribution is significant because he is Indigenous himself, being part of the Driftpile Cree Nation in northern Alberta, Canada. His first contribution is that he can and has written from a Native perspective, experience, and platform. The second contribution is *Coexistence,* which is Belcourt's fifth published work. He has also written essays, public scholarship, and creative writing. The third contribution is that Belcourt is male and also identifies as Indigenous and Queer, the identity Queer being as significant as being Indigenous. Belcourt has expressed throughout his works how difficult these two labels are to hold, and he knows how difficult it is for others who identify as Indigenous Queers.

---

[53] Billy-Ray Belcourt, *Coexistence* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2024), 31.

> By the time the Spaniards had expanded their territory to California, the use of dogs as weapons to kill or eat Indians, particularly *joyas* (the Spanish name for third-gender people…explores the survival of this third gender as first *joyas*, then *jotos* (Spanish for homosexual, or faggot[54]), was well established. Was this violence against *joyas* classic homophobia (fear of people with same-sex orientation) or gendercide? I argue that gendercide is the correct term.[55]

From Deborah Miranda (Ohlone-Costanoan Esselen Nation with Santa Ynez Chumash tribal ancestry), professor of English at Washington and Lee University, it shows how Queer Natives were treated by early colonizers and how being Queer was enough reason to be torn apart by a ravenous dog who was trained to have a taste for Native flesh. In turn to Miranda's work, Belcourt stated, "To see one's own life as a possible life is a kind of fortune, a small miracle even."[56] Belcourt's remarks about his own life, to see one's own life as a possible life, is a small miracle that can be said of those who survived boarding schools in the United States and Canada.

Survivors of boarding schools in both the United States and Canada experienced the same kinds of trauma, experiences, and evil. "For two of the four years Klein attended Fort Totten, she said, she was sexually molested by the adult son of the school's matrons–the term used to describe boarding school employees, regardless of whether they were women or men. She still has flashbacks from the sound of keys on a chain, because he would

---

[54] Deborah A. Miranda, "Extermination of the Joyas: Gendercide in Spanish California," GLQ A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies 16, NO. 1-2 (2010), 256.

[55] Miranda, "Extermination," 258.

[56] Billy-Ray Belcourt, "Billy-Ray Belcourt Wants a Whole Literature of Queer Indigenous Possibility," Literary Hub, June 24, 2022, https://lithub.com/billy-ray-belcourt-wants-a-whole-liteature-of-queer-indigenous-possibility.

take his mother's keys and let himself into the girl's dorm and inappropriately touch her at night while she was supposed to be sleeping."[57] These are the words and memories of Ramona Klein, seventy-six, of Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in North Dakota. She says, "she never told her mother of the abuse, nor anyone else, for that matter. It wasn't until years later that she sought out support and counseling, that she spoke of her experiences"[58]. She says, "It's a lifelong scar. It's a lifelong wound."[59] Young girls were not the only victims in boarding schools; boys also suffered. Donald Neconie, eighty-six, of the Kiowa Nation in Oklahoma, recalls being molested for years, starting when he was ten, while at Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, Oklahoma: "Nobody ever talked to us. They never gave us any counseling. We held it inside of us, all welled up. Nothing can make it go away."[60] In an article written in 2023, he revealed that he had informed his wife, his partner of fifty-six years, about this matter only the previous year.[61] While these are only two stories of boarding school experiences, there are so many more that have never been revealed and will never be told because it is too painful to speak of. Or, even more heartbreaking, the survivors are no longer living. Indigenous Peoples who survived have lived with this shame and sorrow for centuries.

This shame and sorrow are not only of the survivor, but also are passed down to generations. "Physical, sexual, and mental abuse were common at the schools, which banned Indigenous languages and cultural practices, often through violence. The use of Christianity as a weapon to break Indigenous people was spread

---

[57] Dana Hedgpeth, '12 Years of hell': Indian boarding school survivors share their stories," Washington Post, August 7, 2023, https://washingtonpost.com/history/2023/08/07/indian-boarding-school-survivors-abuse-trauma/.

[58] Belcourt, "Billy-Ray."

[59] Belcourt, "Billy-Ray."

[60] Belcourt, "Billy-Ray."

[61] Belcourt, "Billy-Ray."

across generations."[62] As mentioned before, President Biden apologized to survivors in the United States, and Pope Francis has apologized to Native Peoples in Canada multiple times. Some felt the Pope's apology was half-hearted, such as Nick Tilsen, the chief executive of NDN Collective, an Indigenous rights advocacy group, who is of the Oglala Lakota nation. "He noted that the document mixes acknowledgments of the harm done to Native children with assertions about positive effects the schools had, like sheltering children in Alaska who had been orphaned by epidemics."[63] Tilsen goes on to say, "If you're just going to give an apology, just apologize. How many times have people taught their children, "Don't say sorry and then say, but…"[64] While an apology is just words, many Indigenous Peoples agree words mean nothing if there is no action behind those syllables. An apology should never be made with a "but," and an apology to Indigenous survivors should never be made by outlining the "positive effects" boarding schools had.

