

# TEACHING SOCIAL STUDIES

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 The NJCSS is the only statewide association in New Jersey devoted solely to social studies education. A major goal and accomplishment of the NJCSS has been to bring together educators from all social studies disciplines, including history, economics, political science, sociology, geography, anthropology, and psychology. Our members are elementary, intermediate, secondary and college educators as well as other professionals who share the commitment to the social studies. Together, NJCSS members work toward a better understanding of the social studies and its importance in developing responsible participation in social, political, and economic life.

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# Teaching Social Studies

Published by the New York and New Jersey State Councils for the Social Studies

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## **NCSS Response to the AP African American Course Controversy**

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*[Official statement](#) of the National Council for the Social Studies:*

NCSS recognizes that states and districts have the right to approve or not approve individual courses and, in so doing, have a responsibility to use a transparent evaluation process that includes educators and other experts in the field. When courses, especially those that were created and supported by some of the United States' most esteemed scholars and organizations, appear to have been rejected without a transparent process, all educators and community members should be concerned and have the right to request more information on the process used.

Of equal concern to NCSS is that the current political climate might negatively impact the great work that is being done throughout the United States to diversify curricula, use culturally responsive resources, and build content and pedagogical knowledge so that educators might better create lessons and other opportunities to address a longstanding marginalization of Black histories in the American education system. The NCSS previously addressed concerns about "divisive concepts" laws that seek "to ban the teaching of such concepts as race, racism, white supremacy, equity, justice, and social-emotional learning, as well as to limit the teaching of content such as slavery, Black history, women's suffrage, and civil rights."

NCSS supports the teaching of Black histories in a manner that engages students in learning about the achievements, joy, perseverance, agency, and resilience of Black Americans. An attempt to block courses that fully portray the Black experience, such as the AP African American Studies course, places professional judgment boundaries on teachers' freedom to teach and denies students the right to learn rich, complex histories that allow for multiple perspectives and deep exploration of the successes and struggles in our collective history across cultures. Every student has the right to learn about Black histories and the Black experience, and every teacher has the right to teach Black histories and the Black experience without the fear of intimidation and retaliation.

NCSS continues to advocate for the inclusion of Black histories and contemporary issues across K-12 curricula and calls on all education officials to provide students with the right to learn about, and from, the experiences of Black Americans. NCSS strongly believes in the educational value of offering diverse learning experiences in schools. We believe all students deserve the opportunity to learn African American studies and should have access to courses that support their pursuit of higher education and the study of African American history and culture in all education settings and throughout life.



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## **Disciplinary Literacy, Trade Books, and Culturally Responsive Teaching in**

### **Middle Grades Social Studies**

Dr. Caroline Sheffield & Dr. Jeremiah Clabough

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Disciplinary literacy, which emphasizes teaching students the skills and strategies used by practitioners, has become more prevalent in U.S. schools over the last 15 years. Therefore, teachers need to be deliberate as they assist students to think and write like practitioners (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has placed an emphasis on disciplinary literacy in its College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (NCSS, 2013a).

Emphasizing disciplinary literacy means social studies teachers need to give careful thought and consideration in designing learning experiences to develop their students' historical, civic, economic, and geographic thinking skills (NCSS, 2013a). For some, this will mean redefining their classroom practices. Incorporating disciplinary literacy practices is complicated by the fact that many students are not reading on grade level.

Our intervention is centered on using trade books focusing on civil rights activists that address the racial discrimination Black Americans faced immediately after the U.S. Civil War. Students read excerpts of the trade books and additional sources

as a whole class and in groups. They utilized these texts to answer analysis prompts where they used evidence to support their arguments. In this article, we share both our intervention and the successes from the project.

#### *Culturally responsive teaching*

The demographics in U.S. public schools have dramatically changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. White majorities in schools have given way to student populations that are more diverse. This is due in part to immigration patterns to the United States. With the changing demographics in the United States, social studies teachers need to reconsider how they design classroom instruction. One approach is to incorporate culturally responsive teaching, which is defined by Geneva Gay (2000) as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse student to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (pg. 29). Additionally, culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the need for high expectations and academic achievement for culturally diverse students, which reflects the empowered school culture described by Banks (2019).

Gay (2000) calls for teachers to scaffold and connect ethnically and culturally diverse students with the curriculum of the varied academic subjects. Doing so helps teachers to achieve the transformative approach to multicultural education described by Banks (2019). In the transformative approach, “the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups” (Banks, 2019, p. 64). If social studies teachers are to move beyond the additive and contributions approaches to multicultural education, it is necessary to consider how to incorporate the experiences and viewpoints of minorities beyond a single month in the year (King & Brown, 2014). In the social studies, this would entail using a variety of resources to authentically represent different groups’ values and perspectives throughout the curriculum. Texts that reflect students’ cultures act as mirrors. This allows students to see themselves in their U.S. history curriculum (Bishop, 1990).

There are several key components of culturally responsive teaching for social studies teachers to consider. Effective instruction in the social studies includes primary and secondary sources that allow students to analyze different groups’ perspectives and beliefs about historical and contemporary issues. Doing so provides students with the information to develop a nuanced understanding of an issue and helps to prepare them to work with people from different backgrounds in our pluralistic democratic society (Banks, 2019; Gay, 1994). By focusing on their culture through reading assignments, students can also analyze and critique historical and contemporary power

structures in U.S. society and thus equip them with the knowledge to take civic action to address social, cultural, economic, and political inequities (Ochoa-Becker, 1996). One of the approaches to addressing ethnic and cultural diversity in the classroom identified by Gay (2000) is the use of trade books as instructional tools.

#### *Using trade books in the social studies*

The term *trade book* refers to books, other than textbooks, that are available in retail establishments. Trade books include informational texts, picture books, and graphic novels (McGowan & Guzzetti, 1991). Not only are trade books more engaging than the typical social studies textbook, but they are also better written (Palmer & Stewart, 1997). Trade books highlight individuals and events frequently excluded from traditional textbooks (Chick, 2008). Trade books are not shallow in content and difficult to read (Berkeley et al., 2016; Tracy, 2003).

Trade books enable teachers to focus on a specific individual or event in depth. Diverse perspectives can be accessed by using several trade books in a curated text set about a specific event or time (Palmer & Stewart, 1997). The diversity of available trade books, in content, format, and readability, offers teachers an opportunity to select texts that best match their students’ reading and learning needs (Liang, 2002; Saul & Dieckman, 2005).

For social studies teachers, trade books offer students a chance to step into a new time or place (Beck & McKeown, 1991) to meet lesser-known

historical figures and make emotional connections to the events depicted (Chisholm et al., 2017). It is through this emotional connection that trade books can be used as tools to develop students' historical empathy skills, which is the effort to better understand historical figures, their actions, decisions, and lived experiences (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Trade books also offer social studies teachers a way to teach disciplinary literacy by requiring students to analyze for perspective, bias, and purpose (Shanahan & Shanahan 2008).

As mentioned previously, in culturally responsive pedagogy, teachers employ varied sources that celebrate the history and lived experiences of the culturally diverse students in the classroom. Trade books are an excellent way to do this. For students of color, historical figures who look like them are often portrayed as victims, with little agency and impact on U.S. history (King, 2020). This is not the mirror we want our students to see. To counter this image, teachers should use texts that present people of color impacting their world. This is the framework we utilized to design our study.

### *Project background and setting*

We designed a year-long project for the 2021-2022 academic year in which a sixth-grade teacher would use trade books to thematically teach the concept of civil rights in the United States from Reconstruction to the present. We envisioned thematic teaching to be the examination of a specific concept, in this case civil rights, while still teaching U.S. history chronologically. Thus, the thematic teaching approach was embedded into the

existing content taught in the grade level. We chose to focus on the civil rights theme because we wanted students to recognize that the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s did not exist in a vacuum. There were events, individuals, and groups who strove for civil rights long before Dr. King.

We determined that trade books would be an effective way to address this theme, as there are books written for young people that address all of the eras of U.S. history. Many of them highlight the struggles and achievements of culturally diverse individuals. To identify high quality trade books aligned with the sixth-grade curriculum and the civil rights theme, we first referred to the NCSS Notable Trade Book lists. All trade books were read, evaluated with regard to both project goals and text quality, and were agreed upon by the two researchers and the teacher.

The thematic teaching through our project was conducted at the Academy (a pseudonym), a new public charter school located in a medium-size city in the Southern United States. At the time of this project, there is only a sixth-grade class of 100 students at the time of our project. The Academy's mission statement is clearly aligned with the principles of culturally responsive teaching. The school mission is socially justice oriented, seeking to empower their students to be agents of change.

Black students represent 93% of the Academy's sixth grade class. The remaining 7% include students who identify as Latinx, white, and Asian. The social studies teacher, Ms. Edwards (a pseudonym), identifies as a white female and has more than ten years of experience teaching social

studies in both middle school and high school settings. We should acknowledge that both researchers identify as white, one a white male and the other a white female.

The learning activities were co-constructed with the participating teacher. The three of us crafted an instructional plan that was both reflective of content that addressed the state standards, incorporated the selected trade book, reflected both the school's mission, and the teacher's understanding of the students' learning needs. We helped the teacher monitor student work and aided with instruction, when requested. Based on the fact that the students' completed work when we were present did not greatly differ from their work when we were not in the classroom, we posit that our participation in class instruction had little impact on the students' performance.

#### *Intervention*

This paper explores the results of the first two eras addressed in curriculum: Reconstruction and the Progressive Era. The trade books chosen for these units included Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s (2019) *Dark Sky Rising: Reconstruction and the Dawn of Jim Crow* and Walter Dean Myers and Bonnie Christensen's (2008) *Ida B. Wells: Let the Truth Be Told*. *Dark Sky Rising*, a non-fiction chapter book, is written for the young adolescent reader and contains numerous primary sources embedded into the narrative. It explores the rise and fall of African American civil liberties during the Reconstruction era. *Ida B. Wells: Let the Truth Be Told* (Myers & Christensen, 2008) is a 2009 NCSS Notable Trade Book. It is a picture biography of Ida B. Wells's life

and includes her childhood, education, work as a journalist and suffragette, as well as her efforts fighting the lynching of Black Americans.

We used the trade books as anchor texts in the two units. In the Reconstruction unit, *Dark Sky Rising* (Gates, Jr., 2019). was used to explore literacy tests, poll tax, Plessy v. Ferguson, and Jim Crow segregation laws designed to keep African Americans second-class citizens in the latter 1800s. During the second unit, students read the trade book *Ida B. Wells* (Myers & Christensen, 2008) and watched videos about Wells to examine how violence was used as a tool to maintain white hegemony in the South.

Excerpts from *Dark Sky Rising* (Gates Jr., 2019) were used due to the book's length. A whole class read-aloud strategy was used for both *Dark Sky Rising* (Gates Jr., 2019) and *Ida B. Wells* (Myers & Christensen, 2008). Students also did partner readings of sections from both trade books. They worked together to complete tasks that required them to synthesize information found in the trade books to explain how policies were created to disenfranchise African Americans and how violence was used to maintain these social inequalities.

#### *Findings*

There was evidence that two years' worth of disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the students' literacy skills. It was apparent in the interactions between the teacher and students that there was also a discrepancy between expectations in the middle school and the

elementary school. Students were initially resistant to reading informational texts, synthesizing information, and writing to convey their understanding. Over the course of the year, the students' resistance was reduced, and their work reflected improved literacy skills.

It was clear that they were not used to completing tasks like the ones assigned. Their written responses were short and rarely in complete sentences (see Figure 1):

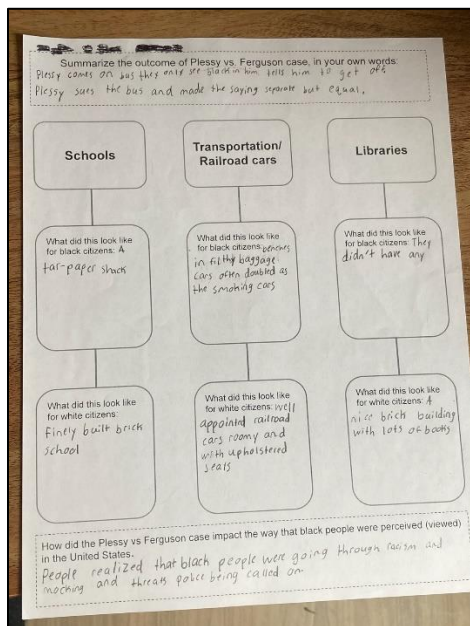


Figure 1: Student Example 1, Impact of Plessy vs. Ferguson

Despite the brevity of the students' answers, the majority of students' responses were correct, indicating that they were able to successfully read the trade books and articulate responses to questions focusing on the obstacles African Americans faced.

There were encouraging signs from the first two handouts that with simple modeling from the

teacher and researchers, some of the students included references from the trade book and primary sources to support their arguments. Students would add the page number where they found their answers to the questions (See Figure 2):

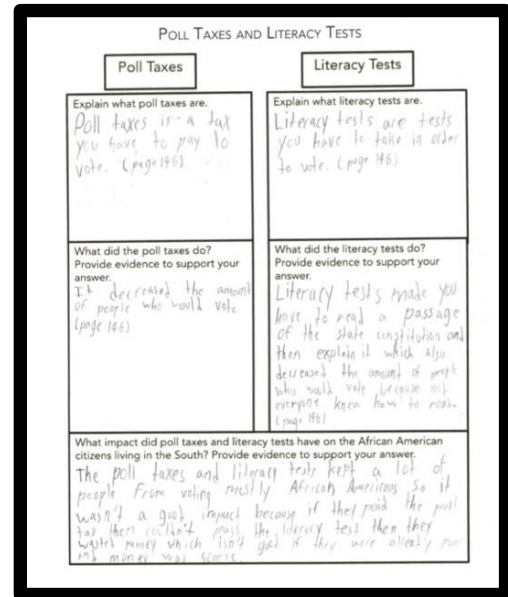


Figure 2: Student Example 2, Impact of Poll Taxes and Literacy Tests

By the end of the first two units, almost all students were consistently using evidence from sources to support their arguments, and they were doing so in complete sentences. Additionally, students made subtle thematic arguments regarding how different civil rights activists worked to address racial discrimination.

One other item of note was that in addition to strengthening students' disciplinary literacy and historical thinking skills, they also started to discuss historical figures in three dimensional terms. Often, middle school students see historical figures as dead characters who lacked hopes and dreams (Clabough et al., 2017). These students started talking about

the historical figures, Frederick Douglass from the first project and Ida B. Wells from the second project, in three dimensional terms in the second unit's summative assessment. That assignment tasked students with drawing a Janus figure for Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells while also answering questions about these two individuals' backgrounds and advocacies. The trade books and resources selected through the first two units were designed to highlight how and why both historical figures advocated for civil rights.

The students' writing showed tremendous progress within the course of a month. Most were writing in complete sentences by the end of the Janus figure activity (See Figure 3):

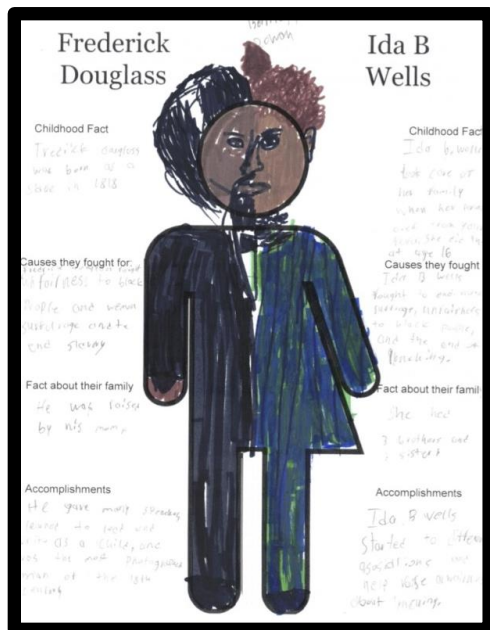


Figure 3: Student Example 3, Janus Figure Assessment

The majority of the students cited evidence at the end of the sentences from the trade books and the resources used. The students consistently wrote

about Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells in three dimensional terms by capturing events in their childhood and family life, as well as their values and beliefs about civil rights issues.

### *Thematic vs. chronological teaching*

When social studies teachers talk about thematic teaching, they often speak of a dichotomy between chronological instruction and thematic instruction (Turan, 2020). Our work in this project suggests a different approach, one where teachers do not have to sacrifice chronological teaching to embrace thematic instruction. The units highlighted in this project were taught in a chronological order. However, they both included a focus on the struggle for African American civil rights, using the selected trade books as anchor texts. As demonstrated in their Janus figures, the students were able to make thematic connections between the two individuals. The theme was not diluted by teaching the units chronologically, and the chronology of the content was not lost in examining a theme. This project demonstrates that, at least in thematic teaching, you can have your cake and eat it too.

### *Trade books in middle grades social studies*

Social studies education has long embraced using trade books as instructional tools. There are quite a few articles describing the potential benefits of using trade books in the middle grades social studies class (Clabough & Sheffield, 2022; Wilkins et al., 2008). However, there is little research within the last twenty years that outlines how these potential benefits play out in the middle school classroom.

We found in our work at the Academy that using the trade books was an effective method to engage students in disciplinary literacy. The students demonstrated the ability to gather information from sources and draw informed and supported conclusions. They also began to employ historical empathy, a highly complex skill, with regard to the African American leaders studied in the Reconstruction and Progressive Era units. The results from this project indicate that the articles extolling the potential benefits of trade books in the social studies classroom were well-founded.

#### *Culturally responsive trade books in social studies*

Students need opportunities to explore their culture in meaningful ways (Gay, 2000). The exploration of culturally responsive trade books offers students a way to empathize with varied groups' lived experiences, which is also an important aspect of historical empathy (Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Additionally, drawing on trade books that address diverse cultures helps to cultivate an inclusive learning environment that values all students.

The sixth-grade students were actively engaged in our project through class discussions during read alouds and group work analyzing trade books and supplementary sources. The content being explored focused on African Americans' lived experiences with racial discrimination. Students were able to see how historical figures analyzed public policies and took civic action, thus demonstrating for the students the practical necessity of being able to complete complex reading tasks. Finally, students gained the skills

needed as future democratic citizens to take civic action as change agents to address social injustices (NCSS, 2013b).

#### *Conclusion*

During our time with the students at the Academy, the importance of starting small with building students' disciplinary literacy skills and giving them space to grow became increasingly obvious. Within a month, the students went from writing sentence fragment responses in the first two tasks to consistently articulating their answers in complete sentences with references to support their arguments. This transformation was accomplished from support and modeling by the teacher and researchers. The exploration of culturally responsive trade books also allowed the students' historical empathy skills to be strengthened as they could articulate historical figures' values, beliefs, and advocacies. Social studies teachers need to strive for students to engage in disciplinary literacy in order to examine the experiences and achievements of marginalized groups and to explore complex topics within the U.S. history curriculum. Avoid the assumption that just because students are not reading on grade level, or struggle with writing, that they cannot engage in historical analysis. The students' growth and engagement with the content that we observed in the first month of school suggests that with the right support, students can successfully grapple with complex historical content.

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## **We Have A Civics Education Crisis — And Deep Divisions on How To Solve It**

Glenn C. Altschuler and David Wippman

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According to the [most recent analysis by the National Assessment of Educational Progress](#), only 13 percent of eighth graders are proficient in U.S. history — [down from a peak of 18 percent](#) in 2014. A mere 22 percent of those students are proficient in civics, the first decline since the test began in 1998.

Adults fare little better. Less than half of those surveyed could [name the three branches of government](#) (1 in 4 could not name any). Nor did they know that a 5-4 Supreme Court ruling becomes the law of the land.

Yet, even as Americans across the political spectrum believe that more civic awareness [could help heal the country's divides](#), only [seven states require a full year of civics](#) education.

The belief that an educated citizenry is the best protection for democracy is as old as the Republic. As George Washington asked in the founding era: “What species of knowledge” is more important than “the science of government?”

Yet, U.S. history and civics curriculums have long been attacked from the political right as insufficiently patriotic and from the left as woefully incomplete and discriminatory. In short, Americans have never agreed about what should be taught when it comes to our nation’s history and government. And as this latest round of test scores suggests, that has real implications for schoolchildren.

How to teach American history and civics was not initially an issue of national debate or concern. At the nation’s founding, most Americans received little or no formal schooling, but [learned instead from family, work and church](#).

That began to change with the adoption of universal, state-funded education. By the 1840s, education reformers like Horace Mann argued that publicly supported schools could help to create “[disciplined, judicious, republican citizens](#)” by “[teaching the basic mechanics of government and imbuing students with loyalty](#) to America and her democratic ideals.”

To protect public schools from “[the tempest of political strife](#),” fears spurred in part by the arrivals of immigrants, Mann insisted civics be presented in a nonpartisan, nonsectarian manner — even as he and his allies, consciously or not, imbued their own values into this supposedly neutral curriculum. Civics was taught through study, memorization and recitation of patriotic speeches and foundational texts, such as the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. These exercises were paired with readings from the King James Bible “[that exemplified the Protestant ethic](#).”

Unsurprisingly, controversies arose. [Abolitionists complained](#) that the nonpartisanship required the exclusion of anti-slavery principles. Roman Catholic leaders attacked non-sectarianism as a stealth imposition of Protestantism, prompting “[school wars](#)” that led to the creation of the Catholic parochial school system. In the North, some native-born critics feared that the 9 million immigrants arriving in their port cities between 1880 and 1917 — predominantly non-English-speaking Catholics and Jews from Southern and Eastern Europe — lacked the instincts and training to qualify as citizens. “Americanizers” sought to prepare the children of these “new immigrants” for citizenship through instruction in English, basic civics and a history that celebrated the country’s political institutions, downplayed its shortcomings and implanted in them “the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government.” Eager to become citizens, most immigrants did not object. But some resisted the effacing of their linguistic, cultural and religious heritage. During World War I, former president Theodore Roosevelt demanded that schools [discontinue instruction in the German language](#) and declared that “[there is no room in this country for hyphenated Americans.](#)” In New York, state legislators banned textbooks containing material “[disloyal to the United States.](#)” In response, nascent cultural pluralists proposed that the metaphor for “[transnational America](#)” should not be a melting pot, but a “symphony orchestra,” where “[each ethnic group is the natural instrument.](#)”

After the nation took stock of the blood and treasure expended in war, isolationist sentiment took root alongside an anti-communist red scare, overriding pluralist sentiment in the 1920s. Congress implemented strict quotas in 1924 that dramatically reduced immigration, especially from the non-English-speaking world. World War II accelerated a backlash against progressive educators like John Dewey who, during the Great Depression in the 1930s, advocated that students “[critically examine](#)” the nation’s institutions and economic inequality. Instead, with America at war again by the end of 1941, politicians demanded that teachers promote “[an abiding love of American institutions.](#)”

In the Cold War that followed, elected officials again used the nation’s schools as a space to pit the virtues of U.S. democracy against the evils of communism — this time to an even greater degree than before. Congress created the “[Zeal for American Democracy](#)” program in 1947, which encouraged educators in public schools to exalt U.S. democracy, while glossing over McCarthy-era violations of free speech and freedom of association. Throughout the century following the Civil War, teachers instructed White students in the South that the conflict was a struggle over states’ rights, fought by gallant Confederate soldiers. They learned that during the brief period of Reconstruction after the war, corrupt northern carpetbaggers and formerly enslaved men now eligible to vote drove basic civic and governmental institutions into the ground — and that race mixing was contrary to the law of man and God. As late as 1961, an Alabama textbook maintained that “[slavery was the earliest form of social security in the United States.](#)”

But the civil rights and women’s and gay and lesbian rights movements, as well as opposition to the Vietnam War, called into question the dominant vision of U.S. civics and history that had long prevailed in American classrooms. Demands for immigrants to assimilate were recast by underrepresented racial and ethnic groups as “[cultural imperialism](#),” as questions increasingly arose about the desirability of building a common civic

culture. Advocates created a pluralist, multicultural curriculum that featured voices seldom before included in history and civics curriculums, such as Frederick Douglass's oration, "[What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?](#)" and the [proceedings of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention](#).

A conservative movement soon grew in opposition, with activists warning that "[secular humanism](#)" was creeping into schools and usurping religious, traditional family-centered values taught at home. The fact that the Supreme Court had outlawed school-sponsored prayer in public schools in 1962 — seen as a potential antidote to this trend — only fueled their ire.

By the 1980s, opponents began [decrying multicultural education and ethnic studies](#) as "political correctness," and in 1992, they successfully derailed an attempt to establish national history standards and adopt the voluntary guidelines developed by dozens of civic organizations and educators. Lynne Cheney, chair of the National Endowment of the Humanities from 1986-1992, derided these efforts [as a politicized, "grim and gloomy portrayal" of American history](#), focused excessively on women, ethnic and racial groups. The standards were rejected by the U.S. Senate [in a 99-1 vote](#).

At the beginning of this century, concerns about American economic competitiveness prompted a renewed focus on reading and math under President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act and then on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects under President Barack Obama's Educate to Innovate campaign. Both came at the expense of civics, history and related subjects.

As political polarization in the United States escalated, President Donald Trump denounced [the New York Times' 1619 Project](#), which put enslavement and discrimination at the center of the history of the United States. Trump claimed that such efforts taught children "[to hate their own country](#)." He established the Advisory 1776 Commission, which declared that U.S. history, when properly taught, reveals the United States to be "[the most just and glorious country in all of human history](#)."