Even though Belcourt writes about themes and topics that are heart-wrenching and tragic, *Coexistence* has received positive reviews since its publication. Readers rave over the publication of Belcourt's latest work, especially Native readers. One review that perfectly sums up *Coexistence* was written by Hann Scurlock (Chickasaw), a PhD student in the University of British Columbia's English Language and Literatures department. Scurlock writes, "As a queer Indigenous person, it's rare to come across books that I resonate with…Belcourt's books have been profoundly important to me for this reason. Belcourt's writing has

---

[62] Jason Horowitz and Ian Austen, "Pope Apologizes in Canada for Schools That Abused Indigenous Children," The New York Times, July 25, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/americas/pope-apology-canada-indienous.html.

[63] Rachel Nostrant, "U.S. Catholic Bishops Apologizes for Traumas of Indian Boarding Schools," The New York Times, June 14, 2024, https://www.nytimes/com/2024/06/14/us/catholic-apologize-indian-boarding-schools./hmtl.

[64] Nostrant, "US Catholic Bishops."

made me feel seen in ways I did not know were possible in the constraints of conventional publishing houses."[65] Belcourt's *Coexistence* was well received, especially by Native readers, because finding Indigenous authors can be difficult to find. It is also more difficult for Native readers to find books that resonate with them. Belcourt makes Native readers feel seen with his work, which can be difficult for Native Peoples to find in literature. He talks about themes and topics that many Native readers can relate to and that are important to Native culture. He also talks about themes and topics that can be difficult to speak about, but having an Indigenous author discuss these topics makes it easier for Native readers to digest. Native representation is lacking in many areas, such as literature, but Belcourt is impacting that area with his works.

Coexistence impacted me as an Indigenous woman, historian, and professor. As an Indigenous woman, my family has been impacted by boarding schools. When I heard Biden's apology about boarding schools, I felt it was lacking, and an apology was not enough. Apologies cannot bring back those who were lost to boarding school violence. Apologies cannot erase the lifelong trauma and PTSD that Native Peoples still live with from boarding school violence; Apologies cannot improve the conditions many Indigenous communities are trying to survive; Apologies cannot improve the negative ways Indigenous Peoples are still treated in the United States and Canada. However, there were many Indigenous Peoples who felt Biden's apology was necessary and a first step in the right direction toward improvement between the United States and Indigenous Peoples. Many Indigenous People shed tears over Biden's words and felt they would never hear those words in their lifetime. While this

---

[65] Hann Scurlock, "The Potentialities of Queer Love in Billy-Ray Belcourt's Coexistence: A Testament to Queer Indigenous Lover's Everywhere," SAD Magazine, June 28, 2024, https://www.sadmag.ca/blog/2024/6/28/book-review-billy-ray-belcourts-coexistence#:~:text=Belcourt's%20writing%20is%20a%20testament,%5D%20work%E2%80%9D%20(54).

apology may be considered an important event in Indigenous History, Belcourt's work should be considered an important piece of literature in Indigenous History. Belcourt is writing about issues that appeal to Indigenous Peoples on a large scale. He transcends labels and gives a voice to those who may feel unseen or unwanted by society. He lets us know that as Indigenous Peoples, we are not forgotten, our voices are still heard, our experiences and stories are still being told, and that they deserve to be told. He is not letting the world, especially Canada and even the United States, forget about their past or present. Belcourt holds them accountable for their actions in short stories that put Indigenous People at the forefront. Indigenous Peoples are not ghosts, and they are not going to be erased.

Bibliography

The Anglican Church of Canada. "The Anglican Church of Canada's apology for residential schools." *Truth and Reconciliation*. Accessed on November 10, 2024. https://www.anglican.ca/tr/apology.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray. "Billy-Ray Belcourt Wants a Whole Literature of Queer Indigenous Possibility." Literary Hub. June 24, 2022. https://lithub.com/billy-ray-belcourt-wants-a-whole-literature-of-queer-indigenous-possibility.

—*Coexistence: Stories*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2024.

Bora Laskin Law Library, Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "Apologies." Accessed on November 16, 2024. https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=527189&p=3698521.

Bora Laskin Law Library, The United Church of Canada.

"Apology to Former Students of United Church Indian Residential Schools, and to Their Families and Communities." Accessed on November 10, 2024. https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/apologies-response-crest.pdf.

"The Confession of the Presbyterian Church in Canada." The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Accessed on November 10, 2024. https://presbyterian.ca/healing.

Hedgpeth, Dana. "12 years of hell: Indian boarding school survivors share their stories." *Washington Post*, August 7, 2023. https://washingtonpost.com/history/2023/08/07/indian-boarding-school-survivors-abuse-trauma/.

Horowitz, Jason and Ian Austen. "Pope Apologizes in Canada for Schools That Abused Indigenous Children." The New York Times, July 25, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/world/americas/pope-apology-canada-indigenous.html.