In 2021, in an attempt to bridge these divides, over 300 experts with diverse political views recommended new guidelines for civics education. Their [Roadmap To Educating for American Democracy](#) calls for treating disagreement "as a feature, not a bug of democracy," and [an account of U.S. history](#) "that is honest about the wrongs of the past without falling into cynicism, and appreciative of the founding of the United States without tipping into adulation." Supported by [six former secretaries of education](#), Republicans and Democrats and over [120 civic organizations](#), it was attacked by conservatives, who distorted its purpose and content and [gave it an "F+."](#)

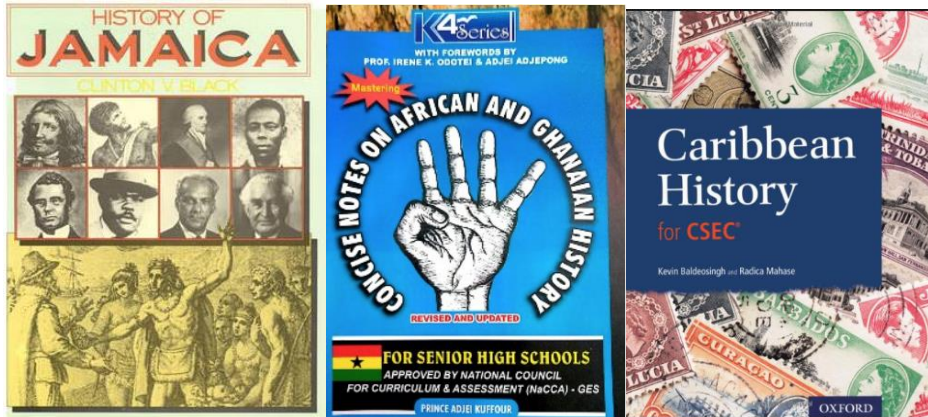
The bipartisan Roadmap has gone nowhere, and many states are going their own way. This is unsurprising. Efforts to establish national history and civics guidelines have always been subjected to withering criticism — just as attempts to ignore contested aspects of our past to foster national unity have only produced partisan divisions.

Understanding this history may well be the most important civics lesson of all.

## Missing in Action: Africans in History Textbooks

Laura J. Dull

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In American schools, the history of transatlantic slavery often begins with the terrors experienced by enslaved persons in ships across the Atlantic or on auction blocks in the Americas. This means that students do not learn about processes of capturing and selling people in Africa, let alone the African societies that were present when Europeans arrived. These knowledge gaps were present among the secondary and college students I have taught and observed. For example, in a seventh grade class on civil disobedience, a black student asked his teacher for details about how slave trading operated in Africa. He was curious about how people were captured—in wars or “just walking along?” The student yearned for historical context about how the monumental trade in the Atlantic worked and what Africans brought with them to the US. We teachers owe this student a fuller history, one that can

combat longstanding beliefs that ‘uncivilized’ Africans were just waiting to be taken when Europeans came along.

Omissions, silences, and mystifications have plagued stories of slavery told in school textbooks and lessons. For example, curriculum and textbook writers avoid directly naming those who participated in trading or imply that the slave trade simply involved “theft” by Europeans. As David Northrup (2017) explains, “The records of the slave trade into the Atlantic make it clear that Europeans did not steal slaves but bought them for prices negotiated with their African trading partners.” Beyond historical inaccuracy, says Northrup, the myth that Europeans “stole” Africans prolongs erroneous notions that “Africans were easily exploited, and that their societies were weak and brittle.” Such conceptions “underestimate Africans’ strength, intelligence, and adaptability.” In reality, after initial attempts to kidnap slaves, the

Portuguese built “permanent, as opposed to haphazard, commercial ties” by seeking out African leaders with whom they could trade in a peaceful manner. As historian Herman L. Bennett (2018) explains, West Africa’s “sovereigns regulated the slave trade, like all trade, and indeed during the earliest phase of the encounter with Europeans . . . [African leaders] bore responsibility for those deprived of their African mooring.”

The erasure of Africans as traders and trading nations denies them a place as central players in world history. Enslaved Africans are often portrayed as lacking agency as well. School materials, films, and books for popular audiences perpetuate the narrow image that slavery was based on southern plantation life and focus mostly on the terrors of enslavement, pursuing a victim narrative that can “[rob] black people of humanity.” Indeed, teaching materials “tend to center on the white experience” of planters and small farmers rather than the diverse experiences of enslaved people. These shortcomings can make it difficult for teachers seeking to tell a fuller story. As one teacher explained, “I don’t . . . understand where the proper ‘balance’ is between getting across the physical and psychological pain of slavery without losing sight of the efforts made by enslaved people to build emotional, spiritual and family and community resources to cope with the institution” (SPLC, 2018: 28).

Seeking to learn whether other countries brought Africans “onto the stage as fully drawn historical actors” in the story of Atlantic trading, I conducted a textbook analysis using the collection

at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI) in Braunschweig, Germany. I found secondary history textbooks from countries at each point of the triangle of trade—England, Ghana, and Jamaica and the Caribbean (test preparation guides for Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate [CSEC] exams for 16 West Indian countries, including Jamaica). The textbook analysis focused on African agency on two levels. First, I asked how African traders and their actions were portrayed. I took note of the names and numbers of African and European trading nations or ethnic groups identified by the authors, reasoning that equal numbers showed that authors acknowledged a trading partnership. Next, I looked for representation of enslaved people as individuals, not simply helpless victims, by examining how much space and description the authors gave to the lives of enslaved people outside of their work and their contributions to present-day society.

English accounts reflected a Eurocentric perspective that focused mostly on the actions of Europeans and rendered African traders as invisible. For example, they named far more European nations than African nations. In addition, enslaved persons appeared primarily as brutalized victims, with little to no discussion of their social, cultural, or economic lives before, during, or after slavery. In Ghana, authors named equal numbers of trading nations and ethnic groups in the transatlantic trade. But in promoting a story of African innocence, they tended to overlook or underplay African involvement in trans-Saharan slaving that predated the Atlantic trade, suggesting instead that Africans began slave trading in the Atlantic due to a

temporary bout of immorality. Their accounts also gave little space to the lives of enslaved people. Only in Jamaican and Caribbean textbooks did African traders appear as full participants in the Atlantic trade. Moreover, the diverse lives and experiences of enslaved people across time and space were described, presenting them as historical actors even amidst the terrible conditions of enslavement.

As “the self-descriptions of nation-states,” textbooks and curricula represent a country’s official stance on what and how children should learn. Textbook authors write narratives to legitimize existing political, social, and economic systems, so they often “forget” history that might undermine governmental authority or exacerbate social divisions. In the US, for example, textbook authors have presented slavery as “an aberration” rather than at the “heart of [American] history.” Authors use passive sentence constructions to avoid identifying slave traders, as in “Africans ‘were brought’ to the colony.” Many Africans have struggled with acknowledging their part in this history as well. Roger Gnoan M’Bala, an Ivory Coast filmmaker who made a movie about African slave traders, urged Africans “to open the wounds of what we have always hidden and stop being puerile when we put responsibility on others . . . In our own oral tradition, slavery is left out purposefully because Africans are ashamed.”

The complexity of slaving practices and the justifications for it are staggering: slavery has taken place across most societies throughout the history of humanity, and continues today. Captive people were

significant sources of change in the societies where they lived. They provided “knowledge of new technologies, design styles, foodways, religious practices, and more.” Despite these enduring creations, there is often little discussion in American textbooks of the diversity and depth of the lives of enslaved people across time and locations. Instead, textbooks and other media propagate stereotypes that enslaved Africans were passive victims working on large plantations.

Representations of the slave trade are also limited. In many textbooks, ‘triangle of trade’ maps are used to illustrate the trans-Atlantic slave trade. According to this map, Africans were enslaved and brought to the Americas to produce raw materials that were shipped to Europe, where these materials were turned into manufactured goods to sell back to Africans. This simple image diminishes the massive scope of global trading and slaving taking place during this period. People of all ‘races’ traded for slaves and were taken into slavery between the 14th and 19th centuries. Muslim and Christian corsairs raided for slaves in the Mediterranean Sea and European coasts; European and Arab slavers traded for Indians, Tamils, and other Asians in the Indian Ocean; and Ottomans enslaved Mongols, Tatars, and others. Meanwhile, Africans had long experience with slaving before Europeans arrived on the Atlantic coastline. North and east Africans and Arabs sent about 10 million Africans across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean between 650 and 1900. Then, starting in 1500, Europeans and Americans transported about 10–15 million Africans across the Atlantic from 1500–1800. When slavery was abolished in Europe and the Americas,

internal African slavery grew and many pre-existing trades continued. These facts are part of the historical record, but are often omitted from the story of early modern slavery. Without this context, cruel ideas circulate, such as the falsehood that “black people were meant to be slaves,” as one British teacher told his students.

England, Ghana, and Jamaica and the Caribbean were deeply interconnected during the transatlantic trade. The Portuguese began trading for captives on the west coast of Africa in the late 1400s. As British colonizers opened sugar plantations in Jamaica and the Caribbean in the mid-1600s, people in England increased their involvement in the Atlantic trade to obtain enslaved labor. Africans tended to set the terms of trade with Europeans, who paid tribute, gave gifts, signed treaties and contracts, and engaged in other diplomacy with African leaders. Europeans built castles along the coast of Ghana to conduct trading and hold captives. Some former slave castles are now used as tourist sites, enduring reminders of the slave trade. Various African ethnic groups, as well as individual merchants who led small armies, captured slaves from among other groups that are all now part of the modern nation of Ghana. They also traded with Muslims to the north. At the end of the 19th century, Britain took control of the region and called the colony the Gold Coast.

In the GEI library, I found at least three recent textbooks for each country and region. For Ghana, there were two textbooks for junior high and one senior secondary textbook covering African and Ghanaian history for the West African Secondary

School Certificate Exam (WASSCE). There were three junior high school texts on Jamaican history and three Caribbean history textbooks meant to prepare students for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) exams. Among these were two older Jamaican junior high textbooks that provided compelling stories of slave trading. Finally, four textbooks from England were reviewed: One covered the years 1509–1745 for Key Stage 3 (KS3—local, British, and world history from 1066–1901); another for KS3 provided an in-depth topic study on whether Britain should pay reparations for the slave trade; one textbook was for the International Baccalaureate middle year program, 1700 to present; and the last was for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) for ages 15–16, 790 to present.

These questions guided analysis of each textbook’s sections on slavery and the slave trade: How was slave trading explained? In what roles did Africans appear in the story? How were enslaved Africans represented? Did authors move beyond the labor and harsh conditions of enslavement to describe enslaved people’s cultural and social lives, gender relations, and other experiences across different places and times? I looked for historically accurate details that provided insight into how trading worked and the lives of enslaved people. Sentence structures and language used to characterize trading and slavery were also examined—for example, did authors use passive construction to mask perpetrators? Did they use language that was dated or colonialist? Below, I present my analysis and provide excerpts to



illustrate how the authors told the stories of slave trading and slavery.

The review starts with Jamaica and the Caribbean, as these narratives stood out for their representations of Africans and their history.

*Africans in action: Jamaican and Caribbean textbooks*

The curriculum for Jamaica and the Caribbean countries reflected a willingness to fully embrace the history of slavery that gave rise to their contemporary nations. As the vast majority of the populations in Jamaica and the other 15 Caribbean nations in the secondary examination community (CSEC) are descendants of enslaved Africans, their citizens have a personal stake in telling a richer, more complex story about how their ancestors came to the Americas. The exams cover nine themes, four of which are directly related to enslavement of Africans: Caribbean economy and slavery; resistance and revolt; metropolitan movements toward emancipation; and adjustments to emancipation, 1838–1876. Jamaica’s curriculum is closely linked to the CSEC program.

In the textbooks, West Africans emerged as full participants in the trade. Caribbean authors Kevin Baldeosingh and Radica Mahase (2011) explained, “as the Europeans could not invade and settle within Africa, they had to depend on African rulers to supply them with slaves.” Jamaican author Philip M. Sherlock (1966) acknowledged African power by noting that when Europeans arrived, “they [often] had to get permission from the chief or king before they dared to start trading.” Caribbean

authors Brian Dyde *et al.* (2008) evoked historians like John Thornton (1998) and Toby Green (2019) by stressing African development and skills in trading: “Along the [African] coast during the fifteenth century, they [Portuguese] found a recognizable commercial organization in existence. This was equally capable of distributing the European goods . . . and of providing the slaves.”

Baldeosingh and Mahase provided detailed economic explanations for the growth in trade, such as African consumers’ desires for brass pots, basins, and bracelets from Germany. Their accounts contradict stereotypes of an uncivilized continent by explaining that Africans had “a fairly developed manufacturing capability [and] African goldsmiths’ skills reportedly surpassed the Europeans.” However, they contended, Europeans could produce certain goods more cheaply, which explains why those goods were more valuable than slaves to Africans. Jamaican and Caribbean authors also took note of changes over time, revealing slavery as “temporally- and spatially-changing” rather than a monolithic, static condition. According to Dyde *et al.*, although Europeans initially kidnapped victims “during raids on coastal towns,” later, “kidnapping was carried out by Africans.” Presented as shrewd decision-makers, Africans actively shaped the trade. For example, the trade “encouraged African chiefs and headmen to distort and alter the local sanctions that led to enslavement,” the profits from which led to the rise of kingdoms like Asante and Dahomey.

Jamaican authors acknowledged that their nation was founded on the labor of captives and made the story of enslaved Africans central to their

narratives. Sherlock tried to find the “balance” that eluded the teacher quoted in the introduction: “The story of slavery . . . is a story of endurance and of triumph. The African fitted himself [*sic*] to life in a strange land far from his own home and loved ones; he cleared the forests and tamed the land, grew food crops and made for himself a new way of life. By his strength of spirit he rose above the brutality of the system into which he was forced.”

This focus on enslaved Africans and their actions sets the tone for a narrative that included enslaved people as multifaceted individuals: terrorized laborers, but also resisters, artists, entrepreneurs, and people with flaws. Dyde *et al.* devoted entire sections to work and life on sugar, coffee, and cotton plantations as well as in logging and shipping industries. In addition to explaining differences in status between enslaved people working in homes and the elds, they noted political sources for divisions: “In the early days, the mistrust felt by Africans toward other Africans helped to divide slave society.” Baldeosingh and Mahase explained that such disunity was encouraged by planters, who tried to buy Africans from different regions to inhibit communication. They also included a lengthy section on “Women’s situation under slavery,” describing how women “played a significant role in undermining the system” by “spreading messages of revolt” in the markets. But enslaved and freed people were not idealized—they had to make tough decisions to survive, as when women practiced “abortion and infanticide to deprive the master of gaining more slaves” or collaborators reported on “escape plots” in forts and plantations. By portraying enslaved

people as historical actors within the terrible constraints of their circumstances, Jamaican and Caribbean authors refuted more meager accounts of Africans as solely victims.

#### *Africans as innocent: Textbooks in Ghana*

Textbook authors in Ghana reflected the nation’s ambivalence about slavery and the slave trade. The senior secondary author provided a strong discussion of how trading worked, but none of the authors expanded on lives of slaves in the Americas or fully confronted the long-running trans-Saharan trade that involved West Africans. Ghana was the first country in Africa to gain independence from their colonizer, England. The country recognizes nine ethnic groups, many of whom were slavers in the Atlantic trade and enemies. For teachers, sustaining national citizenship amidst this animosity required the reduction of ethnic ties in favor of African and Ghanaian pride. To promote unity, teachers emphasized that their diverse cultures were “almost the same” and taught a “national story of subjugation, struggle, and sacrifice” in which heroic Ghanaians overcame deceptive, cruel, and racist Britons. The desire to minimize past transgressions like slave raiding was reflected in the junior high textbooks. In brief histories of Ghana’s ethnic groups, Nikoi A. Robert’s (2010) textbook named only the Denkyiras as slavers during the Atlantic trade. Junior high textbook author Agyare Konadu (2014) did not acknowledge any group as engaged in transatlantic slave trading and veiled the involvement of Africans in this awkward sentence: “The European merchants exchanges [*sic*] their

goods such as guns, gun powder, drinks, beads, etc. with slaves [*sic*] from Africa and sold them to North America.” African traders were later described as undifferentiated “chiefs” or “middlemen” who were “very greedy for more money” and “enrich[ed] themselves by selling domestic slaves and captives of wars.”

Though junior high students would learn little about who was involved in trading and how it worked, high school students had the opportunity to learn the active roles of traders during the Atlantic trade. Senior secondary school author Prince A. Kuffour (2015) noted that, “Ghanaians were deeply involved in ethnic wars, slave raids and kidnapping just to satisfy the unjust demands by the European merchants.” Ethnic groups like the Fante, Asante, and Akwamu were named as raiders in the Atlantic trade. Kuffour also argued that Africans controlled the trade, explaining “As Africans violently resisted against [kidnapping of Africans], the Europeans came to the realization that the only practical way to obtain slaves was to bring items the Africans wanted . . . Within a short time, Europeans and Africans established a systematic way of trading that changed little over centuries.”

But Ghanaian authors downplayed centuries-long slave trading across the Sahara that demonstrates Africans’ long experience with slaving and helps explain the shift to Atlantic trading. Europeans sailed along the coast in an effort to circumvent the Saharan trade and gain direct access to African markets. West Africans also gained by this, as they could purchase trade goods more cheaply. Ghana’s founders took the name of

the great trans-Saharan gold and slave-trading kingdom to the north of present-day Ghana. Robert did not mention slave trading by ancient Ghana, though Konadu said the empire became “very great as it had a lot of gold, grew a lot of food, fought many wars, conquered many states and captured a lot of slaves.” Kuffour explained that Western Sudanese states “participated in and controlled the Trans-Saharan trade” and this “trade brought wealth . . . and enabled them to sustain, expand and consolidate their territories.” But given his stance on European slavers as “brutal and immoral” and African chiefs’ “diabolical intentions” in trading with them, it is notable that Kuffour made no mention of the cruelties committed by North African and Arab traders during the deadly journey across the desert. In fact, he emphasized African innocence prior to the arrival of Europeans, noting that greed caused by the Atlantic trade “forced the naturally moral-minded peoples of Africa to throw morality to the wind.”

The junior high textbooks did not cover the lives of enslaved Africans in the Americas, focusing instead on the trade’s negative effects on Africa, including depopulation, increased warfare, and discrimination. Kuffour’s longer textbook included sections on how captives were obtained and traded in Africa, conditions in the slave castles, and the horrific journey across the Atlantic. Kuffour introduced slave life in the Americas by stating that “Slaves faced a variety of experiences in the Americas . . . [and] nearly all involved heavy physical labour, poor housing, and insufficient medical care.” But he devoted only one paragraph to this topic, focusing on numbers of captives,

mortality rates, and types of work. Kuffour included six paragraphs on achievements and contributions in arts, politics, science, and sports in the African diaspora. So while Ghanaian students had little opportunity to learn about life once Africans left the continent, high school students could get some sense of the enduring impact of Africans on American life.

*Africans as invisible: British textbooks*

Starting in 2008, British teachers were mandated to teach “the nature and effects of the [Atlantic] slave trade, resistance to it and its abolition.” In explaining this change, Children’s Minister Kevin Brennan (BBC, 2008) stated, “Although we may sometimes be ashamed to admit it, the slave trade is an integral part of British history.” Given the duration and impact of the slave trade on England’s history, politics, economy, and culture, it is shocking that this topic had not already been required. Nevertheless, these curriculum reforms could not overcome the textbook authors’ Eurocentric focus on the actions of white people. Most authors detailed diverse European beneficiaries of the slave trade and took full responsibility for English people having been slavers, but there was far less discussion of African participants. For example, besides “ship owners, slave traders and slave owners,” Aaron Wilkes (2014) named “many other Britons . . . linked to slavery,” including “dockworkers unloading ships full of cotton the slaves had grown, workers turning the cotton into shirts and even the shop owners selling sugar and tobacco.” On the other hand, Wilkes identified only “local African tribesmen” as

involved in “swap[ping] the goods in the ship for prisoners from other tribes.” Besides being the only reference to Africans, the designation of ‘tribesmen’ by Wilkes (and Bruce *et al.* 2016) replicated colonialist language. Jo Thomas and Keely Rogers (2015) included a source explaining that “The economics of slavery permeated American and European life,” listing wealthy merchants from Liverpool and Bordeaux, banks, insurance companies, and universities like Yale and Brown as beneficiaries. These authors pointed out that the “only beneficiaries in Africa were the rulers and wealthy merchants who engaged in the slave trade,” otherwise it “had a wholly negative impact on African nations.”

John D. Clare’s (2010) textbook on the trade provided more coverage of European and African participation. The author provided a two-page discussion of the vicious cycle of violence caused by slave trading, focusing on the Ceddo wars in Senegal and exploits of traders like Lat Sukkabe Faal. In a listing of “Arguments against the British paying reparations” at the end of the book, Clare hinted at African motives and gains in the trade: “The British did not steal the slaves—they *bought* them from the African rulers in what both sides regarded as a business deal, and pumped millions of pounds into the African economy of the time.” However, in most of the 48 pages, Europeans were the primary historical actors, and students would search in vain for African agency. This is starkly illustrated in the names of African nations identified by the authors in texts (I did not count names on maps). Ghanaian, Jamaican, and Caribbean authors named equal numbers of African and European

trading nations, while British author Clare named only two African regions (Senegambia and the Kingdom of Futa Toro) as involved in trading.

All the English textbooks discussed the transatlantic journey and noted that most slaves were destined to work on cotton and sugar plantations, but they provided no coverage of enslaved people's social or cultural lives. There was little discussion of their oppression either. Wilkes did not mention any cruelty or difficulty in the lives of slaves. Bruce *et al.* said that enslaved Africans lived "short and brutal lives of hard work and extreme misery . . . [ate] a poor diet, faced tough punishments, and had no proper medical attention." Thomas and Rogers provided a paragraph from Olaudah Equiano about oppressive slave ship conditions. Clare's book on the slave trade also used Equiano's diary to illustrate life in Africa before capture, the process of enslavement in Africa, and the journey across the Atlantic. But while the author devoted eight pages to abolition and its heroes, most of whom were white, there were only three paragraphs about Africans' daily lives once they arrived in the Americas. Life was portrayed as unrelentingly harsh: "house slaves . . . were often better treated, but even small mistakes might result in terrible punishment—the law allowed a slave-owner to beat a slave to death." While it is important for students to understand the cruelties suffered by enslaved people, an emphasis solely on victimization defines people only by what is done to them. It is no wonder that an African-Caribbean student in Britain reported feeling bad "about being black when we did the slave trade . . . They [teachers] made me feel ashamed."

Citizens in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries have the opportunity to learn the most comprehensive accounts of transatlantic slave trading. African nations and traders were presented as sophisticated actors in the trade. Enslaved Africans were portrayed in nuanced ways, as people who overcame terrible oppression to create independent nations. Only the Jamaican and Caribbean textbooks provided coverage of the diversity of enslaved people's experiences outside of their work—and in most of their textbooks, coverage far exceeded two sentences about the topic, the standard counted as covering these topics. Most of the other textbooks could not meet this standard.

Ghana's colonial-era border brought together former slave traders and societies who were victimized by those traders. For junior high textbook authors, creating a nation out of this diversity meant ignoring inter-ethnic slaving that could stir up old wounds. None of the authors fully confronted West Africans' complicity in the trans-Saharan trade either. In the postcolonial period, Africans found allies among Middle Eastern nations who had also suffered under European imperialism. As Simon Simons (2005) argued, "In the context of this African-Arab solidarity there was no place for discussing the crimes committed in a period when Arabs enslaved Africans on a large scale." Silence about this trading helps sustain the idea that Africans were innocent and morally pure before Europeans arrived.

Bennett argued that a "savage-to-slave trajectory" continues to contort Western ideas of

Africa. In this conception, African history is wrongly viewed as in a state of savagery that became a source of slaves when Europeans showed up. Today, this narrative continues to obscure the history and politics of African civilizations whose interactions with Europeans and others shaped the modern world. In England, white citizens took full responsibility for engaging in and profiting from slavery—ultimately comforting themselves that British people ended slavery in the Atlantic world. But in telling this story, they presented African traders as undifferentiated middlemen or kings, and enslaved people as brutalized victims, sidelining black people and their agency in the national narrative.

Acknowledgment of African agency would help teachers tell a more robust, candid, and humanistic story of slavery. To do this, textbook authors should identify and describe the roles of African as well as European traders (and also name Africans who tried to stop slave trading, as was done by Ghanaian author Kuffour). I argue for including African trading nations and traders not to assuage the guilt of white people by calling out African slavers or as an argument against reparations. Rather, to be viewed as participants in history, Africans need to be acknowledged as political actors—they too engaged in diplomacy, trade, oppression, and manipulation to serve their interests. Current conceptions “grant Europeans far too much power.” At the same time, educators need to be clear that enslaved people were not simply acted upon by white people. They lived rich lives before they were captured, created societies and cultures amidst the terrors of slavery, and faced

additional struggles once slavery ended. Because most of the authors included very little about slaves’ lives beyond their arduous labors and vicious punishments, the image of enslaved people as brutalized victims remained unchanged. As Toby Green explained, a focus only on slavery when teaching about Africa and Africans replicates “an old trope of primitivism and oppression.” Jamaican and Caribbean textbooks stood out for their honesty, depth, and attention to historical change. Students learned about life in Africa before capture, the complex and varied lives of enslaved people, the long and contested process of emancipation, cultural and other achievements, and enduring racism.