Miranda, Deborah A. "Extermination of the Joyas: Gendercide in Spanish California." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, NO. 1-2 (2010): 256. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/372554.

Neuman, Scott. "The Pope's apology in Canada was historic, but for some Indigenous people, not enough." NPR News, July 25, 2022. https://www.npr.org/2022/07/25/1113498723/pope-francis-apology-canada-residential-schools-indigenous-children.

Nostrant, Rachel. "U.S. Catholic Bishops Apologize for Traumas of Boarding Schools." *The New York Times*, June 14, 2024. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/14/us/catholic-apologize-indian-boarding-schools.html.

President Joseph Biden Jr., "Remarks by President Biden on the Biden-Harris Administration's Record of Delivering for Tribal Communities, Including Keeping His Promise to

Make This Historic Visit to Indian Country." Speech, Laveen Village, Arizona, October 25, 2024. The White House. https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/10/25/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-biden-harris-administrations-record-of-delivering-for-tribal-communities-including-keeping-his-promise-to-make-this-historic-visit-to-indian-country-lavee/.

Scurlock, Hann. "The Potentialities of Queer Love in Billy-Ray Belcourt's Coexistence: A Testament to Queer Indigenous Lovers Everywhere." *SAD Magazine*, accessed June 28, 2024. https://www.sadmag.ca/blog/2024/6/28/book-review-billy-ray-belcourts-coexistence.

Author Bio

Gabrielle Velázquez (she/her) is a descendant of the Choctaw, Muscogee, Mono, and Yokut peoples, with ancestral ties to Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. She is an enrolled member and citizen of the federally recognized North Fork Mono Rancheria, located in North Fork, California. Born and raised in San Bernardino, California, she continues to live and work in her hometown.

Gabrielle earned her Master of Arts in History, with an emphasis in Indigenous History, from California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) on May 17, 2024. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from CSUSB and an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts from San Bernardino Valley Community College. In Spring 2025, she began her role as an Adjunct History Instructor at San Bernardino Valley Community College, where she teaches United States History and Native American Experiences in U.S. History. She is scheduled to continue teaching through Summer and Fall 2025.

This piece is dedicated to the Indigenous children whose graves have been uncovered—and those yet to be found—across Turtle Island; to the boarding school survivors who continue to share their stories; and to those who did not survive. They are not, and have never been, ghosts. They are not forgotten, and they never will be. For this generation and the ones to come, the truth will continue to be told.

Film Review: *Hijack 1971*

By Martin Perez

The making of films and television shows depicting new historical events has taken a great interest for many people worldwide, with South Korea being one of them. Over the recent months and years, relatively recent events that have been forgotten or not discussed have been coming out and being told on the big screen. There are many events that numerous people do not really know about. One specific event was the hijacking of a Korean Air F27 airliner on January 23, 1971, by a twenty-two-year-old man who wanted the plane to fly into North Korea from South Korea. Miraculously, everyone who was on the aircraft would survive except the co-pilot and the hijacker. *Hijack 1971,* directed by Kim Sung-han, tells exactly that story.

Summary of the Film

The film opens with two Republic of Korea Air Force pilots doing their daily routines near the demilitarized zone (DMZ), the border that separates North and South Korea, in 1969. The lead pilot, Tae-in, portrayed by actor Ha Jung-woo, and his partner Dong-chul, in another plane, portrayed by Kim Dong-wook, are about to head back to the base when they receive a distress call about a commercial plane heading towards the border. The two then go in that direction, and Tae-in sees something strange in the cockpit of the commercial aircraft. He notices that the co-pilot of the plane was his superior, Seo Min-su, portrayed by Choi Kwang-il. Tae-in tries to tell Min-su to turn the plane around, but Min-su shakes his head, which is when Tae-in notices something is off; a gun barrel is pointed towards Min-su's head. Tae-in is then given the order from his superiors to shoot one of the engines in order to force the plane to land, however, he does not do it, stating that there are

civilians in the aircraft. He decided not to shoot the plane down, and the plane ends up going across the border into North Korea. As a consequence, Tae-in ends up being discharged from the Air Force.

Jumping one year later to January 1971, there is a change in Tae-in's life. He is now the First Officer of an airline, which means he is second in command of the place, and he is doing well for himself; however, he still thinks about Min-su, and the captain, Kyu-sik, portrayed by Sung Dong-il, wonders if he is safe in North Korea. Suddenly, in an airport waiting room, there is one particular person who appears to be ordinary, but is not. This person's name is Yong-dae, portrayed by Yeo Jin-goo. As the passengers make their way to the doors that lead to the passenger boarding bridge, they are gibbering since they know it is on a first-come, first-served basis. As the chains come off the handles from the outside, everyone begins to run like crazy in order to get to the plane first and get the seats that they want. After everyone is seated and some commotions are handled, the plane takes off and flies to its destination.

Figure 1: The actors pictured are as follows from left to right; Sung Dong-il, Ha Jung-woo, Yeo Jin-goo, and Chae Soo-bin.[66]

[66] Moupriya Banerjee, "Yeo Jin Goo, Chae Soo Bin's Disaster Thriller Hijack 1971 Hits 1 Million Moviegoers Following June 21 Premiere," PINKVILLA, June 30, 2024,

After a few minutes, everything seems to be going well until Yong-dae takes down the wrapped-up box from the carrier. As he opens it, he takes out two objects that look like regular tin cans for food, but in reality, they were makeshift grenades that he made. He then unpins the grenade and throws it at the marshal. It explodes in a few seconds. The captain is hit by shrapnel that comes off the door, which results in blood falling from his face. Tae-in is trying to maintain control of the plane as it swerves out of control due to the blast of the grenade creating a hole in the middle of the plane's floor. Tae-in is able to get control of the plane at a steady pace. Yong-dae then enters the cockpit and tells the captain and Tae-in to fly towards the ocean.

Tae-in then goes and finds Ok-soon, portrayed by Chae Soo-bin, the flight attendant, as she is confused as to what had just happened. She begins to slowly panic, but Tae-in tells her that she needs to calm down and to follow her training. They are able to get a briefcase and a net to seal the hole. He then looks to see if anyone needs medical attention. One of the passengers, shaken, asks Tae-in if they will be safe and get to Seoul in time. Tae–in assures her that they will all be alright and he will get them to their destination. Yong-dae then informs everyone that the plane will be heading to North Korea, causing shock to everyone. Kyu-sik, after hearing this, ends up calling in the hijacking, "Mayday. Mayday, Mayday. Hotel-Lima, 5212. Hotel-Lima, we have hijacking."[67] Yong-dae then notices and rips the headphones off Kyu-sik, smashes them, and tells him and Tae-in that if they do anything dumb, he will kill them.

When asked why he wants to go to North Korea, Yong-dae reveals something shocking. He tells them that it was actually his brother who did the hijacking of the plane a year prior and that he got money for it, two million US dollars worth.

---

https://www.pinkvilla.com/entertainment/yeo-jin-goo-chae-soo-bins-disaster-thriller-hijack-1971-hits-1-million-moviegoers-following-june-21-premiere-1322573.

[67] Kim, *Hijack 1971*, 37:40.

After some passengers discuss taking back the plane, Yong-dae orders two men to tie up the air marshal. Tae-in tells Ok-soon that once they cross the border, she will need to collect all the passengers' identification cards. This is a critical point made in the film because, as mentioned earlier, if North Korean authorities found out that a South Korean had a special trade or occupation, they would keep them; however, the others who served no use to them would eventually be sent back.

When Yong-dae comes back to the aircraft cabin, one of the passengers, who was mentioned to be a cop during the Korean War (1950-1953), leaps forward and grabs Yong-dae, trying to wrestle the knife out of his hand. The plane experiences turbulence, and Tae-in has to be the one to get the plane out of it. The other passengers are hesitant to jump in as the lone passenger attempts to stop Yong-dae from pulling the pin of another grenade. However, Yong-dae is able to grab the air marshal's gun and use it to threaten the cop. He then starts beating him, and Tae-in eventually has to jump in and calm Yong-dae down. Once everything had settled down, the plight continued.

The part of the film that makes the viewer question the reason why the hijacking took place begins with one of Yong-dae's flashbacks. In the flashback, the viewer can see Yong-dae with his elderly mother while being questioned by the police regarding whether or not he has been in contact with his brother from the North.[68] As Yong-dae tells one of the officers no, another officer ends up planting North Korean propaganda inside Yong-dae's book, a police tactic used to arrest anyone suspected of being a North Korean sympathizer. When the police officer shows the "evidence", Yong-dae is confused and wants to know what is happening because he has never seen those items before. A brawl then breaks out, and Yong-dae ends up being taken away to prison while his mother looks on helplessly, as she is not able to do anything but cry. He returns home after spending his time in prison, only to find out his mother is dead. He then cremates her

[68] Kim, *Hijack 1971*, 49:50.

body, and the film turns its attention back to the present situation.[69]

Furthermore, this was what could have occurred to everyday South Koreans during the Park Regime (1960–1979). If someone had a family member living in North Korea, then those individuals would have most likely been targeted by the police and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), and subsequently, watched at all times to see if they try to make contact with those relatives up in the north. The producers tried to add more drama to the plot by adding the psychological motives that pushed Yong-dae to hijack the airplane, which was done very well for the most part.