The aims of critical linguistic analysis of materials like textbooks, according to Ruth Wodak (1989), are “to uncover and de-mystify certain social processes . . . to make mechanisms of manipulation, discrimination, demagoguery, and propaganda explicit and transparent.” In the US, myths about African history and persistent racism can hinder the efforts of teachers to fully address the tragedy of the Atlantic slave trade. This study of textbooks reveals that citizens in other nations are also denied a full accounting of slavery and slave trading. I urge teachers to join with their students to bring forms of discrimination and propaganda to light. Students can evaluate the accounts below to determine which tells a better story. They could also find equivalent passages from their textbooks to compare to the narratives in other countries. In this way, students provide their own analyses of why authors write the ways they do: How do their textbooks compare with others? Do US textbook

narratives support historical agency? What story should textbooks tell?

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### Textbooks in this Study

#### Caribbean

Baldeosingh & Mahase (2011), *Caribbean History for CSEC*

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Dyde *et al.* (2008), *History for CSEC Exams: Emancipation to Emigration, Book 2* (Grades 10-11)

#### England

Bruce *et al.* (2016), *Oxford AQA GCSE History: Thematic Studies c790 to Present Day* (Grade 10)

Clare (2010), *The Slave Trade: Should Britain Pay Compensation for the Slave Trade* (Grade 7-9)

Thomas and Rogers (2015), *History: MYP by Concept 4 & 5* (Grade 6-10)

Wilkes (2014), *Key Stage 3 History: Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution: Britain 1509–1795* (Grade 7-9)

#### Ghana

Konadu (2014), *Effective Social Studies for Junior High Schools, 1, 2 & 3* (Grade 7-9)

Kuffour (2015), *Concise Notes on African and Ghanaian History, for Senior High Schools* (Grade 12)

Robert (2010), *Social Studies for Junior High Schools (Forms 1–3)* (Grade 7-9)

**Jamaica**

Bell-Coates *et al.* (2008), *Living Together: Social Studies for Grade 7* (Grade 7)  
 Black (1993), *History of Jamaica* (Grade 7-9)  
 Sherlock (1966), *Jamaica: A Junior History* (Grade 7-9)

**Excerpts from Textbooks**

1. Accounts from middle school textbooks about how the triangular trade operated.

Ghanaian textbook by Konadu (2014)	Jamaican textbook by Bell-Coates (2008)
“The Transatlantic slave trade involved the buying and selling of slaves across the Atlantic Ocean to America and West India . . . The European merchants exchanged their goods such as guns, gun powder, drinks, beads etc. for slaves from Africa and sold them to North America for raw materials to feed their industries in Europe” (65).	“The Africans were snatched from their village homes along the coast of West Africa to be sold as slaves, first to the Spanish settlers, then, from 1665, to the English . . . Captains of slave ships would offer [goods], many of them manufactured in Britain, to African slave dealers” (31).

2. Accounts from high school textbooks on how Europeans and Africans became involved in slave trading.

Ghanaian textbook by Kuffour (2015)	Caribbean textbook by Dyde et al (2008)
“The first Europeans to sail down Africa’s west coast in the mid- fifteenth century attempted to acquire slaves by means of force . . . As Africans violently resisted, the Europeans came to the realization that the only practical way to obtain slaves was to bring items the Africans wanted in exchange. Within a short time, Europeans and Africans established a systematic way of trading that changed little over centuries” (272).	“To begin with, slaves were obtained by the snatching and kidnapping of suitable victims by Europeans but . . . after about 1700, although kidnapping continued, it was carried out by Africans. The desire of European traders for large numbers of slaves, in exchange for a wide range of goods, stimulated slave raiding in the interior. It also encouraged African chiefs and headmen to distort and alter the local sanctions which led to enslavement” (123).

3. Accounts from middle school textbooks explaining what happened when British colonists in the Caribbean began buying enslaved Africans.

Jamaican textbook by Sherlock (1966)	British textbook by Bruce et al. (2016)
“The story of slavery . . . is a story of endurance and of triumph. The African fitted himself to life in a strange land far from his own home and loved ones; he cleared the forests and tamed the land, grew food crops and made for himself a new way of life. By his strength of spirit he rose above the brutality of the system into which he was forced” (62).	“By 1619, African slaves were introduced to British plantations . . . Slaves had no legal rights and had to work their whole lives without payment. Any slave children born became slave owners’ property too. Purchasing slaves allowed plantations to become more profitable, as the unpaid workforce increased in size” (203).



## Deliver Us from Evil: “Fallen Women” and The Irish Magdalene Laundries

Kameron Anderson

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Throughout history, there has been a large amount of fascination and fear associated with the so-called “fallen women.” Historically, these were women who disobeyed the word of God and subsequently lost their innocence. This interpretation of the fallen women is exemplified in the story of Eve. In the bible, Eve is expelled and falls from the Garden of Eden after eating the forbidden fruit.<sup>1</sup> In nineteenth-century Europe with the rise of Victorian morality, the trope of the fallen women was narrowed down to only include women who committed sexual transgressions. Things like promiscuity or having a child outside of marriage were seen as morally reprehensible and women who committed these so-called crimes were looked down upon as social pariahs.<sup>2</sup> The ostracization of these women and the desire to have these women out of the public eye led to a dilemma for their condemners. How do we get rid of these women without ignoring the expectation of Christian charity? The solution manifested in a combination

of the two, religious sponsored homes for women who had sinned.<sup>3</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century, Ireland was in the midst of a moral panic. As Irish historian Diarmaid Ferriter put it, Ireland was existing in a “mythical state of sexual purity and chastity.”<sup>4</sup> Traditional Roman Catholic values were at the forefront of Irish culture and to say that there was a fear of sin and sexuality would be a gross understatement. It is due to these high morals placed on the Irish, that the country welcomed these religious institutions aimed at housing “fallen women.” Irish people were so steadfast in maintaining their facade of Roman Catholic purity, that families were willing to give up their daughters rather than have their families shamed.

For over two centuries, hundreds of thousands of women across Ireland were forced out of their homes and into forced labor at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church. Magdalene Laundries or Magdalene Asylums as they were also known,

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<sup>1</sup> Amanda Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture*, (Ithica, Cornell University Press, 2004), 125.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, 93.

<sup>4</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, ‘Unrelenting deference’? *Official resistance to Catholic moral panic in the mid-twentieth century*, Dublin, 2010.

were institutions run by leaders within the church. Despite the pretense of charity and goodwill in their names, once admitted into one of these institutions, young women were subjected to forced labor and various forms of abuse. While some women were only in the laundries for a few months, it was a life sentence for others. The last Magdalene Laundry was not closed until 1996.

On August 21st, 2003, *The Irish Times* reported that the bodies of 155 women were found buried in the lawn at Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Refuge in Dublin. Almost none of the women discovered were named. Instead, they were referred to by religious epithets like Magdalen or Lourdes.<sup>5</sup> This discovery led to outrage amongst the Irish people. Despite the nation's history of persecuting fallen women, it is much easier for the modern Irish to empathize with these women. To see women who could have been their mother, sister, or grandmother, being dehumanized and forgotten in this way must have been jarring, to say the least. After this discovery, there was a lot of confusion amongst the Irish as to how these institutions remained in operation for as long as they did. There was also a desire in both survivors and their families to find someone to blame.

In the decades after the 2003 discovery, there were several investigations by the Irish government and international bodies. The leading advocacy group for survivors of the laundries, *Justice for Magdalenes*, have presented their case to

both. The United Nations Committee Against Torture determined that there was “significant state collusion” in the operations of the Magdalene Laundries in Ireland.<sup>6</sup> While some of the contents of this report were disputed by survivors, it does acknowledge that the laundries could not have remained in operation without collaboration by the state.

It would be easy to use either the Roman Catholic church *or* the Irish government as a scapegoat in the establishment and continual use of the Magdalene Laundries. However, I would argue that the two do not have to be mutually exclusive. With a topic as intricate and sensitive as the laundries I think there is a great deal of blame to share. Many historians have looked at the topic and written scholarship that took one side or the other. Leading Magdalene Laundries scholar James M. Smith placing the blame solely at the feet of the government in his book *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment*. While nearly every source that interviews survivors, such as the 1997 documentary *Sex in a Cold Climate*, focuses on the role that the church played in running these institutions.

While this scholarship is both commendable and valid, by choosing one sole culprit, you are at risk of developing tunnel vision and missing what is right in front of you. This paper will argue that it was a combination of the Roman Catholic church and the Irish government who are responsible for

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<sup>5</sup> Joe Humphreys. “*Magdalen Plot Had Remains of 155 Women.*” *The Irish Times*, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> UNCAT 2011, Justice for Magdalenes Research, 2017.

the maintenance of the Magdalene Laundries. The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland was responsible for the establishment and day-to-day running of the laundries. They also recruited families to give up their daughters using traditional Roman Catholic values to create guilt and fear regarding young womanhood. The Irish Government was responsible for turning a blind eye to the well-known abuse and forced labor that took place at these institutions, allowing them to remain in operation until the late 1990s. The Magdalene Laundries would not have and could not have existed without the assistance of *both* the Catholic church and the Irish government.

This paper will begin by looking into the historical context of the Magdalene Laundries, to help the reader understand what kind of nation Ireland was at the time. If they understand this, they will have a better understanding of what may have led families to give up their daughters. In this section, we will also touch on the evolution of the Magdalene Laundries, from a haven for reformed prostitutes to a prison for “sinful” young women. The next section will focus on what life was like for the women in the laundries. By using chilling testimonies from survivors, the reader will be able to hear what this experience was like from a woman who lived it. Finally, this paper will explain what led to the decline of laundries. Before the conclusion, the paper will investigate the various attempts to seek justice for survivors and the investigations that occurred. By using all of these

different sources, this paper will prove that the blame should not be put on one individual group, but on the way that various groups worked together.

### *Background and historical context*

While it is difficult for modern readers to comprehend giving up your daughter to a life of unpaid labor and abuse, Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century was a very different place. It is important to remember that for much of its history, the Roman Catholic church was viewed as the highest moral authority in Ireland. As one survivor recalled, “In Ireland, especially in those days, the church ruled the roost. The church was always right. You never criticized the priest. You never criticized the holy nuns. You did what they said without questioning the reason why.”<sup>7</sup> To put it simply, Ireland at this time was a nation driven by a fear of shame. In 1925, a group of Irish bishops gave a speech on the moral superiority of Irish citizens, claiming “There is a danger of losing the name which the chivalrous honor of Irish boys and the Christian reserve of Irish maidens has won for Ireland. If our people part with the character that gave rise to the name, we lose with it much of our national strength. ... Purity is strength and purity and faith go together. Both virtues are in danger these times, but purity is more directly assailed than faith.”<sup>8</sup> With a reputation of being beacons of

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<sup>7</sup> *Sex in a Cold Climate*. Testimony Films, 1998.  
<http://www.testimonyfilms.com/work/sex-in-a-cold-climate>.

<sup>8</sup> Clara Fisher, *Gender, Nation, and the Politics of Shame: Magdalen Laundries and the Institutionalization of Feminine Transgression in Modern Ireland* (finish citation)

purity, there was an immense amount of pressure from the church to never put a foot wrong.

While all Irish citizens were under intense scrutiny, not all citizens were scrutinized the same way. Without a doubt, men and women had vastly different expectations that they had to meet. Men were expected to avoid sin at any cost, while women were the sin.<sup>9</sup> Irish women were held to unimaginable standards. The Archbishop of Tuam Dr. Thomas Gilmartin claimed, “The future of the country is bound up with the dignity and purity of the women of Ireland”<sup>10</sup> This is an outlandish statement. He is quite literally claiming that Ireland’s future is dependent on how pure its women are. Not only does this kind of thinking impact the women themselves, but also the people around them. While this does not justify families giving up their daughters to the church it does give some explanation into what their thought patterns may have been. Also, this explains why there were no male equivalents to the Magdalene Laundries. As women were the ones who were seen as inherently bad and it was the men who suffered as a result of their sinful ways.

While the laundries may have turned into something much more sinister, the original purpose was not intended to be so. Although the plan with

these institutions was always to sequester fallen women away from the public, the early laundries were meant to serve as a rehabilitation center for them. Following the teachings of Jesus and their namesake Mary Magdalene, the first laundries in Ireland were meant to assist prostitutes in finding their way back to god.<sup>11</sup> Essentially, they were enforcing the belief that anyone could be forgiven if they wanted to. While this is a noble cause, some have noted that the laundries had little impact in decreasing the number of prostitutes in Ireland.<sup>12</sup>

Despite this, the number of laundries continued to grow. It seemed that the institutions were moving further away from their original purpose of helping prostitutes get back on their feet. Frances Finnegan makes note of that in her book *Do Penance Or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland*. She argues that “it seems clear that these girls were used as a ready source of free labor for these laundry businesses.”<sup>13</sup> Another development occurring during this time was defining what made a fallen woman. Before, the laundries were only inhabited by prostitutes. As the need for more hands to work in the laundries increased, nuns running them became more willing to allow all sorts of women into their midst.<sup>14</sup> This is how the laundries become home to unwed mothers, promiscuous

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<sup>9</sup> Fisher, *Gender, Nation, and the Politics of Shame*.

<sup>10</sup> Irish Independent. 1925. “Sermon by Archbishop Gilmartin.” Irish Independent, May 12 (fix citation)

<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Lea McCarthy, *Origins of the Magdalene Laundries: An Analytical History*, (Jefferson, NC, McFarland, and Co., 2010) 85.

<sup>12</sup> Frances Finnegan, *Do Penance Or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Finnegan, *Do Penance Or Perish*, 162.

<sup>14</sup> Finnegan, 10

women, women who were seen as too pretty, and developmentally disabled women.<sup>15</sup>

Some women could hardly understand themselves why they were sent to a laundry. When asked the reason why she was sent to a laundry, a survivor named Mary recalled, “I would actually say that – without trying to say I’m special in any way – but I think I was just so attractive and the nuns probably thought, ‘oh my God she’s going to get pregnant,’ without...nobody telling you anything about the facts of life”<sup>16</sup> Another survivor interviewed was named Christina Mulcahy. As a teenager, Christina gave birth to a son out of wedlock. She was subsequently disowned by her family and sent to a home for unwed mothers where she gave birth and raised her son for the first ten months of his life. Before the baby was even weaned, Christina was forced to leave the home and move into a laundry to begin working there. She wasn’t even allowed to say goodbye to her son. Since she was an unwed mother she had no other place to go and she was forced to give up her son and move into a laundry.<sup>17</sup>

What were once homes solely for prostitutes, now accepted any woman who went against the traditional morals at the time. Even women who they believed had the potential to lead men to sin. Once benevolent religious leaders were quick to forget their Christian obligations and take

advantage of vulnerable young women for financial gain. By looking at the historical context, it is clear that the presence of the Catholic church was instrumental in establishing the laundries. If the morals were not there in the first place, the Magdalene Laundries never would have existed.

### *Life in the laundries*

Once a woman was admitted into the laundries, life looked pretty bleak for them. Daily life was a monotonous routine of unpaid labor that was supposed to help them repent for their sins. The term Magdalene Laundries was fairly self-explanatory. Local businesses and the occasional family would commission the laundries to wash their clothes. Work consisted of washing clothes, scrubbing floors, ironing, and other tedious tasks. Residents received no financial compensation for their work. Although the work itself was not abusive, the intensity and hours they were expected to work were impossible to maintain long-term. Between 2010 and 2013, Dr. Sinead Pembroke conducted a series of interviews with survivors of the Magdalene Laundries often using pseudonyms. In one such interview, a survivor going by the name “Evelyn” explains the physical toll that the work in the laundry took on her body. “Physical would probably...probably be my hands, because my hands hurt now and from those big heavy irons that you’ve got in there. And then we used to have to

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<sup>15</sup> Finnegan, 128.

<sup>16</sup> O'Donnell, Katherine, Sinead Pembroke, and Claire McGettrick. “Magdalene Oral History Collection,” 2013. <https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/dn39x1535>.

<sup>17</sup> *Sex in a Cold Climate*. Testimony Films, 1998.

scrub floors as well, and get on your hands and knees and scrub floors as well, and there was stone floors.”<sup>18</sup> She goes on to say that her knees and hands are still impacted to this day, over fifty years after her release. Another survivor interviewed was named Pippa Flanagan. Pippa did not beat around the bush and stated “The work was killing, half killed us. We used to hardly be fit to walk. We were just like slaves.”<sup>19</sup>

Another way in which the laundries took a physical toll on its residents was in the diet they were expected to live on. Survivor Bernadette Murphy recalled that the food she received contained little sustenance and that she did not have a menstrual period in the six-year period she lived and worked there.<sup>20</sup> Evelyn, Pippa, and Bernadette’s cases were unfortunately not rare occurrences, it was the expectation when working in the laundries.

The pain experienced by women was not only physical. The mental toll of being taken from their homes to an unknown and traumatic future. Another survivor known as Mary Smith recalled her confusion and anger with her predicament. She proclaimed, “Who gave them the right to take me from my mother, to lock me up, to lock my mother up, to lock me into these Magdalene Laundries and let me suffer, suffer so much? That pain will never

go away, that suffering will never go away.”<sup>21</sup> Age played a big role in the mental trauma associated with the laundries. More often than not, the women who were entering these institutions were very young. They have young impressionable minds that are easily malleable. The story of Magdalene Laundries survivor Mary Gaffney is a perfect example of this. Mary was born to an unwed mother who she never met after birth. She was then turned over to be raised in “schools” run by nuns. She was never taught to read and when she was still a child, began working in the laundry system. Mary’s experience was quite typical of women in her predicament. She “scrubbed floors and cleaned endlessly.”<sup>22</sup> At one point, Mary discovered that the mother of one of her fellow residents knew her mother. However, Mary was prohibited from any attempts to make contact with her. Unfortunately, Mary’s story does not have a happy ending. The institutions in which she was brought up, gave her no pathway toward being an independent adult. Since she was admitted into the laundry so young, she knows no other way of life. Journalist Caelainn Hogan recorded Mary’s story in *The Irish Times* in 2020. At that point, she was still living in an institutionalized setting run by nuns.<sup>23</sup> Mary was never given the opportunity to make a life for herself or have a family of her own. She knew no

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<sup>18</sup> O'Donnell, Katherine, Sinead Pembroke, and Claire McGettrick. “Magdalene Oral History Collection,” 2013.

<sup>19</sup> O'Donnell, Pembroke, and McGettrick. “Magdalene Oral History Collection,” 2013.

<sup>20</sup> O'Donnell, Pembroke, and McGettrick. “Magdalene Oral History Collection,” 2013.

<sup>21</sup> O'Donnell, Pembroke, and McGettrick.

<sup>22</sup> Caelainn Hogan, *Mary’s story: The Magdalene laundry survivor who still lives there*, *The Irish Times*, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Hogan, *Mary’s Story*.

other way. The system that she was born into failed her and so many women like her.

While the mandatory labor that occurred at these institutions was well-known in Ireland at the time, there were also much more sinister and lesser-known occurrences happening in the laundries. When interviewed, nearly every survivor of the Magdalene Laundries claimed to have experienced some form of abuse during their stay. Being separated from their families and forced to work in inhumane conditions was enough to traumatize them for life. However, there are countless accounts given by survivors that inform us that this was just the tip of the iceberg. A survivor known only as Mary perfectly encapsulates her experiences with this sentiment, calling her time in the laundry, “The worst experience of my life – I wouldn’t wish it on a dog.”<sup>24</sup> From the testimony of survivors, beatings seemed to be a regular occurrence. Whether it be for minor infractions, not meeting work quotas, or seemingly no reason at all. Survivor Phyllis Morgan remembers the constant beatings and feeling like they would never end. “And you know sometimes you...you think, ‘my God is this nun ever gonna stop?’ They’d be frothing at the mouth, you know, and you’d think – God! You...you’d be nearly fainting your hands would be so painful from the beatings. But you didn’t dare not still stand there because it would...you felt like you know you were going to get worse if you ran away or...so you just stood there and took it!”<sup>25</sup> This account makes the

nuns appear almost sadistic and the young residents appear completely helpless and accepting of their circumstances. It makes one wonder, what happened to the benevolent religious leaders who wanted to help women find their way back to god? Did they abandon those principles or did they see the abuse as another step to get there?

The theme of cruel religious leaders was a key part of Steve Humphries’ 1998 documentary on the laundries, *Sex in a Cold Climate*. The documentary came out two years after the closing of the last Magdalene Laundry in Ireland. It was the main inspiration for Peter Mullen’s 2002 film *The Magdalene Sisters*. In the documentary, we are introduced to four survivors of the laundries. These women recount the experiences that led them to be residents in the laundries. They also describe the psychological abuse they faced in these institutions. Bridgid Young was an orphan who, like Mary Gaffney, spent her entire childhood in religious-run institutions. She recalled the way that nuns would abuse their power and force underage girls to strip and judge their bodies. “They used to touch you a lot. They used to line us up every Saturday night and they used to make us strip naked for them. They would be standing at the bottom of the laundry and they would be laughing at us and they would be criticizing you if you were heavy, fat, or whatever. They would be shouting abuse at us. We had no privacy with them at all. No privacy. They enjoyed us stripping naked.”<sup>26</sup> Not only did women in the

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<sup>24</sup> O'Donnell,, Pembroke, and McGettrick. “Magdalene Oral History Collection,” 2013.

<sup>25</sup> O'Donnell,, Pembroke, and McGettrick. “Magdalene Oral History Collection,” 2013.

<sup>26</sup> *Sex in a Cold Climate*. Testimony Films, 1998.

laundries have to deal with hard labor and physical abuse, but also gross invasions of privacy and public humiliation as well.

In 1993, an event occurred that would be the beginning of the end for the Magdalene Laundry system in Ireland. One of the most notable laundries in the country, Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, lost a significant amount of money in the stock exchange. As a result, the sisters were forced to sell a portion of their land to property developers. When construction began on the property 155 bodies were found in unmarked graves.<sup>27</sup>

The last Magdalene Laundry did not close until 1996. However, they had gradually begun to become a less common occurrence. Historians have debated what caused this to happen. It is a widely accepted fact that the reason why the laundries were able to exist for so long was largely due to Ireland's highly conservative values. However, as decades passed there was a cultural shift and morals changed. There was less emphasis on purity and therefore people did not see the need to send their daughters away anymore. While it is nice to believe that religious institutions let residents leave once they believed their duty was done, some historians believe that the institutions closed once they were not profitable anymore. Frances Finnegan argues that "By the late 1970s the widespread use of the domestic washing machine has been as instrumental in closing these laundries as changing attitudes."<sup>28</sup> Once the women ceased to bring the laundries any

profit, they were discarded from the only life most of them had ever known.

The testimony of survivors provides us with valuable insight into what life was like inside these institutions. It is clear from hearing these women recall their time there that they place most of the blame on the nuns who ran the laundries. This is completely understandable given the fact that they saw them every day. However, it is important to remember that outside of the day-to-day operations, there was the larger system of government allowing the laundries to remain in use.

#### *Reactions, fallout, and blame*

In the immediate aftermath of the closing of the last Magdalene Laundry, there were only murmurs about the secret activities that went on in the institutions. Survivors did not yet feel comfortable sharing their experiences with loved ones. We can interpret the silence as the shame that these women must have felt resulting from being thrown out of their homes. Despite the progress that Ireland had made regarding morality, how could they open up to their families who were so quick to turn their backs on them?

Survivors attempted to move on with their lives despite the trauma they had faced. This was easier said than done. More often than not, women who married after leaving the laundries were less likely to leave abusive spouses. This is understandable since many of them have not known

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<sup>27</sup> Joe Humphreys. "Magdalen Plot Had Remains of 155 Women." *The Irish Times*, 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Finnegan, 113.



a relationship without abuse. Also, many of the women released now had to go about their days knowing that they had children out in the world whom they had no connection or way to get in contact with. This was because laundries were known to force women who had children out of wedlock to give their children up for adoption. These were women who had to make a place for themselves in a world that had recently wanted them tucked away, out of the public eye. To say they felt unwelcome was putting it mildly.

It was only after the 1997 release of *Sex in a Cold Climate* on Channel Four that there was widespread public knowledge and outrage at the activities of the Magdalene Laundries.<sup>29</sup> A few years later, several mass graves were uncovered on land that used to house the laundries. The graves contained no names of the women who were buried in them.<sup>30</sup> These events triggered a desire amongst the public for an investigation into what occurred at the laundries and who was to blame. Numerous groups got together to campaign for the Irish government to issue a formal apology to the women, one of the more notable ones being *Justice for Magdalenes*. The demands of these advocacy groups led to two major investigations. One by the Irish government and one by The United Nations Committee Against Torture.