The film ends with the successful disarming and death of the hijacker, and also the death of the co-pilot. Tae-in attempts to do an emergency landing, however, Yong-dae then forces a young student passenger to hold a live grenade. In order to not cause any more deaths and harm, Tae-in complies and pulls the plane up from the makeshift runway and continues flying. Because of this "disobedience" to Yong-dae, Yong-dae ends up shooting Tae-in in the thigh. Yong-dae goes on to tell the pilots that he had to endure humiliation in middle school because, even though he was the smartest kid in school, the teacher still accused him of being a "commie" and brought disgrace to the school because of his brother's connection with North Korea. As the continuing chaos ensued, two ROK (Republic of Korea) Air Force planes fly next to the plane just like a year ago. Unlike Tae-in and Dong-chul, who hesitated last time, this time the air force pilot does everything he was ordered to do, such as doing a warning flight and shooting at the airplane in order to force the plane to land. Dong-chul tells Tae-in that the situation was now different from a year prior because now a North Korean MiG squad would be on its way to intercept the plane should this one cross the DMZ.

---

[69] Kim, *Hijack 1971*, 51:37.

Being a stubborn kid, Yong-dae tells Tae-in to continue north into North Korea. The situation intensified when the command post instructed the two jet pilots to shoot down the plane with a missile. Tae-in tells Yong-dae that it was the last chance they would get to be able to land the plane on the beach. However, at the last few seconds before crossing the border, Tae-in does the complicated Immelmann turn stunt, as shown at the beginning of the film, in an attempt to catch Yong-dae off guard.[70] Tae-in reverses back to putting the plane back in position, which makes Yong-dae fall forward and get knocked out in the front of the cabin. A brawl then ensues between the two, and before Yong-dae throws another grenade, the marshall is freed and shoots him in the back. While it seems Yong-dae has given up, the marshall shoots him again and finally kills him. In that instance, the live grenade slips out of his hands and falls. Tae-in gets on top of it with a piece of the plane to prevent a huge impact to the other passengers. The grenade explodes! Tae-in is seen completely bleeding out and loses a hand. However, he is able to land the plane on the beach safely, and the film ends with everyone saved.

A Brief History of Airlines Internationally and Korean Air

Everyone who has ever flown on a plane sees the intense security that is placed on the way to their flights, but this was not the case in the early decades of civilian air travel. For example, Southwest Airlines has recently ended its open seat practice since its founding in 1967, to having assigned seating.[71] During the early years of civilian air travel, the seating was on a first-come, first-

[70] An Immelmann turn is an aerobatic maneuver in aviation that involves a half-loop up followed by a half-roll, making the aircraft become upright.

[71] Michael Salerno, "Southwest Assigned Seats Start Date: The Latest on When Open Seating Ends," The Arizona Republic, December 17, 2024, https://www.azcentral.com/story/travel/airlines/2024/12/17/when-is-southwest-going-to-assigned-seating/76926196007/.

served basis. The film shows passengers lining up next to the doors that lead to the plane, and when it was time for the doors to open, they would try to make a run for it to try to get the seat that they wanted. Most airlines shifted the stance of assigned seating in the 1980s.

In regard to the film, Korean Air is the key airline in this movie. Korean Air is currently the largest monopoly airline. Founded in 1948 as Korean National Airlines, it started with domestic flights from Seoul and Busan.[72] Since Busan and Seoul were the main cities in the South, they were the most convenient cities to be doing air travel in South Korea before the invasion of the South by the North in June 1950. In 1962, the South Korean government officially nationalized many businesses, including Korean National Airlines.[73]

The Case Studies of the Hijacking of Planes to North Korea

The opening scene is based on an actual event that took place prior to what happened in 1971. On December 11, 1969, Korean Air Lines YS-11 was hijacked by a North Korean agent, Cho Chang-hui.[74] The plane was on a domestic flight from Gangneung Airbase to Gimpo International Airport.[75] The incident was marked by controversies and criticisms in South Korea. What this meant was that the family members of those who were taken to the north were protesting to the government to bring their family members back. After two months of negotiations, North Korea

---

[72] Steven Walker and Simple Flying Staff, "The History of Flag Carrier Korean Air,"Simple Flying, November 5, 2023, https://simpleflying.com/korean-air-history/#:~:text=Korean%20Air%20traces%20its%20origins,3%20and%20DC%2D4%20aircraft.

[73] Steven Walker and Simple Flying Staff, "The History of Flag Carrier Korean Air."

[74] So-yeol Kim, "39 Years Ago, South Korea Abandoned 11 of Its Citizens to the North," DailyNK, December 12, 2008,

[75] So-yeol Kim, "39 Years Ago, South Korea Abandoned 11 of Its Citizens to the North," DailyNK, December 12, 2008.

repatriated thirty-nine of the people on the flight, but they did not release the remaining eleven people, who included the pilots, Captain Yoo Byeong-ha and First Officer Choi Seok-man.[76] North Korea ended up using the pilots to train the North Korean Air Force, something that was seen as ordinary during that time period. This is because North Korea had been kidnapping prominent and important South Koreans for their own use, for military, economic, educational, and social reasons.[77]