The investigation conducted by the Irish government was led by politician Martin McAleese, husband to a former President of Ireland and devout Catholic. The report was widely criticized by survivors and had many aspects that were proven to be false or downplayed. In his report, McAleese acknowledged that women who were sent to work in the laundries were subjugated to verbal abuse and harsh working conditions. However, he claims that there was no evidence of physical or sexual abuse in the laundries.<sup>31</sup> This is hard to believe as nearly every survivor interviewed reported abuse during the confinement. This is not the only claim made by McAleese that is widely criticized by survivors. He claims that “the average stay was calculated at seven months.”<sup>32</sup> This was unanimously disputed by survivors. In the Magdalene Oral History Collection, an interviewee named Bernadette addressed this directly in her testimony. She claimed “There was no end to our incarceration... Nobody had an end term. I...I hear a lot of talk now since the McAleese Report about people only being in for three months. I saw one person leave in the year I was in there...I...so I find this three-month thing very, very, very strange, but nobody had a release date.”<sup>33</sup> The final claim made in the McAleese Report is that the laundries never made a profit. This was also proven to be inaccurate. Records show that laundries had a long list of clients. It was well documented that “the nuns had

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<sup>29</sup> Finnegan, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Finnegan 156.

<sup>31</sup> Shane Harrison, *Irish PM: Magdalene laundries product of harsh Ireland*, BBC, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Harrison, *Irish PM: Magdalene laundries product of harsh Ireland*.

<sup>33</sup> O'Donnell, Pembroke, and McGettrick. “Magdalene Oral History Collection,” 2013.

contracts with all the local hotels and businesses as well as all the convents and seminaries.”<sup>34</sup> These companies would pay the nuns to have their laundry done for a cheaper price. In addition, with no employees to pay, any profit made from the laundries stayed with the people running them. The *Irish Times* also posted an extensive list of Irish Companies that used a Magdalene Laundry at some point. Some of the more notable examples are Guinness, Clerys, and the Bank of Ireland.<sup>35</sup> The number of claims made in the McAleese Report that were disputed by survivors makes one wonder, how did he come to these conclusions? Did he even interview any survivors?

Despite the shortcomings of the McAleese Report, it was successful in accomplishing one of the goals of *Justice for Magdalenes*. The Irish government issued a formal apology to the survivors. On February 19th, 2013, the *Taoiseach* or head of government in Ireland Enda Kenny apologized to the women on behalf of the government. He called the Magdalene Laundries the “nation’s shame” and stated “the government and our citizens deeply regret and apologize unreservedly to all those women for the hurt that was done to them, and for any stigma they suffered, as a result of the time they spent in a Magdalene Laundry.”<sup>36</sup> He also indicated that the government would be willing to provide a form of financial compensation for survivors. While the apology did

not erase any of the hurt inflicted, it did acknowledge their suffering, and that was worth a lot to the survivors.

While this statement was celebrated amongst survivors, some members of the Roman Catholic church were outraged that the Irish government was willing to criticize them in this way. For centuries, the catholic church was seen as a second governing body in Ireland. Now, they were being criticized alongside the government for their role in maintaining these institutions. One such critic of Kenny’s statement was Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League in the United States and outspoken skeptic of sexual abuse by priests. He argued that the women who were institutionalized in the laundries were not there against their will and could have left if they wanted to. Donohue also claimed that the vast majority of women inhabiting the laundries were indeed prostitutes. He added, “There was no slave labor, ... It’s all a lie.”<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that Donohue had no evidence to back up these lofty claims.

Apart from the McAleese Report, the other major investigation into the Magdalene Laundries was by The United Nations Committee Against Torture (UNCAT). Unlike the other report, the UNCAT confirmed that the vast majority of women and girls who were residents in the laundries were

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<sup>34</sup> Sue Lloyd Roberts, *Demanding justice for women and children abused by Irish nuns*, BBC, 2014

<sup>35</sup> Patsy McGarry, *Áras an Uachtaráin among users of Magdalene laundry*, Irish Times, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Brennan, *Tearful Kenny says sorry to the Magdalene women*, Irish Independent, 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Bill Donohue, *Myths of the Magdalene Laundries*, Catholic League, 2013.

“involuntarily confined.”<sup>38</sup> The UNCAT also recognized that the state failed to protect the women who were sent to these institutions. However, it is important to note that in the eyes of many survivors, the UNCAT’s report also left much to be desired. They agreed with the McAleese Report that the claims of abuse had been exaggerated. They acknowledged the presence of verbal abuse, but stated that instances of physical and sexual abuse were rare.<sup>39</sup> This was incredibly frustrating to the survivors. They now had not one, but two investigations that are invalidating their experiences. This is another instance of victims being gaslit. It is insufferable to imagine a group of people telling you the abuse you experienced is non-existent. This is yet another reason that survivors of the laundries were hesitant in coming forward with their stories.

After two meticulous investigations by two different governing bodies, the consensus seems to be pretty clear. It was the state who failed nearly 300,000 women and girls who were involuntarily confined to the Magdalene Laundries over two centuries. The state was certainly responsible for allowing these institutions to remain in existence for as long as they did. They turned a blind eye to the reported abuse perpetrated by leaders in the Catholic church and even used the laundries themselves. The same list in the *Irish Times* that

revealed several Irish companies had used labor provided by Magdalene Laundries, also revealed that departments within the government itself were using it. “It discloses that, including those listed above, regular customers for the laundry believed to be the one at High Park, including the Department of Justice, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Fisheries, and CIÉ.”<sup>40</sup> *Áras an Uachtaráin*, the Irish Presidential residence was known to use labor from the laundries. This makes them look very guilty, as the Irish government cannot pretend to be ignorant of a situation when you are exploiting that exact situation.

Despite the urge of many to use the government as the sole scapegoat for abuse in the Magdalene Laundry system, they were only complicit in allowing the system to remain. While this is inexcusable, if you asked most of the survivors who they resented the most, chances are they would name the religious leaders who were in charge of the day-to-day operations in the laundries. It was the nuns who ran the laundries and the people who oversaw them that are responsible for the daily abuse suffered by the women and girls who were trapped there. In addition, some responsibility also falls to the feet of leaders within the catholic church for the centuries of purity culture and policing women’s bodies. If these unattainable morals were not put there in the first place, families would not

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<sup>38</sup> UNCAT 2011, Justice for Magdalenes Research, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Irish Department of Justice, "Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries", 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Patsy McGarry, *Áras an Uachtaráin among users of Magdalene laundry*, Irish Times, 2011.

have been so willing to give up their daughters rather than be shamed by the church. It is because of these reasons that the government of Ireland and the Catholic church worked in tandem with one another to establish and keep the Magdalene Laundry system for over two centuries, as both parties had something to gain from keeping them open.

### Conclusion

The United Nations Committee Against Torture estimates that up to 300,000 women passed through the Magdalene Laundry system during its two-century existence. In 2014, there were still around 600 survivors alive.<sup>41</sup> The Magdalene Laundries and the women and girls who inhabited them have become a sad part of Irish history. Today, the laundries have also become a part of Irish pop culture. Irish Singer-songwriter and notable critic of the Catholic church Sinéad O'Connor was admitted to a laundry as a teenager for truancy and shoplifting. She has spoken out on her disdain for these institutions publicly.<sup>42</sup> The struggle of these women was also immortalized in Joni Mitchell's 1994 song *The Magdalene Laundries*. Mitchell empathizes with their struggle singing, "They sent me to the sisters, For the way men looked at me, Branded as a Jezebel, I knew I was not bound for Heaven, I'd be cast in shame,

Into the Magdalene laundries"<sup>43</sup> The laundries have also been the subject of several motion pictures, most notably *The Magdalene Sisters* and *The Devil's Doorway*. Despite promises and condolences from the government, very few of the survivors received any form of financial compensation. This is a debate that is ongoing to this day.

Whenever there is a tragedy in history, it is human nature to want to point the finger at someone. A shared sense of anger towards one party can be cathartic and necessary to heal. It can also help survivors have something else to concentrate on apart from their trauma. However, the Magdalene Laundry system was not a simple issue and there was no simple fix. It was a set of institutions that lasted over two centuries with the complicity of the majority of the country. It is impossible to place the blame on one party. The laundries were able to remain in operation for as long as they did due to the complicity of the government, the motivation of the church, and the conservative morals in place in Ireland. If we looked deeper or further back, we would without a doubt find several other groups of people to blame.

By using this way of thinking we can reevaluate many historical events that have a unanimous source of blame. Perhaps if we look a little deeper we can uncover that the events were in

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations Committee Against Torture, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Sinead O'Connor, *To Sinead O'Connor, the pope's apology for sex abuse in Ireland seems hollow*, The Washington Post, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Joni Mitchell, *The Magdalene Laundries*, 1994.

reality, triggered by a combination of interwoven causes. There may be a historical event to have a universally accepted source of blame. However, the Irish people know all too well that there is often blame to share. Also, the Magdalene Laundry system is a textbook example of how morals of the time can cause historical events. To put it bluntly, people make history. While we view the Magdalene Laundries as barbaric institutions, the Irish people of the time were more concerned with their religious beliefs than the well-being of their women and girls. If we break it down, at one point a group of people truly believed that they were doing the morally correct thing. We can apply this same process to other historical events. By looking at events through different lenses, we can put ourselves in their shoes and become better historians.

Nearly every woman found in the mass grave at Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Refuge in Dublin was unnamed.<sup>44</sup> Families today are still campaigning for the remains to be returned to their families. In 2022, there was a memorial stone unveiled in Dublin, the first of its kind.<sup>45</sup> There is still so much unknown about what occurred in these institutions and it is essential to interview survivors while they are still with us. What happened to these women can never be undone, but by learning about their stories new generations can ensure that it never happens again.

### **How can this be used in the classroom?**

The Magdalene Laundries and the plight of the women who resided in them, are not topics that many students will have heard of. Despite it being a bit obscure compared to the curriculum, there is a lot of merit in studying this topic. First, as I mention in this paper, much of what we know about the laundries comes from survivor testimonies. Having students read this paper can teach them how to interact with primary sources of this nature. Since the Magdalene Laundries are a more modern historical event, learning about them can broaden the knowledge that is traditionally obtained in social studies classrooms. We have pictures, oral testimonies, and documentaries on the laundries. It will be very easy for students to emphasize with the survivors. Another reason why this paper can be useful in classrooms is because it highlights the story of traditionally marginalized groups. It tells the story of poor, disabled, and oppressed women who suffered greatly at the hands of a government and religious leaders. However, my paper does not portray them as merely victims, but survivors who are currently working hard to get the justice they deserve. Stories like this where victim narratives are seen from a different point of view deserve a platform to be told. Classrooms are a great place to start.

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<sup>45</sup> Olivia Kelly, *Memorial unveiled dedicated to all incarcerated in Magdalene laundries*, *The Irish Times*, 2022.

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## Why CRT Belongs in the Classroom, and How to Do It Right

Stacie Brensilver Berman, Robert Cohen, and Ryan Mills

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Right wing politicians in eight states have enacted laws and mandates banning Critical Race Theory (CRT) from their schools, and since 2021 an astounding total of 42 states have seen bills introduced in their legislatures that would restrict the teaching of CRT and limit how teachers can discuss the history of racism and sexism in public schools. This has been done on the dubious grounds that such teaching amounts to left wing indoctrination, which they denounce as divisive, anti-American, racist, and damaging to white students' self-esteem. Such gags on teachers constitute the greatest violation of academic freedom since the McCarthy era. The hysteria against CRT has been so extreme that Republican legislators in states such as North Dakota enacted anti-CRT bans while publicly acknowledging that there was no evidence

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<sup>1</sup> Though CRT has been applied to analyses of educational inequities, it is not a pedagogical practice or topic that most American students encountered in K-12 education prior to this. As Stephen Sawchuk wrote in *Education Week*, "much scholarship on CRT is written in academic language or published in journals not easily accessible to K-12 teachers."

that their state's public schools even taught CRT. The bans amount to a new front in the culture wars, designed to preemptively strike against critical historical thinking and sow political division at the expense of meaningful learning experiences.

Though we are veteran teacher educators, we never taught CRT to our student teachers prior to this era of anti-CRT hysteria. This was not because we disdained CRT, but rather because secondary school history tends to be atheoretical, focusing primarily on the narration of political – and to a lesser extent social – history.<sup>1</sup> We thought of CRT primarily as a set of ideas taught at the graduate level, especially in law schools, and of little use for high school teachers. Though we observed New York City public school history teachers for years, we never saw one teach CRT. But all the controversy

(Stephen Sawchuk, "What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack?" *Education Week*, May 18, 2021, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-is-critical-race-theory-and-why-is-it-under-attack/2021/05>.)

about CRT provoked us to explore its origins and meaning, which led us to realize our error in failing to see CRT's utility for teaching U.S. history, debating the history of racism, and exploring the theory itself. Note that we speak here of having students debate the history of racism and CRT, not indoctrinating students, as right-wing politicians imagine. We are convinced that CRT, with its controversial assertion that racism is a permanent feature of American society, is a powerful tool that enables students to analyze, discuss, and debate the meaning of some central events and institutions in U.S. history, including slavery, Indian Removal, Jim Crow, Chinese Exclusion, Japanese internment, mass incarceration of Black men, and the Trumpist movement to bar Latinx immigrants. Those seeking to ban CRT either do not understand it or distort its meaning to obfuscate the educational benefits of discussing and debating its provocative perspective. We witnessed this positive impact firsthand as we piloted a unit on the uses and debates about and criticism of CRT in a high school class.

Based as we are in New York, we were drawn to study and teach about the writings of the late New York University law professor Derrick Bell-- a widely

admired teacher and mentor--regarded as Critical Race Theory 's intellectual godfather.<sup>2</sup> Un-American? Hardly. Hired as a civil rights attorney by Thurgood Marshall for the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, Bell spent years championing equal opportunity in historic desegregation cases. But Bell was troubled by the fact that even when he won such cases, whites evaded school integration to the extent that, by the early 21st century, many school systems remained de facto segregated and scholars wrote about the re-segregation of American public education. Seeking an explanation for this persistent, effective white resistance to racial integration, Bell argued that racism was a permanent feature of American society, and any anti-racist court victories and political reforms would have limited impact since whites would always find ways to avoid integration and limit progress towards racial equality.

Was Bell right? This question has great potential to spark historical debate in our nation's classrooms because his perspective offers one possible explanation for key events in African American history. Think, for example, of the emancipation of enslaved Blacks at the end of the Civil War, which the white South quickly limited by adopting Black Codes. Congress responded

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<sup>2</sup> "Tributes," Derrick Bell Official Site, 2014, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://professorderrickbell.com>.



by enacting Radical Reconstruction to empower and enfranchise formerly enslaved people, but this multiracial democracy was overthrown violently by white supremacists and replaced with what became the South's Jim Crow regime. The dynamic of racial progress yielding white backlashes--asserted by Bell and documented exhaustively in Carol Anderson's recent study, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (2016) – can be seen in the way the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* decision sparked a furious massive resistance movement in the South, the Supreme Court's refusal in *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) to mandate busing to integrate schools across municipal lines, and the Court's assault on affirmative action. Think, too, of how Barack Obama's two terms as America's first Black president were followed by Donald Trump's presidency, which championed white grievance, flirted with white nationalism, and demonized the Black Lives Matter movement and the national wave of protests following the police murder of George Floyd, culminating in banishing CRT from schools. How do we account for this pattern of racial progress followed quickly by reversals? And what are we to make of the fact that this pattern seems to conform to Bell's argument about

the permanence of racism in America? In confronting, rather than evading or banning these questions, we enable students to probe some of the central questions in American history.

Discussing and debating Bell and CRT works best when we also explore their most perceptive critics' arguments. Harvard Law School Professor Randall Kennedy, for example, charges that Bell was too pessimistic in his outlook on the history of racial progress and unrealistic in his yardstick for measuring the impact of civil rights law. According to Kennedy, Bell

...was drawn to grand generalities that crumple under skeptical probing. He wrote, for example, that "most of our civil rights statutes and court decisions have been more symbol than enforceable laws, but none of them is ... fully honored at the bank." Yet consider that phrase "fully honored at the bank." It does suggest a baseline – perfect enforcement. But such a standard is utopian. All law is under-enforced; none is "fully" honored.<sup>3</sup>

Kennedy draws upon voting rights to support this critique, finding that deep South Black voter registration skyrocketed thanks

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<sup>3</sup> Randall Kennedy, *Say It Loud!: On Race, Law, History, and Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2021), 45.

to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Whereas in 1965 Black voter registration in Alabama was meager, with only 19.3% of Blacks registered, by 2004 72.9% were registered. In Mississippi the percentage rose from 6.7% in 1965 to nearly 70% in 2004.<sup>4</sup> Kennedy viewed such statistics as proof that civil rights law worked over the long run, undermining Bell's pessimistic claim that "Racism in America is not a curable aberration. [O]ppression on the basis of race returns time after time – in different guises, but it always returns."<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, then, debates about Bell and CRT are thought provoking and merit inclusion in high school history classes since they challenge students to assess the trajectory of a central theme in American history: the ongoing struggle for racial equity. We partnered with a New York City high school teacher in designing a unit on debating Derrick Bell and Critical Race Theory. We describe this unit below, but we would like to preface this summary by assuring you that – contrary to the hysterical fears of right-wing politicians – no students found these lessons anti-American, racist, divisive, or emotionally disturbing. To the contrary, the students learned a great deal of history from this unit and came to see it as foolish, even outrageous, that teaching about

CRT was banned from many school systems.

As we began to plan the unit, certain things were clear: students needed to learn about Bell's ideas, life, experiences, and intellectual turning points; the unit had to include resources and information that explained CRT in a way that high school students could understand; we needed to include a range of views on CRT from those who support it, to scholars who critiqued it, to polemics against it from the Right; and it was essential for students to evaluate historical and current events and decide for themselves if Critical Race Theory is, in fact, persuasive. We were intentional in our planning—this could not be a unit that explicitly or implicitly steered students' thinking in one way or another. Our goal was to enable students – with proper support and resources – to discuss and debate CRT and its use as a tool for assessing key patterns in American history, arriving at their own conclusions. The unit, therefore, gave students the tools to engage in this work.

We worked with an AP Government teacher at a large comprehensive Brooklyn high school. He taught this unit over three days to his senior-level class, whose racial composition was 50% white, 29% Black, 14% Asian, and 7% Latinx. The teacher was

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<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, 50-51.

<sup>5</sup> Kennedy, 44.

white. Students previously learned about racial conflict in the United States, including lessons on slavery, Reconstruction, segregation, violence against Black people, and resistance to each; this unit built on that prior knowledge. The readings and resources, though used here a senior class, could be used in any high school class.

We established two Essential Questions to frame the unit: “To what extent is backlash an inevitable response to Black Americans’ legal and societal progress?” and “To what extent does Critical Race Theory (CRT) provide an accurate framework for the U.S.’s relationship to and problems with race in the past and present?” These questions challenged students to assess historical developments and CRT’s validity as an overarching theory. To help students answer these questions, the lessons explored Bell’s central claim about the permanence of racism in the United States, and the ways racism is institutionalized. We were mindful of planning a unit for high school students and tailored our intended understandings about Bell and CRT to that audience; we focused on Bell’s most important argument about the endurance of racism and chose not to explore his secondary arguments (such as his claim that fleeting moments of Black progress only occur when they align with white self-interest). At the end of this unit students would understand the most important component of a nuanced and complicated

legal theory and, through historical analysis, be able assess the extent to which it explained the role of race and racism in the United States.

Students navigated a variety of resources including biographical information on Derrick Bell, videos of scholars explaining CRT, excerpts from Randall Kennedy’s critical essay on Bell, primary sources focused on instances of progress and backlash in Black history, and statistics and media reports on school segregation and recent attempts to prohibit discussions of CRT in classrooms. Ultimately, students used all that they learned to evaluate CRT. At the unit’s end, students responded to two prompts: “To what extent does history align with Bell’s ‘one step forward, two steps back’ argument?” and “Indicate the extent which you agree with the following statement: ‘Critical Race Theory accurately depicts the impact of racism in the United States.’” Additionally, the students responded to a scenario addressing the New York State Assembly’s proposal to ban discussions of Critical Race Theory from schools, drawing upon information from the lessons to support their positions.

Most students knew little about CRT before the unit began. Four recalled hearing of it but were not sure of its precise meaning. Their previous study of racial conflict in American history – from slavery

through and beyond the Jim Crow era—made them more open to learning about this and understanding Bell’s views. Three surmised, based on prior study, that it was related to systemic racism. Students participated in discussions and group work, volunteering to share their thoughts with their peers. From the first day of the unit, when students learned about Derrick Bell and the origins and critiques of Critical Race Theory, takeaways included: “Derrick Bell was one the first people to discuss this theory” and “Racism is more than just how people talk to each other. It’s more systemic.” Students were especially animated on Day Two, when they watched video of North Dakota legislators debate banning CRT in classrooms and worked in groups to apply CRT to pairs of historical events.

Overall, students gained an understanding of the debate over Critical Race Theory and the extent to which arguments and theories on the permanence of racism in the U.S. explain Black Americans’ struggles. Through historical analysis they made connections between events that signified progress towards racial equality, such as the Fourteenth Amendment, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and Obama’s election, and the backlash that curtailed that progress – Jim Crow laws, massive resistance, and the way Trump’s “birther” slander against America’s first Black president helped make Trump a

popular figure on the right, paving the way for his presidential campaign and ascendance to the presidency. Seventy-five percent of the students identified “one step forward, two steps back” as a trend over time, claiming, for example, “I think throughout most events in history involving race, there had been more setbacks than step forwards for people of color.” Of course, this pessimism merits critical interrogation since such steps forward as the abolition of slavery and Jim Crow were not followed by a “two steps” return to that degree of racial oppression.

Clearly, the CRT argument about the endurance of racism resonated with many students who had come to political consciousness in a city where there had been vocal opposition to Trump and his rhetoric of white racial backlash. When asked if CRT accurately depicts the impact of racism in the United States, about 75% of the students wholeheartedly agreed that it does, positing, for example, “One of the main points of CRT is that racism is fundamentally and deliberately worked into our government and society, and I think that that is absolutely true in the United States. A variety of factors, including healthcare outcomes, educational attainment, average income, and incarceration rates, all indicate that there is a disparity in opportunities offered to white people versus people of color.”

But on the other hand, twenty-five percent of the students took more moderate stances, asserting, “Regression does happen but that does not mean that substantial progress has not/ can’t be made.” Just under a fifth of the class aligned with Kennedy and his critique of Bell. One student, for example, stated, “While racism was indubitably present in society, I don’t completely agree with it being embodied in law and government institutions because people have tried making some progress by passing laws that would make people more equal.”

Learning about CRT did not offend students, and none felt pressured to agree with Bell. Students’ differences of opinion indicate that this unit, which provided plenty of room for debate and discourse, didn’t indoctrinate students. Though the students’ views on Bell/ CRT differed, evidence suggests that they found these ideas intellectually stimulating and so were unanimous in their belief that they should be taught. The same student who critiqued CRT said, “People have to be aware of darker aspects of history so they remember those bad times and prevent them from happening; it encourages understanding of each other.” A classmate who agreed with CRT’s assessment of U.S. history connected what happens in classrooms to society at large, stating, “I would say that for the sake of our democracy, it is always better to err on the side of protecting free speech. This is

especially true when it comes to students and teachers.”

As students became more familiar with the critique of American racism offered by Bell and CRT and with the movement to ban CRT in schools, they grew more vocally critical of that movement, which they saw as “an attack on unbiased education” and proof that “the system has been working against people of color up until even now.” They reacted passionately when asked how they felt about New York considering such a ban, saying, “It’s not right to pass laws saying we can’t learn about it in school” and “CRT is as much a part of history as everything else we learn about. We should learn about virulent racism happening at the same time as all these other events.” Students also questioned, “What is education if we erase history?”

None of the students’ comments disparaged the country or sought to evoke white guilt. Rather, learning about CRT and historical evidence that supports and contradicts it enabled students to better investigate and understand events of the past and develop informed conclusions about the present. We observed a huge chasm between anti-CRT polemics, such as that of North Dakota Representative Terry Jones (R), who compared teaching CRT to “feeding our students... poison,” and our class sessions, where students were not poisoned but intellectually stimulated by engaging in

open discussion and drawing their own evidenced-based conclusions. Such open-minded inquiry is, after all, a goal of historical and social studies education.<sup>6</sup>

Creating this unit and working with a high school teacher to implement it demonstrated the possibilities and benefits of exploring Bell and CRT's claims about the permanence of racism in America. Students learned about figures and ideas omitted from their textbooks and most curricula and engaged with multiple and diverse resources. Did every student agree with Bell? No. Did that indicate that the unit failed? Of course not – and such disagreement attests that the lesson succeeded in fostering debate. Did students walk away with a better understanding of Bell and CRT's critical take on racism and the way it might be applied to U.S. historical events? Certainly. Whether or not students' analysis of racism aligned with Bell's, they had the time and space to think deeply about CRT, its roots, and the debate over its place in education in the last year and a half.

If classroom realities matter at all to those governors and state legislators who imposed CRT bans on schools, they ought to be embarrassed at having barred students in their states from the kind of thought

provoking teaching we witnessed in this project.

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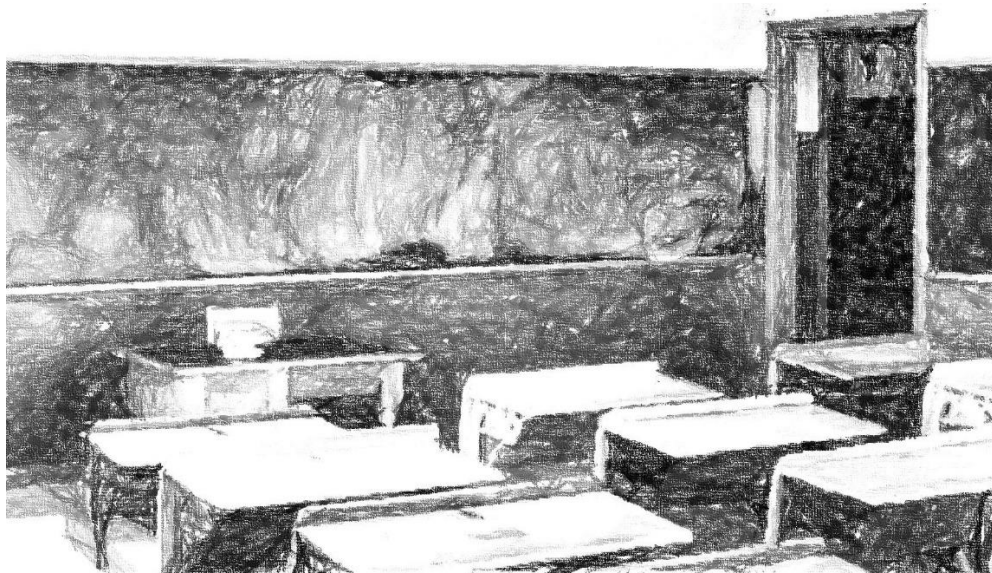
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## **Social Studies Groups Worried State Trying to Downgrade Importance of History, Civics**

John Hildebrand

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*Reprinted by permission from Newsday,  
May 30, 2023*

Social studies groups statewide are pushing back against a plan out of Albany they say would downgrade the importance of coursework in history and civics during a time when such lessons should take top priority. The critics, who include a strong contingent from Long Island, add that the state's plan could lead to elimination of two major Regents exams. Those tests cover U.S. History and Government, and Global History and Geography. At issue is a recent announcement by the state's Department of Education that it would drop, for the next two years, its practice of including scores from such exams in its academic ratings of high schools. Agency officials describe the move as a temporary "pause" and insist that social studies retains its status as a core academic subject, along with English, math and science.

Albany's plan has alarmed many educators, who note that the state already has taken steps to reduce the amount of class time spent on history, geography, civics and related subjects. Social studies leaders at the state level recently stepped up their criticism, joining colleagues from the Island. Lisa Kissinger, president of the New York

State Council for the Social Studies, fired off a letter to state education officials on May 22, urging them to reconsider their planned change in school ratings. A copy of the letter was obtained by Newsday. "This 'pause' sends a message to all New Yorkers that Social Studies education is not a priority," Kissinger wrote. "We are concerned that 'pausing' the inclusion of results demonstrates a devaluation of Social Studies that could lead to the elimination of the Social Studies Regents exams and minimization of the critical importance of this core subject."

Kissinger is a social studies administrator in the suburban Shenendehowa district near Albany, and her state organization represents hundreds of administrators, teachers and college faculty. Her letter was addressed to Lester W. Young Jr., chancellor of the Board of Regents, which oversees the education department and sets much of the state's education policy.

*State: Social studies is integral*

A senior department official, Theresa Billington, responded to Kissinger's letter the following day, insisting that her agency placed a high priority on social studies. "The department values Social



Studies as an integral part of our shared civic discourse and the critical role it plays in educating and shaping the students of New York State to become active citizens and future leaders of our nation," Billington wrote. She is an assistant state commissioner for school accountability. Billington noted that some Regents history exams were canceled during the COVID-19 pandemic and added that this would seriously limit the amount of data available for school ratings. Kissinger pointed out, on the other hand, that data would be available from a global history exam administered last year, as well as from other tests scheduled for June and for the 2023-24 school term.

The assistant commissioner's response did not directly address Kissinger's concerns about the future of Regents exams. That's one of the thorniest issues facing the education department, which recently accelerated a previously announced overhaul of graduation requirements. The overhaul could include a decision to stop using Regents exams as a diploma requirement. A state-appointed commission is scheduled to release recommendations for revised graduation rules by November — seven months earlier than originally planned.

Regents, which established the commission last September, have said that one goal is to help more students gain the knowledge and skills needed to graduate, even if they do that through pathways other than traditional exams. "This is not about

lowering standards," Young remarked at the time.

### *Worries that changes will be lasting*

Social studies representatives have cautioned, however, that any changes in testing policy could affect studies of history and related subjects in a negative way, if not handled carefully. Under federal law, students must be tested periodically in English, math and science, but there is no such requirement for social studies. As a result, social studies testing has sometimes taken a backseat. In 2010, Regents voted unanimously to eliminate social studies tests in fifth and eighth grades, on grounds that the state was short of money for assessments.

Those tests were never restored, and supporters of the social studies said there's a lesson in that. "Once they pause, they will never return," said Gloria Sesso, co-president of the Long Island Council for the Social Studies.

On May 12, the regional group sent its own protest to Betty A. Rosa, the state's education commissioner. The letter asserted that the state's planned change in school ratings could create a "danger to democracy" by lessening the time schools spend on social studies lessons. Billington responded to the Island group's letter, much as she did to Kissinger's, by insisting that her department placed great value on social studies.

Alan Singer, a Hofstra University education professor, agreed with critics that "once paused, it is unlikely social studies performance will ever be included in the assessments, and what is not assessed is not going to be a priority." In a recent blog, Singer noted that a state decision in 2016 to limit events covered by global history exams

to those occurring after 1750 had excluded topics such as the impact of Columbus' voyages. The blog's title: "History is in Trouble in New York State."



## Why We Must Teach African American History

Marlene Munn-Joseph

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Recent years have seen efforts to include African American history as part of the American cultural heritage in school curriculums nationwide. A few examples include an elective 2020 African American studies course in Texas for the 10th-12th grade, in 2018 the adoption of a curriculum entitled *Developing Black Historical Consciousness* in Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools, and in 2005, an African American history course as a high school graduation requirement in the Philadelphia school district (Pew Trust, 2020). These efforts suggest that progress has been made in the century-long struggles of African American communities to include African American history in the mainstream narrative of American history. In this light, the controversy surrounding Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's administration's decision to publicly censor parts of the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) African American Studies Curriculum and the College Board's seemingly capitulation is puzzling. Including an AP African American studies curriculum in the College Board's offering legitimizes the experiences and histories of African American communities. According to the College Board site, the curriculum has been in the

making for over a decade. Respected scholars such as Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham have been part of the effort. However, the DeSantis administration's attempt to censor aspects of the curriculum where they cite violates the provision of "principles of freedom" in newly passed laws (State Board of Education rule 6A-1.094124, and Florida laws including 1003.42, F.S., and House Bill 7.), and has little "educational value" demonstrates the cost of legitimization is an erasure of ideas and events that compete with the mainstream historical consciousness of American exceptionalism and harmony.

It is critical to recognize the importance of legitimizing African American studies as part of the American mainstream historical consciousness. *E pluribus unum*, out of many one, is a critical conceptual frame in American democracy rooted in two foundational ideas. (1) Citizenship and fundamental citizenship rights are available to all regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. (2) Diverse groups can coexist as long as we respect the rights of one another.

Enacting a culturally pluralistic society requires constant negotiation on the following two questions. (1) What are our ideas about America? and (2) What does it mean to be an American. Dill and Hunter (2010) describe *e pluribus unum* as “the central and enduring conundrum of American democracy. How much plurality? What kind of unity? On whose terms?”

To answer the above two questions, we turn to our historical consciousness to make sense of our past and to inform our future. Our individual experiences and our interpretations of those experiences constitute our historical consciousness. The DeSantis administration’s new laws require a singular historical consciousness that does not allow for dialogue on these questions or the introduction of a Black historical consciousness about the past and present. The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) Commissioner of Education, in a tweet, provided a one-page handout with a table listing six problematic areas that the state wanted expunged (out of 19 identified in their correspondence with the College Board over the 2022 calendar year) (Diaz, 2023). These areas explored the roots of institutional racism, contemporary African American resistance movements, and the involvement of marginalized communities. According to a FLDOE memo, these topics specifically violated Florida law because of "Instruction rule, 6A-1.094124, which requires that “instruction on required topics must be factual and objective and may not

suppress or distort significant historical events” and in the same memo, FLDOE cited the material as conflicting with Florida law because it contained “discriminatory and historically fictional topics” (Meckler, 2023).

Labeling the topics of institutional racism and contemporary African American resistance movements as fictional does not allow Americans to have an informed conversation on what it means to be an American or the nature of American society past and present. The DeSantis administration is unwilling to have students engage in the historical process, engaging in intellectual debates to explore contentious interpretations of histories. They are using state power to discredit the work of credible scholars, deny the complexity of the lived experiences of African Americans in the United States, and they are trying to present a singular and inaccurate historical consciousness. The message it sends to all Americans is that the banned topics are not plausible and promote an uncritical examination of history and the DeSantis administration’s censorship undermines the ability of the youth of Florida to analyze, integrate, and form their own the historical consciousness.

Censoring these topics dismisses the necessity of Black historical consciousness. LaGarrett King (2017) argues that Black historical consciousness is essential because African American history includes critical

events in its communities. For example, significant to African American history are traditions of Black liberation such as Juneteenth (among a few holidays celebrated as Emancipation holidays) and the loss of African American educators due to the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision which led to the push for integrated schools by discriminatory school boards. Blatantly ignoring the histories of African American communities is intolerance.

The DeSantis administration is using the law to impose a false consensus on what they see as the “true” narrative of American history. The FLDOE's correspondence with the College Board suggests that the AP African American studies curriculum pushed the boundaries of legitimation to far. The initial version of the African American studies pilot challenged the DeSantis administration and their supporters' understanding of America's historical consciousness by questioning the American collective identity and civic culture. The challenge to e pluribus unum continues.

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## The Evolution of Disability Rights Movements: Great Britain and the United States

Joseph Staszak

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“Know your limits, but never stop trying to break them,” said Kyle Maynard, a man born with congenital amputation, which means that his arms stopped forming at his elbows and his legs stopped forming at his knees. This however did not stop him from a motivational speaker, best selling author, entrepreneur, award-winning extreme athlete, and the first man to crawl to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro<sup>1</sup>. The rights of people with disabilities have evolved rapidly over the past hundred years, specifically in the last thirty years, both within the United States and Great Britain. These two movements have similarities connecting the two, but appear to develop independently of one another.

It is important to understand two different things when discussing the history of disability rights and the discourse as a whole. The first is the two different models of disability, one being the medical model of disability and the other being the social model of disability. The medical model contends that individuals with disabilities are broken and that they need to be fixed or

cured, whereas this social model contends that individuals with disabilities are not broken but instead handicapped by their environment. An example of the medical model would be certain very dangerous medical procedures such as chelation.<sup>2</sup> Since there is no actual “cure” for autism these medical procedures can cause a lot of damage to the individual that is receiving them. An example of the social model would be if a building does not have a ramp or elevator for an individual who uses a wheelchair. These two models have been used to define “disability” throughout U.S. disability history and separate the latter stages of the movement.

The second thing is the language that is used throughout history is very offensive and outdated and while these words are used in this paper they are not meant to be used in a harmful and demeaning way, but instead to give the reader a greater context to the way the individuals with disabilities have been treated throughout history.

Historically disability history focuses on learning about the different laws and acts,

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<sup>1</sup> GDA Podcasts, *GDA Podcasts*, April 26, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> NHS, “Treatments That Are Not Recommended for Autism,” NHS choices (NHS, December 16, 2022),

and how these ideas progress. However, not much time has been spent looking more in depth into the larger discourse of disability rights as well as how this discourse progressed and how it led to effective change. This fostered interest in if there might be any connection or similarities between the way that the disability rights movement progresses in the United States to how it developed overseas, and more specifically in a country relatively similar to the United States, Great Britain. More specifically, how did the disability rights movement with the United States evolve? How did the disability rights movement in Great Britain evolve over time? And were there any connections between these two movements, and if so what are they?

There is not a large variety of literature about the history of the disability rights movements in both the United States and Great Britain as they are relatively recent movements, only having progressed in the last fifty or so years. There is some literature regarding theories of disability, and the normalcy of disability. People, such as Elizabeth Barnes<sup>3</sup> who writes about the social model of disability, and Lennard J Davis,<sup>4</sup> who writes about how normalization of individuals with disabilities within society has led to positive changes being brought about. These books, along with

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2018).

speeches by famous disability rights activists such as Judith Heumann and the Netflix documentary *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*, have all aided in the research process in defining the evolution of these movements and how they compare to one another.<sup>5</sup>

The disability rights movement in the United States has evolved much more rapidly than the subsequent movement in Great Britain, with landmark legislation such as the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Developmentally Disabled Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) of 1975, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and many others coming before the major landmark decisions in the United Kingdom. The United States and Great Britain both see the beginning of their disability rights movements begin with a heavy focus on physically disabled veterans after World War two. However, the exposure of the Willowbrook Institution ushers in a new wave of disability rights within the United States, one that focuses on individuals with neurological disabilities, before the subsequent movement evolution inside Great Britain. The U.S. remains ahead of Great Britain with its evolution of disability rights for the remainder of the 20th century and into the 21st century.

<sup>4</sup> Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> *Crip Camp: A revolution*, Netflix, 2020.

This paper will begin to dive deeper into the progression of the disability rights movement within the United States and then look towards Great Britain and its evolution. It will discuss the different waves of the movement and how the discourse present in the United States during the 20th century leading up to the passage of the ADA. Next this paper will look at the way that the disability rights Movement within Great Britain develops, from mainly focusing on ex-service men with physical disabilities, to then sudden shift to focusing on individuals with more neurological and mental disabilities.

*Disability rights movement within the United States*

United States history is filled with many different rights movements that all seemingly overlap with one another. The Disability Rights movement is one of these, finding its beginning in the middle part of the 20th century, with a heavy focus on the veterans that had been disabled in World War 2. Laws and organizations form to help these individuals reintegrate back into society after the war and begin the normalization of individuals with physical disabilities, which leads to the eventual story of the Willowbrook institution. This story begins to shine the light on individuals with cerebral disabilities, such as autism, down

syndrome, and many others. From the outcry of these individuals and more specifically their families the attention becomes on how they can be “cured” or “fixed” and brought back into society. It is not until these individuals begin to speak up on their own, that there is a real shift not only in policy but attitude and mindset within society. This continues with the discussion around independent living, which will begin the third and final era of disability rights within the United States, the self-advocacy era. This all culminates in the passing of the ADA in 1990, which marks a new beginning for individuals with disabilities in speaking up for themselves and how they can be integrated into society as a whole.

One of the key areas of overlap that the United States has in its disability rights movement with Great Britain is the early focus on veterans and ex-service men that had become physically disabled following World War two. This is where we see some of the first rhetoric of the medical model of disability, in an article published in the New York Times in 1946, Howard A. Rusk M.D. writes “Today public attention is focused on the young men of America who are returning from war disabled and handicapped. They number in the thousands.”<sup>6</sup> This highlights just how much of a focus this was during this time, it was a large part of the discussion happening, so

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<sup>6</sup> Howard A Rusk, “Hope for our Disabled Millions”, *New York Times*, January 27th, 1946.



much so that it was a full page article within the *New York Times*. Rusk makes it known how important it is to have systems in place that can help physically disabled veterans, who were the main group that was being advocated for during this time.

We see some of this help that had been put into place in the form of the Purple Heart Unit, also known as the Military Order of the Purple Heart, which is a national veterans organization. In an article about the Purple Heart Unit, the *New York Times* writes:

“The Military Order of the Purple Heart, nation-wide veterans’ organization, will embark on a peacetime program to speed veterans housing and to provide additional benefits for disabled servicemen, it was announced yesterday by the order’s new national commander Ray Dorris of Portland Ore... The housing program will take precedence over all other programs, Mr. Dorris said, adding that he would confer this week with Housing Expedite Wilson W. Wyatt and officials of the War Assets Administration in Washington on the granting of priorities on surplus equipment needed to complete the

partially constructed housing projects.”<sup>7</sup>

This is one of the key organizations at the time putting a focus on helping disabled veterans. This is such a big and important undertaking that the organization is working with the U.S. government to try and get the necessary funding and supplies as quickly as possible. This is their paramount objective, surpassing all others, showing just how important the rights of the disabled veterans were during this time. After this there is a steady amount of legislation that is passed and signed to help disabled veterans, but the next evolution in the disability rights movement begins in the mid-1960s.

In 1965 Senator Robert F. Kennedy made an unannounced visit to one of the biggest institutions for individuals with neurological disabilities at the time, Willowbrook located in upstate New York. While there, Senator Kennedy observed some of the most inhumane and deplorable living conditions imaginable. After his visit to Willowbrook, Senator Kennedy testified at a committee hearing, which resulted in an investigation in the state institution. When speaking on the institution Kennedy had this to say “We hear a great deal these days about civil rights and civil liberties and equality of opportunity and justice ... But

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<sup>7</sup> "Purple Heart Unit To Act On Housing: Order Back Speed-Up Of U.S. Efforts To Aid Veterans--Also To Help Disabled Men.", 1946, *New York Times*.

there are no civil rights for young retarded adults when they are denied the protection of the State Education Law, which commands that all other children must receive an education.”<sup>8</sup> This was the first time that a major public figure spoke up in regards to disability rights in the United States. This would not be the last time that Willowbrook was public news, as around five years later a reporter named Geraldo Rivera ran a documentary that showed the deplorable conditions within Willowbrook. This would spark major outrage, and lead to a new nationwide conversation about the effectiveness and moral need for these large state institutions.

While it would take another five years for state institutions to begin to change with their unimaginable conditions, the interview of Bernard Carabello, this would mark the 1970s, the next evolution of the disability rights movement. The United States enters into its second wave of its Disability Rights Movement, which is the Parent wave, which sees the parents of the individuals with disabilities to be the advocates for their children, and puts the emphasis on helping and “fixing” individuals with disabilities. While this is a step in the right direction it still creates numerous problems and harmful stereotypes. The medical model of disability, which paints individuals with

disabilities as “broken” and in need of being “fixed”, is still very much prevalent during this time. This period was very short as it only lasted a few years, but it is a crucial step in the evolution of the disability rights movement within the United States, as it moves the spotlight closer to the individuals with disabilities themselves which ultimately marks the final evolution of this movement.

While the independent living model was the first time that the idea of things such as civil rights would be discussed in regards to individuals with disabilities, a few years before this there was discourse around hiring individuals with disabilities into the workforce. In an article about how the year the employment market for individuals with disabilities is starting to become more normalized in society, Howard Rusk writes, “Throughout the country, community programs for the mentally retarded have been slowly demonstrating the truth of the slogan of the National Association for Retarded Children - ‘the retarded can be helped.’”<sup>9</sup> While Robert Kennedy’s visit to Willowbrook was mainly about individuals living there and the inhumane conditions of the state institutions, this discourse is clearly more geared towards helping adults, people who are out of these state institutions, and

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<sup>8</sup>John Sibley, “Kennedy Charges Neglect in State Care of Retarded. September 10, 1965. *New York Times*

<sup>9</sup> Howard A. Rusk, “Hiring the Retarded”, January 6, 1963, *New York Times*.

how they can start to become included within society as a large.

This in turn would create a space for a lot of people such as self-advocates and the families of individuals with disabilities to begin talking about similar issues in regards to disabilities. In their article Romel Mackelprand and Richard Slasgiver talk about the shift that occurred at the beginning of the 1970s, “The disability movement matures with the development of the independent living concept in the early 1970s. Initially led by people such Lex Frieden, Judy Heumann, and Ed Roberts, independent living applied the minority model as the foundation of the political process of gaining the civil rights of peoples with disabilities.”<sup>10</sup> These are just some of the prominent figures that come about and make names for themselves as Disability Rights activists during the early parts of the movement. The minority model, also known as the social model of disability, is something that is very important to modern disability rights activists, as it states that people with disabilities are not “disabled” by their bodies but by the “able-bodied” society that they live in. This is also referred to as the Social Model of Disability and provides a pivotal framework for discussing changes surrounding disability. This is the first large step into a new evolution of the disability

rights movement, where the individuals with disabilities themselves are the ones advocating for change and what is best for them.

One of the major issues that was seen in these institutions was forced sterilization, in which individuals with disabilities were viewed by the public as not being able to contribute to society. An interesting case of this is seen outside of institutions, where parents of three kids all with disabilities are fighting to have them sterilized, however no hospital or medical facility near them would perform the procedure, since there were massive gains made by individuals in protecting others with disabilities from being forcefully sterilized. The parents took their argument to court and “thwarting them, either directly or indirectly, have been the tremendous gains made by the champions of individual freedoms and rights who have won many successes in trying to protect the mentally retarded who are capable of functioning independently in society.”<sup>11</sup> This is the perfect example of how the parent wave of disability and the medical model of disability which arose from the professional wave had very negative impacts on individuals with disabilities. This does however cause massive shifts that are happening during this time, as forced

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<sup>10</sup>Romel W. Mackeprang, and Richard O. Salsgiver, “People with disabilities and Social Work: Historical and Contemporary Issues”.1996, *Social Work*.

<sup>11</sup> Diane Henry, “Parents of 3 Retarded Girls Fight Hospital Refusal to Sterilize Them”, October 2, 1977, *New York Times*.

sterilizations, especially for those under the age of 21, were being rejected and more control and rights were being given to those with disabilities.

In the area of education, there are also discussions happening during the 1970s about making sure that students with disabilities are more included. In 1974 the New Jersey legislature began debating the idea of passing legislation that would improve the conditions of students with disabilities in schools. In an article published by the *New York Times* an unnamed author writes “But proponents of improved education for the retarded children contend that the special session also provides the lawmakers with an ideal chance to require local school districts to install programs for youngsters with severe mental handicaps.”<sup>12</sup> Here it becomes clear just how inclusive the conversation has become. In just a few short years the narrative has switched from individuals with disabilities needing to be kept aside and isolated, to know there is a push for them to become integrated into schools, and as this article states, the push is for even those with neurological disabilities as well as just physical disabilities. This highlights just how much it took for people to fight for more protections for students with disabilities, specifically within schools.

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<sup>12</sup> “Improved Education Urged for Retarded”, June 23, 1978, *New York Times*.

We continue to see the push for protections for individuals with disabilities at the state level, specifically in New Jersey. In his article titled *Disabled Children Get New State Aid*, Martin Waldron writes, “This new policy is only one of several that reflect the quiet revolution underway in the state to protect the rights of New Jersey’s mentally ill, handicapped and ‘developmentally impaired’ residents. Some of these policies reflect an almost complete change in attitudes.”<sup>13</sup> This sudden shift in attitude comes from the work of many activists such but in particular, Judith Huemann is the most prominent of them, especially as she becomes famous for her work in New York City. She became famous for her self-advocacy in being the first person in a wheelchair to obtain a teaching license in New York, something that she had to fight very hard to get.

There are also efforts at a national level as well to help give rights to individuals with disabilities, especially the right to education. In her article for the *New York Times*, Judy Glass writes about the changes that are arising out of the conversations about individuals with more neurological disabilities, such as learning disabilities. She writes, “Ten or 15 years ago, the term ‘learning disabled’ as a handicap was largely unheard of... five years ago, the learning disabled children

<sup>13</sup> Martin Waldron, “Disabled Children Get New State Aid”, March 5, 1978, *New York Times*.

were defined more by exclusion than by objective criteria.”<sup>14</sup> This is another example of the rapid change that occurred in this time frame, as the movement evolves more and more individuals begin to become involved in the movement. The term disability has not crossed over into the realm of education adding another step in ensuring the rights for those with disabilities.

There were also some setbacks that accompanied the disability rights movement, one of the biggest came in April of 1981, in which the Supreme Court ruled:

“that a Federal “bill of rights” for the mentally retarded enacted six years ago, did not oblige states to provide any particular level of care or training for retarded people in state institutions... In the case involving the retarded, the appeals court had ruled that the 1200 residents of Pennhurst, a state institution, were being deprived of their right to treatment.”<sup>15</sup>

This was a huge deal at the time as it further restricted the rights of individuals with disabilities who were still living within these institutions. These institutions were mistreating these individuals and with these laws saying that individuals with disabilities did not need to have their caretakers

properly trained, it would only further their mistreatment. It is an unfortunate step backwards in this movement, but it contributes to the continued movement to get these institutions shut down and to get individuals with disabilities out of them and living on their own.

The representation of individuals with disabilities in public spaces went a very long way in helping the Disability Rights Movement within the United States. It gave those with disabilities someone that they could see themselves in, and feel like they were a part of society as a whole. This representation really started to take shape as we head into the late 1980s and early 1990s. One prominent figure at this time was Bob Dole, the Senate Republican leader who made it known that he was an individual with a disability, which was something that had not been discussed before. In an article from 1986, Dole is quoted as saying:

“I can’t do buttons like you do, just feel and push them in there... I’ve got to be able to see the hole and sort of push the button in. The trouble is these buttons on this shirt are just about a fraction too high, so it's very

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<sup>14</sup> Judy Glass, “New Efforts to Assist ‘Learning Disabled’ Debated Across L.I.” November 23, 1980, *New York Times*.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Greenhouse, “Justices Restrict A ‘Bill of Rights’ For the Retarded”, April 21, 1981, *New York Times*

hard to do that. So every day you get a little test; you're tested."<sup>16</sup>

Dole at the time dealt with many physical disabilities, the main one being all the damage that he has suffered to his right arm. This was one of the first times that someone this prominent and well known within the United States government began advocating for himself as an individual with a disability. This is where we begin to enter into the final stage of the evolution of the disability rights movement, where these issues are not something that is being discussed within the federal government, and changes being implemented on a national scale, whereas before changes were often made on a smaller scale, either by state or even more local.