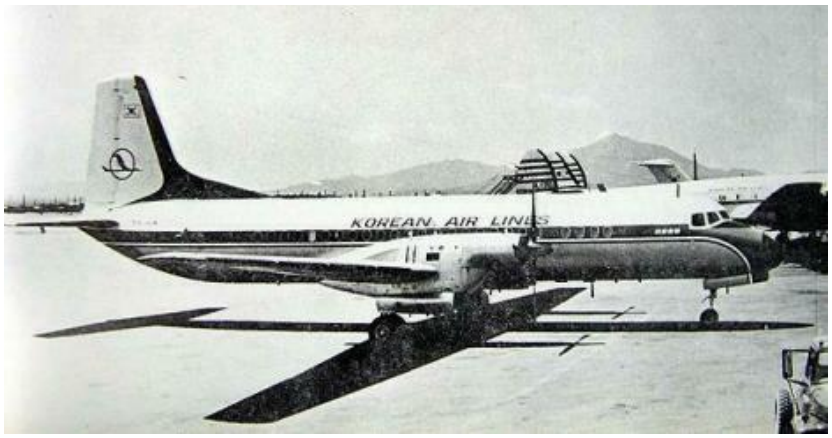


Figure 2: This NAMC YS-11 Model is what would have been the same one that was hijacked by a North Korean agent on December 11, 1969.[78]

---

[76] So-yeol Kim, "39 Years Ago, South Korea Abandoned 11 of Its Citizens to the North," DailyNK, December 12, 2008.

[77] Documentary Film makers & Film Productions. Watch Documentaries Online, accessed May 15, 2025, https://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/11503/korean-airlines-flight-hijacked-by-north-korea. I do not have the exact citation for this one. But I advise you to watch this short documentary called, *Korean Airlines Flight Hijacked by North Korea,* and see in the end, the eleven victims that were not repatriated. They each had specific occupations, such as businessmen, pilots, news reporters, owners of companies, etc.

[78] Andrei Lankov, "Take to the Skies: North Korea's Role in the Mysterious Hijacking of KAL YS-11," ed. Oliver Hotham, NK News - North Korea News, January 1, 2020, https://www.nknews.org/2019/03/take-to-the-skies-north-koreas-role-in-the-mysterious-hijacking-of-kal-ys-11/.

Reviews, Reaction, and Recommending the Film to Others

The overall reviews for this film had all been positive. In a review published on June 30, 2024, the reviewer states that within the first week of the release, the film had surpassed 1 million moviegoers.[79] There have also been positive reviews on the casting and the storyline. Historical movies about events such as this one have been getting a lot of positive attention. This is because a lot of Koreans may not know about some events, but they may be curious if there are events like this in history textbooks. The story behind this is that no matter how bad a situation Koreans are in, they are able to find a solution and make sure that the outcome comes out positive. Overall, I would highly recommend this film. The casting, story, and effects of the film all come together really quite nicely.

Bibliography

Banerjee, Moupriya. "Yeo Jin Goo, Chae Soo Bin's Disaster Thriller Hijack 1971 Hits 1 Million Moviegoers Following June 21 Premiere," PINKVILLA, June 30, 2024. https://www.pinkvilla.com/entertainment/yeo-jin-goo-chae-soo-bins-disaster-thriller-hijac k-1971-hits-1-million-moviegoers-following-june-21-premiere-1322573.

Documentary Film makers & Film Productions. Watch Documentaries Online. Accessed May 15, 2025. https://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/11503/korean-airlines-flight-hijacked-by-north-

[79] Moupriya Banerjee, "Yeo Jin Goo, Chae Soo Bin's Disaster Thriller Hijack 1971 Hits 1 Million Moviegoers Following June 21 Premiere," PINKVILLA, June 30, 2024.

korea.

Kim, So-yeol. "39 Years Ago, South Korea Abandoned 11 of Its Citizens to the North," DailyNK, December 12, 2008.

Lankov, Andrei. "Take to the Skies: North Korea's Role in the Mysterious Hijacking of KAL YS-11," ed. Oliver Hotham, NK News - North Korea News, January 1, 2020. https://www.nknews.org/2019/03/take-to-the-skies-north-koreas-role-in-the-mysterious-h ijacking-of-kal-ys-11/.

Salerno, Michael. "Southwest Assigned Seats Start Date: The Latest on When Open Seating Ends," The Arizona Republic, December 17, 2024. https://www.azcentral.com/story/travel/airlines/2024/12/17/when-is-southwest-going-to-a ssigned-seating/76926196007/.

Walker, Steven, and Simple Flying Staff. "The History of Flag Carrier Korean Air." Simple Flying, November 5, 2023. https://simpleflying.com/korean-air-history/#:~:text=Korean%20Air%20traces%20its%20origins,3%20and%20DC%2D4%20aircraft.