As the disability rights movement enters into its final stages there is now an even bigger push to help get individuals with disabilities normalized and integrated into society. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in late 1989 and was set into law in 1990. The *New York Times* wrote this when discussing the new act, "The act was considered by its supporters to be one of the most sweeping pieces of civil rights legislation in decades. It extended throughout private industry a prohibition against discrimination toward

the disabled by government agencies and companies that receive government contracts."<sup>17</sup> The ADA was a monumental piece of legislation in regards to the disability rights movement in the United States resulting in federal mandates that made every aspect of society more accessible to those with a disability. It comes after years of hard work by many people and paved the road for the future legislation that would be passed in the years to come.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) marked a true turning point in the American disability rights movement, as it is one of the first acts passed that was focused on helping individuals with disabilities be able to feel a part of larger society. Steve Holmes a writer for the *New York Times*, described the ADA in the following way:

"The public accommodations provisions of the law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, mean more than merely providing adequate parking spaces or ramps for the handicapped. Restaurants may have to provide Braille or large-type menus for the blind or visually impaired people,... space for customers with wheelchairs and

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<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Fuerbringer, "To Dole, It Was An Education to Get Past Disability", June 16, 1986, *New York Times*.

<sup>17</sup>Richard, "Justin Dart Jr., 71, June 14, 2002.

ensure that their friends and family may sit with them.”<sup>18</sup>

These are some of the major changes that came about as a result of the ADA, and they highlight just how little people with disabilities were seen in society, and how powerful the ADA was in shining a light on them. We see things today such as ramps, handicap parking spaces, and other inclusive infrastructure and think of it as common and something that has always been there, but for many people it has not. This time back into the social model of disability, showing how an individual can be disabled and handicapped, because there is no ramp to help them access a building.

There were numerous people that played a large role in helping to get the act passed, many of whom were famous disability rights activists within the United States at the time, including a man named Justin Dart Jr. “Mr. Dart was best known as one of the primary forces behind the Americans with Disabilities Act, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George Bush with Mr. Dart as his side, in 1990.”<sup>19</sup> Justin Dart Jr. was one of the most influential Disability Rights activists within the United States, he was

constantly arguing and advocating for the passage of this act. He became very well known among those serving during this time, simply for how much he was around and speaking with people about how important this act was.

### *Disability rights movement Within Great Britain*

The disability rights movement within Great Britain is rooted in highlighting the conditions of the physically disabled, specifically wounded veterans. Much of the early discussion that takes place within Great Britain deals with this select group of people with disabilities. It was not until more recently that the conversation has shifted to be more inclusive of people with neurological disabilities, along with people with more visible physical disabilities. The movement moved towards the focus on group homes, which were similar to the institutions within the United States, before leading to Great Britain's own version of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Disability Discrimination Act in 2005.

An early example of Great Britain's focus on veterans can be seen when the Parliament is discussing a new finance bill that would have been used to raise money in 1951, Lieutenant-Commander Braithwaite

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<sup>18</sup> Steven A. Holmes, “Sweeping U.S. Law To Help Disabled Goes Into Effect: Gains Seen For Millions Statute May Force Businesses To Alter Buildings And Offer Specialized Services Sweeping U.S. Law To Help Millions Of The DisabledI Goes Into Effect New Anti-Bias

Legislation Could Bring Changes To Many Businesses.” Jan 27, 1992, *New York Times*.

<sup>19</sup> Richard W Stevenson, “Justin Dart Jr., 71, Advocate for Rights of Disabled People”, June 14, 2002.

said that “it would also adversely affect disabled ex-service men.”<sup>20</sup> His argument was that the petrol tax that was included in the new finance bill would increase the cost of road transport, and would force more people into using public transport, which was used a lot by disabled individuals at the time. Also when discussing this bill Sir Ian Fraser said that disabled individuals should be excused from the extra petrol duty. This shows how much people were thinking about the physically disabled veterans, as a part of society as a whole, similar to the conversation in the United States.

Disabled veterans dominated a lot of the early discussion of disability rights within Great Britain as they were the most visible individuals with disabilities that were actively trying to be included into society. When discussing the approach to the idea of the economic situation post war, Mr. King of Southampton urged “for an increase in the basic rate for disability pensions of disabled ex-service men.”<sup>21</sup> This is a good start for the conversation about disability rights in Great Britain and provides a solid foundation for the future.

The idea of working and labor was also something that came up in discussions

when discussing how to best include them in the labor force. When discussing the idea of defense-workers, looking specifically at summer resorts during the winter time. There is a group of workers that were used to help advance the “national effort”. The argument that these disabled workers could be employed to help in other aspects of the country, was taken before the Ministry of labor, and the position of disabled men specifically was brought up by a man named Mr. E. Evans, stating that it can be difficult for them to find work at times.<sup>22</sup> Mr. Evans is one of the first people that begins to speak out for those with physical disabilities within Great Britain, that is not speaking solely for disabled veterans, advancing the disability rights movement further.

The infantilization and idea that individuals with disabilities need to be helped and cared for by others, even when they may be perfectly able to take care of themselves, is something that is present. For example, the London times published a newspaper article entitled, Debate on employment of disabled and elder persons<sup>23</sup>. Having people with disabilities be associated with the elderly shows how they were seen by larger society. People with disabilities and specifically in this case, those with physical disabilities are seen as

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<sup>20</sup> “House of Commons”, *Times*, June 6, 1951, *The Times Digital Archive*.

<sup>21</sup> “House of Commons”, *Times*, November 7, 1951, *The Times Digital Archive*.

<sup>22</sup> “Parliament”, *Times*, August 3, 1951, *The Times Digital Archive*.

<sup>23</sup> “Diary Of Next Week’s Events”, *Times*, July 8, 1961, *The Times Digital Archive*.



weak and in need of someone to be helping them at all times even though there are things that they still might be able to do by themselves. In this case a lot of them are former veterans, specifically men, so they would most likely still be in good physical condition, only needing help in the area of their handicap. This is a very early argument describing the Social Model of Disability, where the individuals themselves are perfectly fine, it is society and their environment that is handicapping them.

At the start of the 1960s we began to see the conversation in Great Britain evolve to begin to include individuals with neurological disabilities, alongside those with physical disabilities. Similar to the pattern in the United States at this time, it appears that Great Britain thought its best course of action was to have these individuals placed into group homes. In March of 1961 there was discussion about the construction of a new home in Bognor Regis, near the southern British Coast. The issue that was brought up was about whether or not that project had been abandoned because two local private schools apparently rejected the idea as they felt that the location was too close to their location, and they did not think it would be able to be the proper size necessary.. When talking about the issue Mr. Kenneth Robinson, who was a representative in Parliament during this time

had this to say “Projects of this kind are constantly being frustrated by local difficulties being raised about sitting. Is there nothing the Minister can do, perhaps in conjunction with the Minister of Housing and Local Government, in trying to influence local authorities to be a little more sympathetic towards this type of development.”<sup>24</sup> This shows some of the issues that the disability rights movement in Great Britain faced in its early stages, with many doubting if it was even necessary to have these group homes.

Similar to the United States, in Great Britain these individuals with neurological disabilities are subjected to being separated from the larger part of society by being placed into these group homes. These group homes similar to the institutions in the United States seem to be mistreating the individuals with disabilities as well. Unfortunately, at this time individuals with neurological disabilities are seen as “rejects” and “outcasts”. This also led to the mistreatment of these individuals as they were seen as needing to be removed from society, including many horrible things being done to them such as Euthanasia.

One of the most prominent people in both England and the United States was C. Killick Millard, who was mainly working between 1930-1955 but was the main figure

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<sup>24</sup> “Subsidy Rate In Airport Changes”, *Times*, March 7, 1961, *The Time Digital Archive*.

and was a very well known and respected doctor during this time. Ian Dowbiggin writes about Millaird describing him as having “dedicated much of his life to legalizing the right to die, he was likewise motivated by the conviction that an educated, rational and mentally competent person would consent to mercy-killing if suffering from a painful, terminal illness or disability.”<sup>25</sup> This gives insight into how individuals with disabilities were viewed as not able to be educated the same way as their non-disabled counterparts, and how having a disability was seen as something that would not make you of use to the larger part of society. This is another aspect of the disability rights movement in Great Britain that has a parallel to the United States, which is the way that both of these movements had a time where they looked to medical professionals for the answers.

One of the first major pieces of legislation to come from Great Britain in the realm of disability rights is the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act of 1970. This bill established welfare for those who were disabled or for those who suffered from chronic illness. This is an important part of the Disability Rights movement in Great Britain because while there may have been support for the bill, the speaker, who themselves identified as disabled, thought

that the bill needed to be stronger. An article written in the London Times “Under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970, builders had to provide access facilities where it was ‘in the circumstances both practicable and reasonable. There have been instances in the past 11 years when such facilities were not provided, mainly because nobody has enforced the law.’”<sup>26</sup> The prolonged and delayed enforcement of laws is something that is far too common in disability law in particular, with vague and non-descript wording allowing companies and others to get away with not fully giving people with disabilities the accommodations they need. As mentioned in the *London Times* article it took almost eleven years for something to be done about this, and it is one of the reasons why disability rights are still an active fight.

Prolonged enforcement of laws and regulations can be tied back to an issue that was brought up almost twenty years prior to this incident, which involved giving disabled drivers a badge that would help identify them. In March of 1961, in response to the increasing parking problems of disabled drivers, a man named Mr Dobbs, who was a member of Parliament proposed “to provide a badge to be displayed by disabled drivers to help them and to assist police in using their discretion in dealing with traffic

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<sup>25</sup>Ian Dowbiggin, “A Prey on Normal People”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, (2001), 65.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Evans, “Law will ensure access for disabled in new buildings”, *Times*, June 2, 1981, *The Times Digital Archive*.

problems.”<sup>27</sup>It would take almost ten more years for this idea to become mainstream and implemented in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act in 1970. The idea of these badges being used to assist police is very interesting because it speaks to a debate that is happening right now in the United States about how to best aid individuals with disabilities, specifically those with more “invisible disabilities” in regards to things such as traffic stops, and their interactions with police officers. For individuals with disabilities, especially those who may have neurological disabilities, understanding social cues and following directions can often be a tough task, and unfortunately in the United States, police officers can at times give conflicting directions. This can lead to individuals with disabilities being treated harmfully by police officers and not fully understanding why.

We began to see a mindset shift in Great Britain in the late 1990s and one example of this comes from a man Lee Duffin, who although he spent most of his life working in sales and marketing, joined a charity that helped young adults with disabilities to become more self-reliant and independent. Although his main job was fundraising, he said “I had no experiences in fund-raising or the mentally handicapped,

but I was so impressed by the charity’s philosophy of helping the young adults to lead a fairly independent and fulfilled life that I wanted to help.”<sup>28</sup> This is a massive shift from just thirty years prior where individuals with disabilities, specifically those with neurological disabilities, were seen as needing to be kept away from society and kept in group homes. This comes in the years following the United States and the idea of independent living that was introduced by disability rights activists there.

As we enter into the 21st century we see the last of the group homes or “long-stay care homes” that were prominent in the late 60s and early 70s and began to become less prominent into the late 80s and 90s. The last of these homes shut down in Great Britain in 2004 and was a part of the effort to help people with disabilities become larger members of society. John Hutton the public health minister had this to say “people in Britain with learning disabilities were among the most socially excluded in the country. Only one of them has a friend outside the immediate circle of their family or paid-for carers.”<sup>29</sup> This is one of the biggest shifts and evolutions in the direction of fostering independence for those with disabilities. In 2001, there were an estimated

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<sup>27</sup> “Launchers For Research in Space”, *Times*, March 14, 1961, *The Times Digital Archive*.

<sup>28</sup> Rodney Hobson, “Working at a different pace”, *Times*, July 31, 1990, *The Times Digital Archive*.

<sup>29</sup> Alexandra Frean, “Care homes for the mentally disabled to shut”, *Times*, March 21, 2001, *The Times Digital Archive*.

1.4 million people living with disabilities in Britain. Around this time as well, there were schools in Britain that received investments in communication aids for students who would need them. This is similar to what happens in the United States, which is that if schools receive federal funding that they have to provide students with the accommodations that they need.

In the United States the Americans with Disabilities Act (or the ADA) in the 1990s provided people with disabilities the rights to access society and for changes to be made to help them it is not until the early 2000s that Great Britain enacts something similar. In 2004 the British government passed the Disability Discrimination Act which acts similar to the ADA. it was described by the media as:

“The most significant aspect of the new provisions is the duty of service providers to make reasonable adjustments to any physical features that are a barrier to the enjoyment of goods and services by disabled people ... includes widening a doorway; providing a permanent ramp for a wheelchair user; relocating light switches, for someone who has difficulty

reaching;... and providing tactile buttons in lifts’.<sup>30</sup>

This directly connects to what the ADA did for Americans with disabilities and relates back to the social model, contending that in order for individuals with disabilities to be included within society there needed to be changes made to the environment as well.

Another piece of legislation that was passed in Great Britain that is similar to the ADA is the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which was passed in 2005. This act made it illegal to discriminate against individuals with disabilities within the workplace and to make the necessary accommodations to allow these individuals to succeed in the workplace. “Employing disabled people can attract disabled customers.”<sup>31</sup> This is a great way to think about how it feels to include individuals with disabilities within not only the workplace but society as a whole. Seeing people that represent who you are and how you view yourself is very important in helping people feel safe in society.

### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, the disability rights movements of both the United States and Great Britain have some connections with one another but it was mainly the United

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen Cragg, “Legislation Update”, *Times*, September 7th, 2004, *The Times Digital Archive*.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Alambritis, “The Business View”, *Times*, March 4, 2008, *The Times Digital Archive*.

States setting the precedent for and leading the way. Both of these movements have their foundations in the way that society began to see and treat veterans with disabilities following World War II. The care and thought that was given to these veterans opened the door for disability rights activists in each country to begin to further the conversation on disability rights. While the United States had its focused turn to institutions by parents, Great Britain began to look at group homes. In 1990 the United States passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, which provided comprehensive changes that would grant individuals with disabilities a chance to participate in society. 15 years later Great Britain would pass the Disability Discrimination Act, which would act similarly to the ADA. Ultimately showing how, even though the two movements evolve similarly over time, it is the United States that has its evolutions before Great Britain.

The significance of this capstone paper is that it allows for the start of a discussion on the history of disability rights not only in the United States but in Great Britain as well. It is important to just study the history of one nation's evolution as it can close you off to possible ideas and changes that have been made in other nations that can be adopted in one's own country. Individuals with disabilities have been mistreated throughout history in many different parts of the world and it is

important to begin to understand how this happens and how different nations are able to move forward and away from this awful mindset and treatment of individuals with disabilities.

This capstone paper is significant for education as it allows for students to learn about a history and a movement that has rarely been discussed before. Much of the activism that occurs during the disability rights movement occurs during the late 1970s and 1980s, a time that is just now being discussed more and more in schools, particularly in secondary education. Individuals with disabilities have been treated inhumanely and as outsiders, but if we allow for their story to become a part of our taught history, we can work towards people accepting them for who they are. The disability rights movement also has connections to other historical events, including how the disability rights activists used tactics of other civil rights groups to help fight for their cause. There is also great opportunity for current events with this topic, as this movement is still going today, as many disability rights activists fight to have individuals with disabilities seen by the rest of society.

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## **Modern Neocolonialism Via Public and Private Entities**

Brian Crociata

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For over five centuries, opportunistic outside powers have been taking advantage of Latin America. During the colonial era, the natural resources and native populations of the region were abused by European countries for profit. Exploitative practices left indelible marks on the area that persist to this day, and even after achieving independence, many countries in the region continue to function under neocolonial domination. Through the direct actions of foreign governments and more subtle acts of economic manipulation, the will of the people in Latin America has been continuously suppressed by intruding parties. In this essay, I will argue that modern neocolonial influence in Latin America largely follows historical precedent. Political and economic affairs in the region are shaped by modern foreign interests in the same manner that they have been throughout history.

With the advent of lithium-ion batteries and their increased popularity in the search for clean energy sources, global interest has been shifted back towards the Latin American mining industry. The trio of Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina contain about 58 percent of all global lithium reserves, a resource which is highly valuable on the global market (Berg et. al. "South America's Lithium Triangle" 2021). Consequently, multiple global superpowers have expressed interest in

gaining partial-or total-control over South American mining operations. In the first document that I chose, "South America's Lithium Triangle: Opportunities for the Biden Administration", authors Ryan C. Berg and T. Andrew Sady-Kennedy suggest that the Biden administration should pursue a higher level of cooperation between the United States and the countries mentioned above. Citing environmentalist concerns, green energy, and the rapidly expanding demand for lithium, the two argue that it would be mutually beneficial for all parties to work together (Berg et. al. "South America's Lithium Triangle" 2021). On its own, this suggestion seems innocent enough. Alternative energy is a burgeoning market, and the modern globalized economy means that investment from foreign sources is not uncommon by any means. However, when the current political climate in these lithium-producing countries is considered, it becomes more clear that the United States' plans for involvement are not in line with the ideals that these countries have embraced. The elected governments of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile all express heavy left-leaning ideologies, which are largely incompatible with the concept of investment as it is understood in the article. The newly elected president of Chile, Gabriel Boric, has even suggested that he will seek to nationalize the country's mining industry, a move that would likely

cease all involvement from the United States (Restivo 2021). Berg and Sady-Kennedy briefly address these barriers, noting the “United States’ historically rocky relationship with both Argentina and Bolivia”, but they do not seem to view them as particularly significant (Berg et. al. “South America’s Lithium Triangle” 2021). To the authors, such concerns can simply be solved by organizing a summit between lithium-producing countries and potential investors (Berg et. al. “South America’s Lithium Triangle” 2021). No credence is lent to the possibility of countries being disinterested in such a summit. Such arrogance is reminiscent of that displayed by those seeking to spread European-style “progress” into Latin America during the 19th Century. As described in “Neocolonial Ideologies” by E. Bradford Burns, it was inconceivable to Europeans that anybody would disagree with their conception of the optimal society. Burns puts it as such: “...the Enlightenment philosophers concluded that if people had the opportunity to know the truth, they would select ‘civilization’ over ‘barbarism’” (Burns 1980:92). Of course all Latin American people would pursue an industrialized society, as it was objectively the civilized, superior manner of existence. Berg and Sady-Kennedy demonstrate a similar pattern of thinking. Of course Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina would meet with the United States to discuss investment, because it is objectively the best way for them to boost said investment.

This article frequently invokes the ideas of partnership and cooperation, but it

subtly betrays its true intentions in one key statement. After discussing the newfound usefulness of lithium and the growing market for it, Berg and Sady-Kennedy say the following: “These trends indicate that control of the lithium industry could reap major benefits in the future...” (Berg et. al. “South America’s Lithium Triangle” 2021). Notable in this excerpt is the usage of the word “control”. Unlike partnership and cooperation, the idea of control carries a much different - and much more sinister- connotation. It implies a much more forceful involvement, one in which the will of the United States is imposed instead of negotiated. This, of course, is the most familiar modus operandi of the United States. It can be traced back almost two full centuries to the Monroe Doctrine, expressed in 1823. The Doctrine, presented to Congress by President James Monroe, granted the U.S. permission to involve itself in Latin American affairs “in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved” (Avalon Project 2008). There are shades of this approach visible in the article, as Berg and Sady-Kennedy establish that the lithium industry is very much of interest to the United States. However, the authors seem to push beyond this concept and into the realm of the Roosevelt Corollary. The Roosevelt Corollary granted the United States power to exercise more force in its application of the Monroe Doctrine, under the guise of “[desiring] to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous” (Frohnen 2008). It drew heavily from the idea of paternalism, which is based upon the belief that some groups of people are

more capable and intelligent than others. This feigned desire to see Latin American countries succeed, as well as the paternalistic tone of the Corollary, can be seen throughout the article. The failure of Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina to “successfully [transform] the majority of [their] available resources into economically viable reserves available for commercial production” is bemoaned, and it is heavily insinuated that the United States is responsible for reversing this trend (Berg et. al. “South America’s Lithium Triangle” 2021). The exact words of the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary are much too taboo for modern-day political analysts, but clearly the sentiments expressed within them are still relevant and popular.

The United States is far from the only country perpetuating modern neocolonialism in Latin America. In its efforts to expand its social and economic influence, China has begun to get involved in the region, with much more obvious and direct intentions. Thus, for the second document in this analysis, I chose “Chinese Neocolonialism in Latin America: An Intelligence Assessment”, written by senior airman Steffanie G. Urbano and produced by the U.S. Air Force. The report enumerates a few different grievances that the United States has with China’s action, starting with exploitative lending and the weaponization of debt. Urbano describes a process known as “debt diplomacy”, in which China will issue exploitative loans to Latin American countries that do not have the ability to pay them back. The debt from these loans is then used as leverage by China,

allowing them to hold other countries hostage when they cannot repay. This allows China free reign to operate in the region, with actions like seizing key infrastructure and forcibly reworking government contracts being common (Urbano 2021:185-187). China’s strategy of leveraging debt is not unheard of in Latin America; in fact, it is particularly reminiscent of the blueprint set by Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. During this time, major European powers kept newly independent Latin countries in a state of perpetual debt, taking advantage of their young governments and economies. When these countries inevitably defaulted on their loans, loaning countries used it as an excuse to exercise military power and generally institute their own will. In *Born in Blood & Fire*, John Charles Chasteen lays out a particularly prominent example from Mexico in the mid-1850s: “The civil war had bankrupted the Mexican state, and Juárez suspended payment on foreign debt. France, Spain, and Britain retaliated by collectively occupying Veracruz” (Chasteen 2016:169-170). Using Veracruz as a springboard, the French military invaded the country, kicked out the current government, and installed their own puppet dictator to rule the country on their behalf. This particular brand of gunboat diplomacy is outdated in modern times, but the utilization of debt to excuse aggressive behavior is very much alive. Beyond debt diplomacy, Urbano also notes that large numbers of Chinese immigrants are settling in Latin America. She points to the fact that the Chinese-born population in the area more than doubled from

1990 to 2015, an increase which was sparked by “the migration of families to join Chinese laborers already settled in Latin America” (Urbano 2021:192). This is another familiar strategy, one that was used in the American banana republics in the early 20th century. The United Fruit Company, who effectively controlled much of Central America, created entire towns and communities of U.S. expats. Employees and their families would live in neo-suburban settings, “miniature US neighborhoods of screen-porched houses on meticulously manicured lawns”, isolated at best and actively colonizing at worst (Chasteen 2016:200-201). They spread American culture and ideas into the region, contributing little in the way of actual development and improvement. This parasitic relationship serves as the clear inspiration for China to develop their own isolated communities abroad.

Besides being deeply ironic, the contrasting tones of these two articles demonstrate the power of American exceptionalism to color our perception of the world. How can our government condemn “the detrimental impact of [Chinese-Latin American relationships] on regional stability and US leadership” when it has been just as guilty of destabilizing the region (Urbano 2021:184)? Why is it unacceptable for China to take control of key industries while American think tanks advocate for the same behavior? Do we truly believe that Latin America is only now becoming “overrun by malicious intent”, and that U.S. intervention “to keep our neighborhood friendly” is not

malicious (Urbano 2021:197)? After analyzing both of these pieces, it has become clear that the United States sees itself in a different light from other countries. Ryan Berg and T. Andrew Sady-Kennedy advocate for intervention in the lithium industry because they believe that the U.S. must help Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. They acknowledge that those countries do not want our assistance, but they seem to believe that such relationships can be changed purely by virtue of being the United States. Airman Urbano strongly condemns Chinese intervention in Latin America through the entirety of her writing, but she ends by advocating for U.S. intervention in the region. She seems to believe that the United States has more virtuous and respectable aims in the region, despite a history that suggests otherwise. Only by learning this history can we break such patterns of thinking and work towards achieving justice for the people of Latin America.

#### *Incorporation into the classroom*

Although this essay was previously drafted for a college level course, the ideas and the process demonstrated within it could prove useful in any social studies classroom that utilizes document analysis. When working with historical documents, it is important for students to recognize that the content within the document does not exist outside of its historical context. Effective analysis in the classroom should always include a dissection not only of the content itself, but the author, the intended audience, the reasons for the

document's creation, and the broader historical environment in which it was produced. In the above essay, we can see this process being taken with the Berg and Sady-Kennedy article and the broader context of U.S. policy in Latin America. As acknowledged by the author of this essay, the literal verbiage of the article is fairly innocent and mundane, with Berg and Sady-Kennedy advocating for cooperation and partnership in the region. When the historical context of the Monroe Doctrine and interventionist policy is considered, though, the article's messaging becomes a more concerning indicator of contemporary views about Latin America in the United States.