Author Bio

Martin Emmanuel Perez is a recent Spring 2025 graduate of California State University, San Bernardino's History Department's Masters Program. Obtaining his Bachelor of Arts in history in 2020 and teaching credentials in social science at the end of Fall 2021 from the same institution, Martin has developed his love for history even more. His academic interests mainly focus on East Asian history, and he developed a love for East Asia when he studied at CSUSB during his undergraduate years. Having traveled to East Asia three times, South Korea twice (2017 & 2023) and Japan during 2023 and, most recently, in April 2025, Martin's knowledge of Asian history has grown and made him more interested in learning more about the region. He hopes to continue to earn a PhD and teach East Asian history to students who find interest in the region. Martin is currently working as a Resident Substitute Teacher at his Alma Mater, San Jacinto High School, located in his hometown of San Jacinto, CA. He also directs the San Jacinto High School's Mariachi Club. Martin would like to thank everyone who encouraged and supported him throughout the MA Program.

Exhibit Review: *Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today*

By Martin Perez

On September 5th, 2024, the Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art (RAFFMA) at California State University, San Bernardino, had an exhibit that showcased the art of South Korea from the Joseon Era (1392–1897). The exhibit, *Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today,* showcased commonalities in Korea during the Joseon Dynasty and contemporary Korea, from shelves, chests, silk robes, porcelain, wood bowls, and scrolls. The exhibit, on display until December 7th, 2024, was part of the *2024 Traveling Korean Arts* project supported by the Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange. As Sae-june Kim, Dean of Sookmyung Cultural Center, said in her statement in the guide passed out on the day the exhibition started, "This exhibition provides an opportunity for students and local communities of CSUSB to discover the profundity of Korean traditional beauty amid the K-culture boom. There is hope that this touring exhibition will not be a simple relocation of collections, but lead to intellectual exchanges and reflections on life."[80] Dean Kim is right. After viewing the exhibition, the profundity of Korean traditional beauty is even more astounding and awe-inspiring. This exhibit was truly one that opened many people to the transitions between the old and the new.

When first entering the exhibition, the visitor was greeted with the old forms of art such as porcelain and wooden furniture, including old silk robes that were worn by the nobility class of the Joseon Era. One display that is eye-catching is the painted scroll of a government official and a blue robe that is embroidered with an

[80] Opening statements of Kim, Sae-jun, Dean of Sookmyung Cultural Center from the RAFFMA's *Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today* program given out on September 5th, 2024 on the opening of the exhibition, 7.

image of a crane flying. That specific robe was one of many that were only worn by high officials of the Joseon court, as well as members of the royal family, as many can see in paintings and even Korean media. This form of wear was what let everybody in the capital, *Hanyang* (present-day Seoul), and other parts of the country know their rank within society. The person in the painted scroll was a scholar, Park Seung-hyun (1781–?), who lived during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. According to the exhibit booklet, Park served as an Assistant Writer in the Office of Special Counselors.[81] The single crane embroidered on his robe shows that his rank was below the third rank. The portrait itself shows the many features of the individual, such as their facial structure and their pose, and even the leopard skin that is draped on the chair. The degree that the person had to look at was at a three-quarter profile to the left. This is a perfect example of *jeonsinsajo,* a unique characteristic of traditional Korean portraits that depicts not only the form but the spirit embodied by the person.[82]

Next is the robe, a replica of one in South Korea, that was on display right next to the painted scroll. According to curator Park Hyekyung of the Chung Young Yang Embroidery Museum at Sookmyung Women's University, located in Yongsan-gu, a district in Seoul, South Korea, the robe is the replica of the robe worn by Heungwan-gun (1814–1848), the older brother of Daewon-gun (1820–1898), the father of Emperor Gojong (1852–1919), the last king of the Joseon Dynasty and first emperor of the Korean Empire (1897–1910).[83] This robe is different from the one that Park Seung-hyu was wearing in his *jeonsinsajo*. Unlike the one that Park was wearing with just one crane, the robe on display had two

---

[81] RAFFMA *Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today,* 17.

[82] RAFFMA *Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today,* 17.

[83] Park Hyekyung is one of the main curators from Sookmyung University's Chung Young Yang Embroidery Museum who was at the opening ceremony of the exhibit. She had referred me to another catalog when Sookmyung University did their exhibit, *The Journey of the Costumes of Heungwan-gun and His Family.* She explained to me at the ceremony and through conversations that the robe was indeed a replica.

cranes on it, meaning that the individual was in the top three ranks of the Joseon court. Known as a *gwanbok,* this style of robe had been worn by government officials and members of the royal family since the Silla Dynasty (57 BCE–935 CE). It was brought over from Tang China (618–907 CE) and was worn until the end of the Joseon Dynasty. It also came with a belt and official hat that were to be part of the robe's attire. It was the most beautiful robe that was on display. Also on display were a blue undercoat garment for a court robe, a symbol of power and authority during the Joseon Era, used for ceremonial purposes, and a military robe known as a *cheolik.*

Figure 1: The painted scroll of Park Seung-hyun wearing his government attire.[84]

[84] Martin Perez, *Painted scroll of Park Seung-hyun,* photograph.