For students in a secondary education setting, the skill of recognizing and defining a document's subtext should be targeted for development. Educators can promote this skill by highlighting the aforementioned aspects (author, audience, intention, context) of documents that are used in class, thereby modeling the process for students. This can be scaffolded as well, with educators prompting students to undertake the analysis process on their own until it becomes an automatic part of dissecting a document. If students can effectively utilize this skill, teachers can incorporate a much broader range of documents into the classroom. Material does not need to be nearly as literal and targeted if students possess the ability to consider historical context. For example, a lesson on racial discrimination could incorporate writings about eugenics, redlining, discriminatory legal codes, and much more

provided that students are able to recognize the racial connotations of these issues. Outside of the classroom, this skill is just as valuable. Politically active Americans will frequently encounter messaging that relies heavily on connotations and subtext to execute its true intentions. In order to function as a responsible and informed member of our democracy, an individual must be able to pick up on the messaging beneath the surface.

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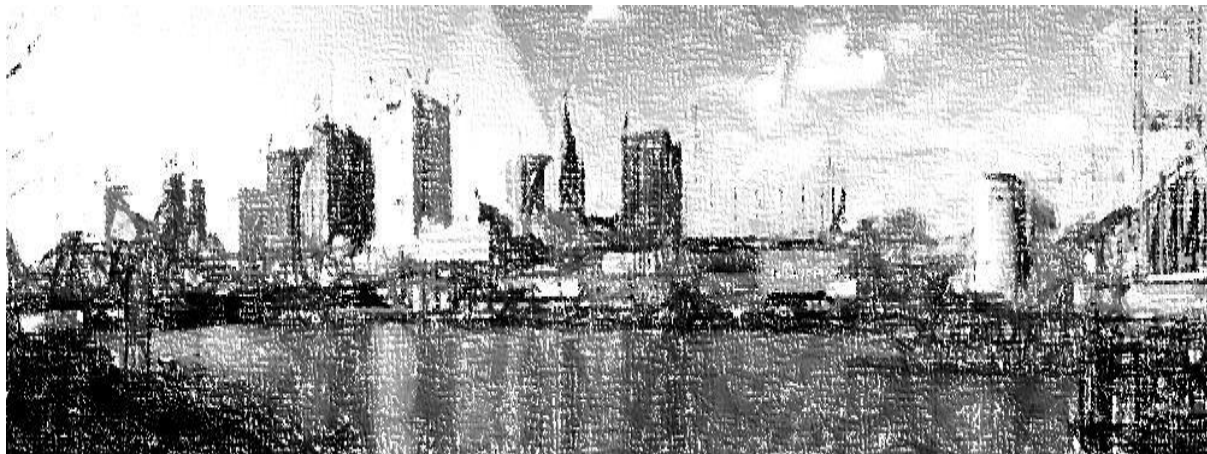
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## 50 Years Ago, "Anti-Woke" Crusaders Came for My Grandfather

Max Jacobs

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On April 22nd, 2022, Florida Governor [Ron DeSantis](#) signed House Bill 7 (popularly called the “Stop WOKE” Act). Christopher Rufo then took to the [podium](#). After praising the Governor and the bill, Rufo denounced Critical Race Theory (CRT) in schools on three points: CRT segregates students based on race, teaches white heterosexual males that they are fundamentally oppressive, and paints America as a place where racial minorities have no possibility of success.

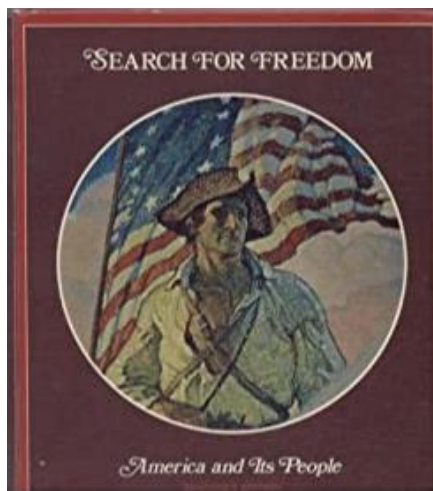
While the bogeyman of CRT is a new iteration, Rufo's objections fit into the long history of the politics of American education. Like his predecessors, Rufo misrepresents ideas critical of conservative hegemony in order to maintain it. “I am quite intentionally,” Rufo [tweeted](#), “redefining what ‘critical race theory’ means in the public mind, expanding it as a catchall for the new orthodoxy. People won’t read Derrick Bell, but when their kid is labeled an ‘oppressor’ in first grade, that’s now CRT.” But if the public does read Bell, they will see the fallacious humbug Rufo has concocted. “America offers something real

for black people,” Bell writes in *Silent Covenants*, “...the pragmatic approach that we must follow is simply to take a hard-eyed view of racism as it is, and of our subordinate role in it. We must realize with our slave forebears that the struggle for freedom is, at bottom, a manifestation of our humanity that survives and grows stronger through resistance to oppression even if we never overcome that oppression.” Rufo’s deliberate obfuscation of CRT furthers the American lost cause of white resentment. Attaching the politics of education to the politics of whiteness places Rufo’s actions within a longer historical pattern.

In 1972, *Search for Freedom: America and Its People* came up for review at a public hearing in Texas for statewide textbook adoption. Noted Texan conservatives Mel and Norma Gabler derided the fifth-grade social studies text for several reasons. First, they alleged, it questioned American values and patriotism. Second, it encouraged civil disobedience. Third, it championed Robin Hood economics (taxing the rich and giving to the poor). Fourth, it committed blasphemy for comparing the ideas of Thoreau, Gandhi, and King with those attributed to Jesus in



the Gospels. Fifth, it glorified Andy Warhol and, worst of all, only mentioned George Washington in passing but devoted six-and-a-half pages to Marilyn Monroe. After the hearing, the Texas legislators agreed with the Gablers' objections and effectively banned the textbook from Texas classrooms. Because of Texas's outsized role in textbook adoption, the textbook did not make it into any other classrooms.



William Jay Jacobs, my grandfather, wrote the book. My personal connection to this history helps me see how Rufo carries the Gablers' legacy into the twenty-first century. Acting as guardians of the American republic, Rufo and the Gablers turn complex ideas into soundbites and use those soundbites to make claims about radical indoctrination in schools. They portray this indoctrination as so dangerous that censorship is the only possible solution. The Gablers and Rufo, in their way, share Plato's [conviction](#) that "the young are not

able to distinguish what is and what is not...for which reason, maybe, we should do our utmost that the first stories that they hear should be composed as to bring the fairest lessons of virtue to their ears." Should any story question or contradict the conservative virtues the Gablers and Rufo hold so [dear](#), "it becomes [their] task, then, it seems, if [they] are able, to select which and what kind of natures are suited for the guardianship of a state."

In a modern democracy, though, which "lessons of virtue" and who "select[s] which and what kind of natures" should be taught to the young are open for public debate. The Gablers and Rufo have therefore worked to manipulate ideas, and how the public perceives those ideas, to justify both conservative curricula and their roles as legitimate guardians of the common-sense virtues of the American republic.

After the 1972 *Search for Freedom* hearings, as the right questioned the left's patriotism and labeled any dissent as anti-American, the Gablers took to the press, seeding sensational soundbites. [Headlines shouted](#): "The Sexy Textbook!" and "More MM than GW!" Mel and Norma then headed to "The Phil Donahue Show" and "60 Minutes" with my grandfather's textbook in hand. Proclaiming themselves as neutral textbook evaluators, they held the book up to the screen and claimed that my grandfather had swapped Marilyn Monroe for Martha Washington as mother of our

country. But as my grandfather wrote in a [retort](#), “‘Marilyn’ made for a good laugh. Yet what better contemporary symbol have we of the potential for barrenness in the American dream when, stripped of its inherent idealism, it is reduced to a mindless groping for money and fame? The Marilyn Monroe sketch raised questions for young readers about mass “spectatorism” and the commercial packaging of human vulnerabilities. It illustrated that not every story beginning with “Once upon a time” necessarily will end with the hero (or heroine) living ‘happily ever after.’”

Rather than juxtaposing the moral of my grandfather’s story with their objection, the Gablers simply skipped over my grandfather’s critical rendition of the American dream and turned it instead into made-for-TV moral panic. They used live television to warn the American public that dangerous ideas were in their textbooks. The Gablers posture—as common-sense Americans shocked by outrageous lessons—spoke to conservative Americans and encouraged them to join their effort to prevent subversive ideas from entering classrooms.

Before Rufo spoke on the podium with DeSantis, he began his crusade [on Fox News](#) with Tucker Carlson. On live television, Rufo claimed that CRT “has pervaded every institution in the federal government.” He further proclaimed, “I’ve discovered... that critical race theory has

become in essence the default ideology of the federal bureaucracy and is now being weaponized against the American people.” With a captivated, frown-eyed Carlson watching, Rufo explicated findings from three “investigations” that purported to “show the kind of depth of this critical race theory occult indoctrination and the danger and destruction it can wreak.” First, he presented snippets from a seminar led by Howard Ross, who asked treasury department employees “to accept their white privilege...and accept all of the baggage that comes with this reducible essence of whiteness.” Second, Rufo described a weekly seminar on intersectionality held by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which aimed “to determine whether you are an oppressor or oppressed.” Third, Rufo detailed a “three-day re-education camp,” sponsored by the Sandia National Laboratories, to “deconstruct their white male culture and actually force them to write letters of apology to women and people of color.”

Rufo ended his diatribe with a call to action: “conservatives need to wake up that this is an existential threat to the United States...I call on the president to immediately issue this executive order and stamp out this destructive divisive pseudoscientific ideology at its root.” With his hyperbolic language, his tying CRT to anything that criticized the power of white American males, and his call for conservatives to “wake up” to defeat an

“existential threat,” Rufo put his telegraphed approach to work.

The Carlson interview aired on the first of September; by the 4th a memo was sent by the Trump administration stating, “...according to press reports, employees across the Executive Branch have been required to attend trainings where they are told that ‘virtually all White people contribute to racism or where they are required to say that they ‘benefit from racism’.”

Extracting CRT from the halls of academia and claiming to find its pernicious presence across all federal agencies, Rufo and Carlson brewed [moral panic](#) to transform CRT into an existential bogeyman who was coming to destroy white America.

In both cases, the Gablers and Rufo used television to gain support for their cause. They turned critical ideas of American society into a demon that must be slayed. By inflating distant employee training sessions and fifth-grade social studies textbooks into a vast anti-white, anti-American conspiracy, they encouraged viewers to see schools as a nearby battle front, they could, and must, fight on.

In an [article](#) titled “Ideological Book Banning is Rampant Nationally,” published in the *Washington Post* on October 16th, 1983, Alison Muscatine reported the following: “‘Our children are totally controlled,’ said Norma Gabler, displaying a

social studies textbook that devotes six pages to Marilyn Monroe but that makes only three references to George Washington. ‘Can you imagine a sex symbol being given more time than the father of our country? I don't think it's fair that our children be subjected to this kind of information. They are being totally indoctrinated to one philosophy.’”

To try to fight the alleged indoctrination, the Gablers created the [Educational Research Analysts](#)—an explicitly Christian conservative organization--to review, revise, and censor any textbook that ran counter to their vision of what American children should be taught. In their attempt to guard the American child from subversive stories, the Gablers claimed children were being “totally indoctrinated to one philosophy.” Their censorious actions, however, did more to indoctrinate American children to one way of seeing the world than did my grandfather’s parable on Marilyn Monroe. Citing indoctrination, the Gablers justified their censorship to preserve their version of America as the only legitimate story American children should read.

Although Rufo himself has not censored textbooks, his actions led to legislation that did. The Florida Department of Education published a [press release](#) labeled “Florida Rejects Publishers’ Attempts to Indoctrinate Students.” In 5,895 pages, the department details two reasons for rejecting 41 percent of the textbooks that

were reviewed. The textbooks either followed Common Core Standards (which the Florida Department of Education rejects), or the textbooks included CRT (defined, of course, in Rufo's expansive terms). Like the Gablers, the Florida textbook evaluators assume controversial ideas in a text will indoctrinate the children reading them. Again, the Gablers and Rufo posture as guardians standing against a radical activist agenda, not as censors. They both throw their hands up, sit, and watch as other citizens act upon their calls to censor ideas. And when others call them censorious zealots, they simply dodge the charges by claiming they themselves did not censor ideas, even though their actions clearly encouraged others to do so.

In an [exposé](#) on the Gablers, Mel details how they understand this guardianship. “When they eliminate good books and put garbage in, they are the censors,” he said. ‘All we do is point it out.’” Because they only reported the textbooks to the Texas Education Agency, the Gablers did not see themselves as censors. Semantically, they may be right. Practically, however, the Gablers’ actions effectively “canceled” certain ideas. Forget merit; for the Gablers, an idea should only be taught if it fits into an understanding of “good books” that happens to coincide with their conservative worldview. The good books argument is akin to the argument Plato’s Socrates makes in the *Republic*. Namely, those who have the

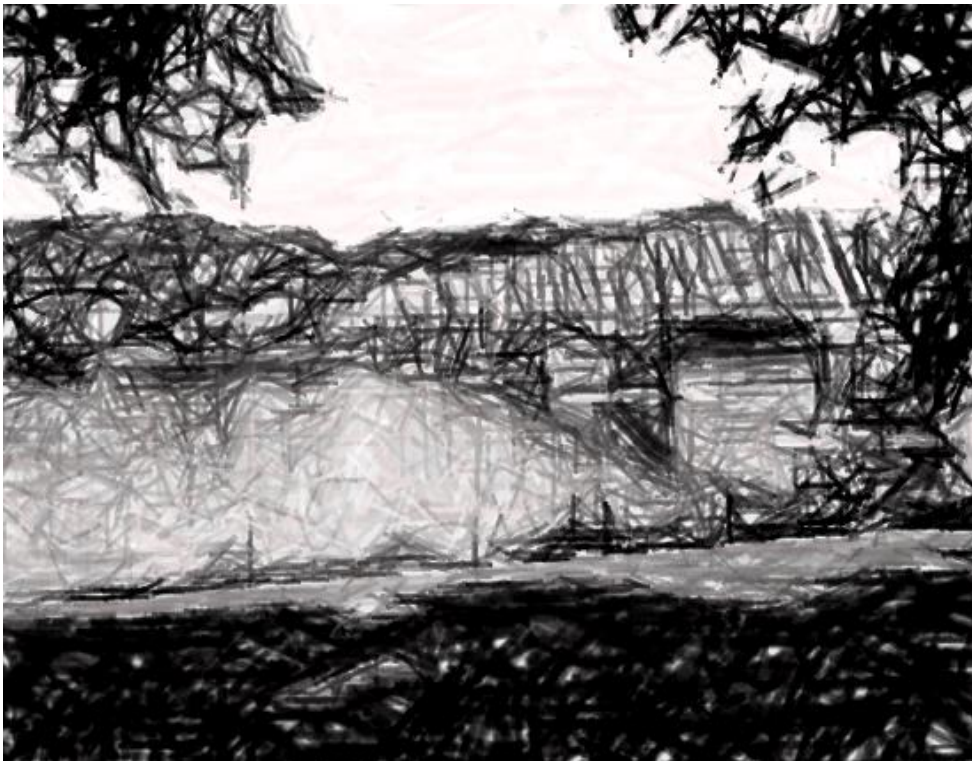
power and guard the republic are the rightful persons to decide which stories and thereby which virtues the future guardians should learn. The problem is, however, neither the Gablers nor any other single entity in a modern democratic state has the sole right to decide what the next generation ought to know.

On Twitter, Rufo evoked this exact line of reasoning. He wrote, “there are no ‘[book bans](#)’ in America. Authors have a First Amendment right to publish whatever they want, but public libraries and schools are not obligated to subsidize them. Voters get to decide which texts—and ultimately, which values—public institutions transmit to children.” Rufo is right, to a point. The voters do make those decisions but do so, presumably, by understanding good faith arguments on both sides of an issue. But Rufo’s sensationalized, bad faith reporting—which turned CRT into something it is wholly not—prevents voters, especially children, from seeing both sides of the issue and forming their own opinion. Positioning himself as defender of America, Rufo’s reporting turns progressive ideas into anti-American rhetoric to excite the conservative base to enact censorship.

Let me be clear, the difference between the Gablers and Rufo is one of degree, not kind. The Gablers aimed at textbooks while Rufo aims at a broad and diffuse set of ideas and practices that are now dubbed “wokeness.” The Gablers

raised hell at textbook adoption meetings while Rufo raises hell on the internet. Both position themselves as protectors against supposedly subversive ideas. Both (along with Plato), however, fall into the same faulty assumption. Critical or not, ideas do not simply transmit to children. Children, like adults, [can reason](#). Thus, children--not just books, not just ideas--shape how they understand the world they live in.

In his response editorial, my grandfather leaves us with a prescient insight: “Meanwhile, it’s comforting to know that the issue of book banning continues to generate controversy. It means that at least someone, somewhere, still takes the written word seriously as a means of influencing the minds of young people.”



## **British Exacerbation of the Great Hunger 1845-1852**

Brian Sugrue

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*An Gorta Mór* is the Irish word for Great Hunger, but most people know this event as the Irish Potato Famine. The Great Hunger began in 1845 when a disease in plants, that was caused by mold and fungus, spread among the crops. This plant disease is called *Phytophthora infestans* and it spread swiftly across the island nation. Potato crops were ruined for the next several years and this was especially devastating considering the main source of food for the Irish were potatoes. At the time Ireland was a colony that was controlled by Great Britain and due to this they were forced to be subject to the rules implemented by the British. Great Britain, being Ireland's colonizer, took it upon themselves to send soldiers over to Ireland and implement new laws in order to help the issue from getting more out of hand. The rules subjected upon the Irish by the British hurt the country of Ireland and its people at a time when they needed as much help as possible. Life in Ireland had become so unbearable that many looked to leave the country, but unfortunately emigration was not accessible to all people. By the end of the Great Hunger there were approximately one million Irish people who had died during the famine years and another one million who

were forced to seek refuge in other countries.

The Great Hunger in Ireland occurred in 1845 and lasted until 1852. Throughout the seven years things didn't seem to get any better, but the British government insisted they were doing what needed to be done to fight this mass hunger. During this famine, if people were supplied with food and the proper resources, there would not have been widespread death across the country. The help England was claiming to give actually had the opposite effect and made problems in Ireland worse. Workhouses provided jobs that paid less than the cost of food, and landlords were being given the incentive to evict poor tenants. On top of this, Britain had not stopped exporting mass amounts of food from Ireland back to England. So when the British are claiming they are helping the issue, why are they making decisions that have the opposite effect?

The actions of the British government tell a bit of a different story to this 'famine'. What were these decisions being made by the British government that were continually harming the already struggling Irish people? Weren't the British supposed to be the ones helping Ireland through this dreadful period of history? By

looking at the history of the Great Hunger, authors - Cormac O'Grada, Christine Kinealy, Jill Sherman, Peter Gray, Edna Delaney, Peter Solar, Tom Yager, and Mark McGowan - all give crucial details into the problems going on during the famine and what made it worse. These historians paint a picture of how a beautiful country like Ireland turned into a place of death and poverty. The heavy impact the new laws and relief measures had on the people as well as lack of care for Irish citizens' welfare on the part of the British government is also discussed. I will also be using my sources to describe the first hand accounts of the Irish who struggled during this time. The authors actively contest the whitewashed stories behind the Great Hunger and use first hand accounts as well as written evidence to show British culpability. The argument states that the actions taken by the British government show that they knew what they were doing. Some of the authors go in depth about how the British government ended up seeing this as a solution for population control, because if people died then less would need to be fed and taken care of.

In this writing I use scholarly sources to reshape people's thinking on the Great Hunger. Drawing from a few sources, I will use firsthand accounts of people who survived the Great Hunger, published books on the Great Hunger's history, journals about laws enacted in Ireland, and articles about how the laws impacted Irish citizens to show how England exacerbated this

famine. Ireland has dealt with a few famines throughout its history but nothing compared to the Great Hunger of 1845. Ireland had experience in how to help make the famine more manageable, but there were other factors at play that continuously made the issue worse. If Ireland had been properly supplied this famine would have ended in much less death. Other nations/groups of people saw the struggle not getting better and donated to the cause, such as the Choctaw Native Americans. In contrast the British Crown went out of their way to not help the Irish get donations. When the Ottoman Sultan offered to send money for famine relief, the representatives of the Queen rejected them, stating that they couldn't donate that much due to the fact that it was much higher than the amount the Queen donated. This would be seen as an insult to donate more than the Queen. The actions of the British were the reason the death toll went up as high as it did and they continued to act in their best interest. This has been viewed for years as a tragedy that couldn't be avoided, but diving deeper into this topic allows readers to see the man made factors that helped exacerbate this problem.

By looking at the significance of the laws put in place by the British government and the food being transported from Ireland to England, it is clear that this famine was very much exacerbated by the British. In general people believe this was a famine caused by a disease in the potatoes, but the

lengths the British went to in order to ‘help’ Ireland actually ended up making everything worse and leading to more death. By looking at scholarly sources the reader can see that the British didn’t act in the best interest of the Irish and instead ignored the problem at hand. British bias towards the Irish drove the government to pass the Poor Relief Act, The Temporary Relief Act, or the Poor Law Extension Act which were said to be effective measures in fighting the famine but they were all ineffective. The treatment of the Irish people by Britain will always be remembered by those who survived those traumatic years, but in order to learn from history the story must be true and unbiased. In order to understand the trauma and hardships caused by the British government, one must look into the actions that harmed the Irish and how the people were affected by them. By looking at the living conditions brought upon the Irish by Britain's relief and the laws enacted by the government it is clear that this famine was amplified by England.

### *Exacerbating the Famine*

Ireland is no stranger to food shortages, as the Irish have experienced sixteen different food shortages from the year 1800 to 1845. But when the blight arrived in Ireland in 1845, this happened to be the first food shortage that affected the entire country of Ireland. “By late 1845

Ireland had lost about half of its potato crop to the blight. The English still believed the food shortage would not last. They thought that if the Irish people needed more help, Ireland should use its own tax revenue”( Sherman, 2017, p.18). In the beginning of the famine, government officials in England did not believe that the blight was as bad as people were saying and they thought this whole thing is an Irish problem. This was initially seen by the British government as an Irish issue that required action from no one but the Irish. What was going on in Ireland was being overlooked by those in England. It was assumed that if the British were to help the Irish by giving them government assistance, the Irish would rely too heavily on handouts and things would never get better in the country.

Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel had a harsh view of the Irish people and felt they were exaggerating when talking about how bad the blight was. When scientists told him that this should not to be taken lightly and that they weren’t overreacting, he chose to believe that they were still overreacting and that this wasn’t a big deal. When the Irish did look to see what the British were doing they were shocked and horrified to see them making things worse:

“In the midst of all this suffering, the Irish began to examine the actions of the British government. Food continued to be exported out of Ireland. British owners of Irish land



were still entitled to the crops grown on that land. Their businesses relied on these crops. And British policy did not prevent the export. Starving Irish people became furious as they watched boatloads of grain depart from their docks for England. Food riots erupted at ports such as Youghal and Dungaran in southeast Ireland”(Sherman, 2017, p.22).

Ireland was growing enough food to feed its people but they had to watch this food get shipped out of the country. The fact that Britain wasn't taking this issue seriously was clear when seeing that they continued to transport food from Ireland back to England. During a famine the goal is to get enough food to feed the entire country, but if the English government decided to keep that food they were exporting in Ireland, then the majority of people would have been fed.

Allowing Britain to export food out of Ireland hurt the poor in the country for years and allowed many people to starve to death. The exportation of food out of Ireland, made this whole issue of not having enough food worse. Importing food would help this mass hunger, but taking food away from the starving people when they could be surviving off that food is helping nobody. In the beginning it was the blight that caused Ireland's food shortage, but as time went on it was the policies that were implemented by Britain that made the issue worse. It was

said that the weak policies “did not help much” and that “stronger action by the British government could have prevented some suffering”( Sherman, 2017, p.34). The British government made efforts to start soup kitchens and public works projects to provide food and work to those who were affected the most in Ireland. The problem with these public works was they weren't well funded and they weren't long term solutions. Members of Parliament in England blasted the politicians who were going out of their way to do less to help the suffering Irish because it was inhumane and England would be looked down on if the problem got more out of hand. Christine Kinealy in her works “The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology, and Rebellion” points out: “The decision to make public works unproductive divided members of the Whig Party and caused a rift between the Irish Executive and the Treasury, a division that developed as the Famine progressed” (Kinealy, 2002, p.38).

There were certain members of parliament who were doing what they could to not help this famine die down. Decisions like this enraged the Irish people because they were expecting help from the country that has power over them. Instead Whig policy was focused on getting poor people off the land “and if it took mass death to achieve that directive, so be it”(McGowan, 2017, p.87). The intentions of the British government, led by the Whig party, were not that of wanting to give much help to the

Irish. By overlooking mass death, the British were willing to undersupply the Irish and do less to help them. Since these were not citizens of England they were very comfortable with death amongst the Irish.

One man testified that when his grandfather talked about the public relief efforts, he would say “that there were so many making for the poorhouses that there wasn’t accommodation for half of them”(Ó Gráda, 2001, p.134). The decision to make these relief efforts not well funded or well organized hurt many Irish who were struggling. Many Irish looked to these different relief efforts put in place by the British but when people saw how little supply there was, some turned on each other to survive. Decisions like these came about due to a new thought amongst some British, which stated how this famine was an opportunity to bring about a regeneration of Ireland. The issue was that this was based on British views and was built around getting rid of religion and culture in Ireland.