Figure 2: The replica of the gwanbok that belonged to Heungwan-gun, the older brother of Daewon-gun.[85]

Next, with the old forms of art in the exhibit, was a collection of porcelain and woodwork. There are four porcelain works: four water droppers, a bowl, a plate with a crane design, and two wine bottles, with one of them having the design of a phoenix. The water droppers, known as *yeonjeok*, were used to pour water on an ink stone to grind ink for writing. The most intriguing wine bottle that was on display was the one with the phoenix design on it, which was the possession of the royal family.

[85] Martin Perez, *Replica of gwanbok of Heungwan-gun,* photograph.

The phoenix imagery is significant because they were the only people allowed to have this image on their wine bottles. For the woodwork, there are two that catch the eye: a *mungap,* which is a sort of stationary chest; a four-shelf stand, called a *sabang takja;* and a chest that opens in the top front, called a *bandaji.* Each of these furniture pieces was in the homes of the nobles and other aristocratic families, as well as within the residences of members of the royal family in the palaces.

Figure 3: Four different styles of water droppers displayed.[86]

[86] Martin Perez, *Porcelain water droppers,* photograph.

Figure 4: From left to right: The four-shelf stand and the mungap, along with three modern pieces.[87]

The next room, after admiring the old forms of Korean art, focuses on the contemporary era of Korea, meaning the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For instance, the above image shows three contemporary art forms. The first is the tapestry that was made by artist Park Sook-hee in 1993. For decades, she has woven tapestries and, more recently, has worked with other forms of materials as well. Her work, "Beautiful Seoul," shows four different tapestry pieces, and by placing them vertically, they appear to be like buildings to show modern infrastructure in Seoul. The colors somehow showed just how much Seoul has grown by just looking at these tapestries.

The porcelain pieces are of new styles in the modern contemporary sense. A few that came to play were a big white "moon jar," a porcelain piece that was made in 2020 by Choi Ji-man, one of Korea's leading contemporary ceramics artists. The

[87] Martin Perez, *Mungap, Sabang takja, along with two modern porcelain, and a tapestry,* photograph.

jar's shape resembles a full moon and is meant to express true Korean beauty and sentiment. Along with the jar, in the contemporary sense for porcelain work, is a brush holder, a water dropper, and a bowl with a lid.

Figure 5: The contemporary white porcelain moon jar on top of the Joseon Era bandaji.[88]

[88] Martin Perez, *White porcelain moon jar on top of bandaji,* photograph.

Finally, the other art forms in the contemporary section included leather works, Tyvek sheets, and modern lacquerware[89]. The *Modern Leather Craft,* made by Kim Junsu, takes the shape of a vessel; it is made with vegetable leather that is made into thin strips, thereby letting the artist depict nature, making it look like the wind is taking a role in it as well. Textile artist Cho Ye-ryung's work, *Space,* shows how she works with Tyvek. She used a motif found in the Joseon Dynasty's blue official uniform and blue-and-white porcelain pieces, recreating the motif on pieces of Tyvek arranged in white and blue. After she sewed the pieces together, a smooth curve was achieved, making it look like outer space, as well as looking like it was made out of an official's robe from the Joseon court. In regard to a more modern form of lacquerware, Kim Seol's work, *Cloisonne Bowl,* inspires awe. As described in the program, "The artwork of lacquer artist, Kim Seol, features a red bowl, which has a shiny rim decorated with mother-of-pearl, that resembles the sun and is placed over a blackened saucer that recalls a shadow."[90] As one looks at this piece, that is indeed what it looks like: a sun (being the bowl) and its shadow (the saucer).

Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today was an exhibit that combined the arts of the past and the contemporary as one. This exhibit was a huge success, as all visitors were able to experience the true meaning of Korean culture and art through these amazing artifacts that left the visitors awestruck.

Bibliography

Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art, *Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today.* September 2024.

[89] Tyvek sheets are a painting material that is made of a non-woven synthetic material made from high-density polyethylene fibers. It is, in fact, water-resistant.

[90] RAFFMA *Korean Craft: Yesterday and Today,* 44.

Author Bio

Martin Emmanuel Perez is a recent Spring 2025 graduate of California State University, San Bernardino's History Department's Masters Program. Obtaining his Bachelor of Arts in history in 2020 and teaching credentials in social science at the end of Fall 2021 from the same institution, Martin has developed his love for history even more. His academic interests mainly focus on East Asian history, and he developed a love for East Asia when he studied at CSUSB during his undergraduate years. Having traveled to East Asia three times, South Korea twice (2017 & 2023) and Japan during 2023 and, most recently, in April 2025, Martin's knowledge of Asian history has grown and made him more interested in learning more about the region. He hopes to continue on to earn a PhD and teach East Asian history to students who find interest in the region. Martin is currently working as a Resident Substitute Teacher at his Alma Mater, San Jacinto High School, located in his hometown of San Jacinto, CA. He also directs the San Jacinto High School's Mariachi Club. Martin would like to thank everyone who encouraged and supported him throughout the MA Program.