Throughout the famine years politicians would expect lots of crops to be grown during the farming seasons. In Ireland they were producing enough food to feed the majority of the country but many people were still starving and unable to get access to food. Britain showed how seriously they took this problem:

“In autumn 1846, the Treasury decided that a portion of the modest amount of grain imported by the government should be sent in the

first place to Scotland, despite the greater destitution in Ireland. This action caused considerable alarm amongst relief officials in Ireland. It was also an early example of decisions being made in London which ignored advice from relief officials on the ground”( Kinealy, 39).

This was a huge indicator to the Irish that they were not being taken seriously. People were starving and struggling to survive, but the British government continued to claim that this was not a big deal and that if the Irish needed help they should help themselves. Since this issue wasn’t taken seriously, people assumed that this was an Irish problem which required solutions made by the Irish government.

After debates about what to do, in the Autumn of 1845 Prime Minister Robert Peel decided to implement a Temporary Relief Committee with the goal of feeding the poor. He also shipped in 100,000 pounds of Indian Corn into Ireland with the thought that this food will replace potatoes in Ireland. These relief efforts were not put into place immediately because Prime Minister Peel felt that there was enough time to wait before the impacts of the shortages were to be felt in the following Spring and Summer. He expected the cheap Indian corn to take the place of the potato on the Irish palate. The relief efforts were better than nothing, but this was also seen as temporary relief.

The British government expected this to get Ireland back up on its feet, but that was not the case. Prime Minister Peel was replaced in 1846 by Prime Minister John Russell. This then led to new relief efforts under the Russell administration.

When Prime Minister Russell came into power he introduced new relief efforts that were vastly different from the measures in which Peel put into place. Robert Peel's measures were already not much help for the poor Irish, but when Russell's relief efforts replaced the old ones it was clear that this would hurt the Irish. Russell's measures meant much less food being provided for them and access to places to stay and eat were going to be more restrictive than they were before. These new measures also made Public Works the centerpiece of the help offered, but the measures were made to be unproductive. The most important part of the relief systems that was changed after the transition of leadership, the government still did not import food into Ireland.

During a famine, importing food would have been one of the best things they could have done. The only reason Peel's relief efforts were more successful than Russell's was because the new administration was clearly trying to make relief efforts in Ireland as unproductive as possible.

The Whig government had made the Public Works much harsher than it was before. Some big issues with the Public Works were that there were delays in people

getting paid, people got paid low wages that did nothing against inflation, and changes in working hours to 6am to 6pm with a pay cut penalty for being late. "Despite daily reports to Trevelyan recounting instances of death from starvation of people dependent on the relief works, the Treasury insisted that the wages paid were adequate. The lowness of the wages contrasted with the high level of administrative expenses for the public works" (Kinealy, 40). The Irish thought that Public Works should be properly funded and the workers should be paid enough to survive during the famine. The pay was less than the cost of food for poor people and the jobs didn't make much sense in terms of economic relief or famine relief. The thought process of adding jobs was also ineffective because the British would have Irish workers build things such as roads but these roads wouldn't go anywhere. The jobs were not meant to help boost job growth or the economy, they were instead put there to provide some type of work for the Irish. The British government used the excuse that they were spending a lot of money on these relief systems but they should be using some of that money to properly pay the poor, hard working people. When the British realized the public works were failing they decided that:

"At the beginning of 1847, in recognition of the failure of the public works, the government decided to abandon them and replace them with a new relief measure

based on the provision of free food in a number of specially established soup kitchens. The legislation, known as the Temporary Relief Act or ‘Soup Kitchen Act’, opposed current orthodoxy which viewed the provision of gratuitous relief as both ideologically flawed and expensive”( Kinealy, 41).

This is another example of the British doing something nice but it is not getting a lot of applause because members of the Whig party thought this would cost Britain too much money. They also had their own biases, in which they believed that the thought of generously helping the Irish was erroneous. Even though the British government was actively talking about helping the Irish, there were members of the government who allowed their biases to get in the way of providing relief to people who were struggling.

In the year 1847, when looking at the crops across the country, there was very little blight to be found, but the potato and there wasn’t as much corn being grown. The new policies instituted by the British marked a turning point because in their minds this was where responsibility shifted from Britain to Ireland. This led the British to feel that the Irish would finance relief efforts on their own from now on. As time went on more evictions occurred and more people were in poverty each day. During the Great Hunger land prices started to drop which

allowed wealthy businessmen from Britain to seize this golden opportunity. As they started to buy up all the land, the landowners immediately either evicted the tenants or raised rent so they would have to move out. If families couldn’t afford these high prices then they would be left homeless and their homes would be knocked down so the land could be used. By increasing rent on farmers there was a now homelessness problem which made the poverty/death rate rise. By evicting families from their home or land, they were effectively giving them a death sentence because being evicted meant they lost everything. Experts claimed that “ultimately, there is history to blame: the creation of the landlord class”( Solar, 2015, p.73). Without the land they couldn’t support their family in any way, because that land gave them a home and a source of income. By putting responsibility of the poor on landlords they created a divide amongst those trying to survive in Ireland.

The further incentive for landlords to evict, was a raucous product of the new Poor Law Relief. From when this started in 1847 to the peak in 1850, there were 100,000 Irish men, women, and children stranded without a home. The evictions didn’t stop in 1850 either, “many more were illegally evicted or voluntarily surrendered their holdings in an effort to become eligible for relief, forced to do so by the harsh regulations of the new Quarter-Acre Clause which deemed that anybody occupying more than this quantity of land was not eligible to receive relief.

Homelessness and social dislocation, therefore, became a major source of distress and death in the latter years of famine”(Kinealy, 44-45). Families who didn't leave their homes or land suffered consequences. Many families had the roofs burned off their homes because the soldiers knew that a home without a roof wouldn't help a family during the brutal Irish winter. At this point thousands have died or are in poverty, but the British still felt it was right to continue shipping food out of the country. Shipping food out of Ireland made the hunger worse, but when Irish families were being kicked off their land things were thrown more into turmoil.

The brutal winter that came also interfered with importation of foods from the United States to Ireland, which led England to look to other European countries for help. Unfortunately due to other European countries also being hit with blight the English couldn't look to them for Irish aid. The Irish were struggling during the winter because there wasn't more help on the way but evictions also started to rise leaving more people homeless. Scholars said that “evictions reached massive proportions during the winter which is commonly regarded as the Famine's worst”( Yager, 1996, p.30). During the worst time of the year people are being kicked out of their homes and left homeless. People who refused to leave had the roof burned off or were forcefully removed. Many had no choice but to give up their homes because

when they were formally evicted, landlord's hired men to burn roofs or destroy the affected dwellings there. They would then, as soon as the tenants' effects had been removed, have soldiers or police who were likely to quell any thought of resistance. During this brutal winter, many soldiers burned the roofs off people's homes in order to ensure people don't stay on the land. The winters in Ireland had been ruthless, so not having a roof over their homes would ensure they would freeze to death if they stayed. Tenants were evicted in the dead of winter and ended up losing their lives due to the unbearable conditions. But even through all of that, British Home Secretary Sir George Grey communicated that landlords were not going to get into any trouble with the government for destroying people's homes.

Landlords were able to brutally evict people without having to fear for any consequences from the government. But landlords were acting in response to the Irish Poor Law, which put the government's responsibilities of famine relief on landlords. Local newspapers stated that the good landlords were turning into not so good ones because they used cruel and heartless methods of removal. Landlords were put in a situation where they were responsible for stuff the government should have taken care of. When these landlords' livelihoods were turned upside down, they decided to help themselves, but not all turned to burning roofs or having soldiers remove the tenants. Some landlords went to efforts to pay for

their tenants to emigrate instead of forcefully evicting them. Many weren't lucky enough to have someone pay for them to emigrate, but even those who were lucky enough experienced the brutal times at sea on 'coffin ships'.

*Mass immigration caused by England*

The Great Hunger in Ireland started a mass exodus from the country starting in 1845. It's estimated that more than one million people emigrated from Ireland due to the horrible living conditions. The cost of leaving the country was often too great to help entire families, so oftentimes only one person was given the money to leave. But there were many who continued to live a life of horrors even after getting onto the boat:

“The horrors of famine did not end on leaving Ireland as disease and mortality were rampant on board the ships, especially during the long journeys to America or Australia. Moreover, on arrival, the survivors were frequently subjected to degrading periods of quarantine or anti-irish prejudice. Because the demand to leave Ireland was so high, vessels which had previously been considered unseaworthy were utilized, leading to the sobriquet 'coffin ships'”(Kinealy, 58-59).

There were so many people trying to leave Ireland that ships were overcrowded and unsanitary.

They were called *coffin ships* because this was essentially a coffin for the Irish who rode in it. These ships were not well supplied with food or water and often were riddled with disease so many people died at sea. The use of unseaworthy boats were only just the start to the fright at sea. Many Irish were treated like cargo and this resulted in examples of Irish people suffocating on boats exiting Ireland. Emigration to North America was a lifeline for so many Irish people and unfortunately many didn't get the opportunity to leave famine-stricken Ireland.

When emigrating out of Ireland, the treatment of the Irish was horrendous and they were often judged based on their appearance. If they appeared to look poor, hungry, or in any sign of poverty they were looked down upon, almost as if they were sick. The health officers at ports would inspect the Irish to determine if they have 'Irish fever' but would run into trouble with the emigrants because they tended to hide themselves on instinct. It is also very important to note that those who were emigrating had basically nothing with them most of the time so they were not prepared for setbacks or delays on departures. People would come to the port expecting the ship to depart but oftentimes would have to scramble to find somewhere to stay when the departure is delayed. These desperate emigrants were also often victims of devious practices. These practices were commonly used on the Irish, because they were very

vulnerable due to desperation from their recent living conditions and many weren't educated enough to understand otherwise. Many of the thieves practiced stealing the Irish people's baggage and made them pay for its return. Half-fare children's tickets were often sold to illiterate adults who would be turned away when trying to get on the boat. Frauds also sold worthless out-of-date tickets that were altered to the gullible or desperate. These little immoral practices piled on to the hard time the Irish already were enduring. People saw an opportunity to pick on the Irish who were already poor and suffering. Many people lost their possessions while traveling to new places because their bags would get stolen and they wouldn't have the money to get it back. A lot of people didn't have more money to use after paying for the boat out of the country. It was very common for families to use their savings to get however many of their children out of the country. It was seen as the only way to give their kids a good future, but what they didn't know about was the conditions on board the boats.

The conditions on the ships were unsanitary and caused a lot of deaths. These ships were often not supplied well and provided horrible living conditions of passengers on board. Depending on where these boats were going, Irish emigrants had to endure long journeys through rough seas with little supplies:

“The food, de Vere continued, was seldom sufficiently cooked because

there were not enough cooking places. The supply of water was hardly enough for drinking and cooking-washing was impossible; and in many ships the filthy beds were never brought up on deck and aired, nor was the narrow space between the sleeping-berths washed or scraped until arrival at quarantine. Provisions, doled out by ounces, consisted of meals of the worst quality and salt meat; water was so short that the passengers threw their salt provisions overboard - they could not eat them and satisfy their raging thirst afterwards. People lay for days on end in their dark dose berths, because by that method they suffered less from hunger”(Kinealy, 85).

In the eyes of Prime Minister Peel emigration was seen as the most humane method for helping the country, which he believed to be overpopulated. He thought it was wrong to evict the people, but believed that having them emigrate was the only solution. This was also seen as the cheapest solution for England because employing them in a workhouse cost a lot more over time. The British and sometimes landlords often paid for Irish to leave the country because it was half the cost of what it would be to provide famine relief for them. Authors christine Kinealy and Gerard Moran discuss why the British believed

encouraging emigration to the Irish was the best solution:

“But how different from such an Ireland with which we have to deal - bare, naked, and unimproved! - no capital in the hands of its people - its population unskilled - its natural advantages unemployed - such an Ireland is incapable of supporting its present population”(Kinealy, 2018, p. 347).

By the time this was decided within the government, they were tempted to ship people off in order to save their money. This again showed the English government looking to help in a way that will cost them the least amount of time and money. The British government thought getting the population to decrease would be the easiest and cheapest way to end this issue. On top of encouraging emigration from the country, members of the House of Lords named Mr. Murray, Mr. Shafto Adair, and Colonel Torrens used pamphlets to get people to consider leaving the country. These pamphlets that they handed out “urged strongly in the pamphlet titles... the necessity of encouraging emigration”(Kinealy, 346). The British politicians went out of their way to encourage emigration because it was beneficial to the English. By encouraging emigration the British would only have to pay half the cost to ship them than it would to provide them famine relief. But what

these politicians didn't consider were the horrendous conditions at sea. By not taking this into consideration, they allowed other countries to see how inhumane these people were treated. This often sparked concern in other countries when boats would show up with half naked Irish men, women, and children.

There was often outrage at ports when seeing men, women, or children naked or barely clothed on these crowded ships. On top of that they were also very sick and all stuck in a small space where this illness was able to spread among the passengers. This made people who already looked and were very ill from the conditions in Ireland even worse than before. There had sometimes been women who were fully naked when the boats docked and they would wrap her in a sheet before they brought her ashore. The conditions were inhumane and many lost their lives in the pursuit to save their own.

#### *Firsthand accounts*

Those who felt the effects of this hunger the most were those of the lower classes. The people who were part of that quarter lost were farmers, farm laborers, elderly people, and those who depended on smaller farms. “However, the famine's impact was uneven; poverty and death were closely correlated, both at local level and in cross section”(Ó Gráda, 123). This was a



tragedy that unfortunately impacted mainly lower-class people and for years things kept getting worse. Since things continuously got worse, people were always on the move in order to find food, money, or anything to help their families. Some were on the move because they didn't have a home meanwhile others would have one family member go out to get resources while the others hide in the home. Many died on the roadside while out looking for food, and others died while waiting for their family member to return. One man described the conditions of the bodies found on his journey as "emaciated corpses, partly green from eating docks (weeds) and nettles and partly blue from the cholera and dysentery"(Kinealy, 76). The bodies were all sorts of different colors due to the conditions from weather, quality of food, and the lack of food intake. Many wouldn't be buried out of fear that those who would be around the body would get sick. It also was physically too much for some people to do proper burials for their family members. Many of the people were very sick and had little strength to do anything due to lack of food and water. "The people had neither the material nor the strength to make coffins nor dig graves. When a person died they got a plank and tied the feet of the corpse to one end of it and the head to the other end, and the hands together, then two men took hold of it at each end and carried it to a bog nearby where the water was deep and threw it in"(Kinealy, 78). These burials were

unfortunate for family members who couldn't give their loved ones a proper burial. The death count got so high that graveyards didn't have enough plots to bury people. Trenches were dug in graveyards to fill the demand needed for deaths. They would fill every inch of the trench with bodies then fill it in with dirt. The living conditions England brought upon the Irish prevented them from being able to bury their dead.

Some Irish who journeyed through the country searching for help of any kind stumbled across terrifying scenes when looking at huts or other homes. One man described his experience looking into what seemed to be an abandoned home:

"A cabin was seen closed one day a little out of town, when a man had the curiosity to open it, and in a dark corner he found a family of the father, mother, and two children, lying in close compact. The father was considerably decomposed; the mother, it appeared, had died last, and probably fastened the door, which was always the custom when all hope was extinguished, to get into the darkest corner and die, where passers-by could not see them. Such family scenes were quite common, and the cabin was generally pulled down upon them for a grave"(Kinealy, 76).

Many didn't have the strength to venture for help and unfortunately died in their huts. It was custom for the last person alive to shut the door so people walking by couldn't see the dead bodies. An occurrence like this also provided a place for the family members to be buried at a time when people were afraid to go near the dead. The scenes in this cabin were horrendous, but it describes how a lot of families were found and the conditions in which people died.

One man who worked for the relief committee in Killane described the reactions of some poor when they noticed favoritism among who was given help and who was not:

“A man half starved, and considerably more than half naked, bare head, bare legs, and arms, nothing to cover him but the skeletons of an old pair of breeches and waistcoat...[who] seized me by my coat with the grasp of death” (Delaney, 2012, p.108). There were examples of Irish men and women who would go to famine relief institutions and would either get nothing or would see workers giving some people more resources than others. Actions like this caused a lot of commotion because everyone was desperate and starving yet some people would get special treatment.

Another story describes a man's experience meeting a traveler looking to get help: “Going out one cold day in a bleak waste on the coast, I met a pitiful old man in hunger and tatters, with a child on his back,

almost entirely naked, and to appearance in the last stages of starvation; whether his naked legs had been scratched, or whether the cold had affected them I knew not, but the blood was in small streams in different places, and the sight was a horrid one. The old man said he lived seven miles off, and was afraid the child would die in the cabin, with the two little children he had left starving, and he had come to get the bit of meal, as it was the day he heard food relief was being given out. The officer told him he had no time to enter his name in the book, and he was sent away in that condition. A penny or two was given to him, for which he expressed the greatest gratitude”(Kinealy, 76).

Parents had to walk several miles with very little energy in hopes of getting something that would help the family. This man was lucky enough to get at least some money, but many often had to make the journey with nothing to show for it. It is very important to note that without much food or water it is very hard for people to gain the energy to do things, so walking for many miles is a sign of desperation on the part of the Irish. The living conditions were made so poor that people did anything they needed to survive. They even took risks when going on these journeys for example, in the last quote the man had to leave two of his kids at home, and he had fears that they wouldn't be alive by the time he got back.

This same old man was seen again by the same person but this time his journey

had not gotten him anything. This is an example of when some Irish started to understand that with barely any help there was little to no hope. “The next Saturday we saw the old man creeping slowly in a bending posture upon the road. The old man looked up and recognized me. On inquiring where the child was, he said the three were left in the cabin, and had not taken a 'sup or a bit' since yesterday morning, and he was afraid some of them would be dead upon the hearth when he returned. He was so weak that he could not carry the child and had crept seven miles to get the meal. He was sent away again with a promise to wait till next Tuesday, and come and have his name on the books. This poor man had not a penny nor a mouthful of food, and he said tremulously, 'I must go home and die on the hearth with the hungry ones’” (Kinealy, 76). People like him sacrificed and gave a lot just to be rejected multiple times by British soldiers. This shows how bad the relief system was in Ireland because people were being denied relief multiple days in a row. People went there because they had nothing, but they were often disappointed to find the only source of help couldn't do anything. If people have no water or food and the relief system has barely enough to help them then can they be expected to survive? Another man by the name of Denis M'Kennedy, who worked for the Board of Works, dropped dead and was later spotted on the roadside. After the body was recovered a doctor performed a post-mortem examination on

him and was shocked because “he had never seen a body so attenuated from lack of food”(Delaney, 100). The conditions of the bodies were mortifying to the doctors who had to examine them. When examining the bodies doctors could see how the Great Hunger impacted their bodies.

Another story from the Great Hunger tells of people who were so starved that eating food could kill them. Some people had been starved for so long that their bodies couldn't handle certain amounts of food. The bodies of the Irish often struggled to absorb nutrients in foods and their hearts weren't able to keep up with the body's increased metabolic rate. The story went:

'Carthy swallowed a little warm milk and died' was the simple statement of one man's death from starvation in Skibbereen. One man connected with the Quaker Society of Friends said, 'If they get a full meal it kills them immediately.' When the Indian meal came out, some of them were so desperate from starvation that they didn't wait for it to be cooked properly, they ate it almost raw and that brought on intestinal troubles that killed a lot of them that otherwise might have survived”(Kinealy, 77).

The conditions of life brought upon the Irish were unlivable. People were so starved that eating killed them and their

desperation drove them to often eat uncooked food. Other times they drank or ate anything they could because there was not food and water always readily available. There were often times where those who did have more access to resources tried to be generous but experienced frightening encounters. This story is about a woman whose family left out soup for poor people that were traveling to find food:

“The house was near the road and a pot of stirabout was kept for any starving person who passed the way. My mother Mary was a young girl at the time and alone in the house one day when a big giant of a fellow staggered in. He wolfed his share of stirabout and made for the door, but there was a tub of chopped raw cabbage and porridge for the pigs. He fell on his knees by the tub and devoured the stuff till she was in a fright, then he reeled out to the road and was found dead there a short time after”(Kinealy, 77).

This is another example of someone being so starved and desperate for food that he died due to scarfing down the first bit of food he saw. The people who survived the Great Hunger saw a whole different side of their countrymen because of how the laws and lack of help from Britain affected them. By removing mass quantities of food and not helping those struggling in the country, Britain made living conditions in Ireland

unbearable for the Irish. There were families who had to “[survive] on a single meal of cabbage, supplemented by seaweed”(Delaney, 100).

Families had to be fed portions meant to serve one person and had to survive off meals like that. Meals like this led to starvation among many and made people very desperate. These first hand accounts show how the conditions of life brought on by the British were detrimental to the Irish people's physical, mental, and overall health as well as a first hand view of the impact Britain had in exacerbating this famine.

The year 1852 marked the end of the Great Hunger in Ireland, but life did not go back to normal very quickly. The mass amounts of death and emigration meant there were less people to feed and the harvests were starting to be enough to feed people. But the biggest reason the famine came to an end was when England finally stopped exporting food out of Ireland. Throughout the next several years there would be rebellions against the British until they gained their independence in 1922. However, the history of the Great Hunger has been formed through British interpretations and has ignored the evidence suggesting that Britain is responsible for making the Great Hunger much worse than it should have been.

*Conclusion*

The eventual end to the Great Hunger came due to food not being exported out of Ireland, the recovery of the new harvest, and there were now less mouths to feed across the country. But this dark period didn't end simultaneously across the country. Some counties suffered longer than others and some recovered quicker. The British could have played a different role in history, but instead worried more about themselves and let prejudice get in the way of doing what was right. They did make efforts to help the Irish but they were poor attempts at help that only did more harm than good. Choctaw Native Americans did what they could to help, but they could only donate so much meanwhile, some had their help rejected by the British government. The rejection of help was very telling of a country that didn't want to help another in need. Famine relief was put in place as a placeholder until they could pass off the responsibility of relief onto the Irish. Rejecting help from another country and not making famine relief that is beneficial showed the intentions of the British government. The forced exportation of abundances of food that were produced in Ireland was adequate enough to prevent a famine threatened by potato failure.

These actions by the British illuminate the actual problems that exacerbated this famine. The Great Hunger could have resulted in much less death if the British had not stolen mass quantities of food from Ireland. But this also adds to our

understanding of why this problem went on for years and only seemed to get worse. Generally it is thought that the British helped the Irish and that the problem in Ireland had to do with the potatoes. Though scholarly sources and first hand tellings of the Great Hunger paint a different picture of a country begging for help from a country that was not looking to get involved. England initially took a more hands off approach to famine relief but only changed course when there was pressure put on the government. They also did not do anything to make sure these famine relief efforts were long term and effective. This is shown through scholarly sources that show statements made by government officials and through multiple authors' writings of the impact Britain's laws had on the issue at hand. Through this research it becomes clear that this issue got worse over the years because England's sad excuse for help actually made life worse for those already suffering. Britain deserves more blame for the famine getting out of control than they do credit for providing any sort of relief. The Great Hunger in Ireland was not a story of not being able to grow enough food, but instead is a story of British exacerbation of a famine.

A topic such as the Great Hunger would be a great topic to teach when learning about genocide. In school the only genocide students learn is about the holocaust and sometimes Native Americans which leaves many students not knowing

that there were many more genocides that occurred in history. The fact that there have been so many in history is horrific so if we show our students more examples then we can start to teach the next generations of students about being good citizens and preventing tragedies like that from happening. As the old saying goes those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it and if schools don't teach about more genocides then students will grow up not knowing much about genocides or how impactful they have been on so many lives. Coming out of high school I didn't think there were many genocides besides the Holocaust and Native American removal because we weren't taught about any others in school. Genocides also give students a deeper look into extremism and the forms of government that allows this kind of tragedy to happen. That being said this can also be used to show different forms of abuse of power by governments when teaching about different forms and levels of government.

Topics such as this can lead to conversations about discrimination and oppression and how governments have used their law making powers to push those discriminatory or oppressive laws. In the example of the Great Hunger the British Parliament made laws they knew would make the effects of the famine worse which can be compared to laws made in other countries including the U.S. that were harmful towards a specific group of people. The British government treated the Irish as

if they were an inferior race which is a similar school of thought used against people of color that has been seen for years in American society.

Another interesting topic a teacher could teach the Great hunger with would be British Colonialism and how it's impacted other nations/groups of people. The British have settled all over the world and have had impacts on the histories of many different countries. When teaching about the Great Hunger the teacher could have the class examine the effects of British Colonialism across the globe. Colonialism shapes people's ideas of race, class, gender, and sexuality and all of these ideas are relevant in modern society. These are all topics that have some sort of controversy surrounding them in today's society, so teaching students about the origins of the schools of thought would help them understand the world they live in. The topics of race, class, gender, and sexuality are all impacting our government today because laws are being made to protect the rights of those who are of different races, classes, genders and sexualities. By looking at British colonialism students can examine how those of different races, classes, genders, and sexualities were treated by governments in the past. There are a plethora of different topics that can be taught using the Great Hunger and it can open doors to really interesting and informative discussions which will only benefit the students.

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## The Use of Film in Teaching History through the Lens of the Civil Rights Movement

Elizabeth Sullivan

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Film, in the wake of the 21st Century, has become a highly popular type of media to portray historical events. Society has evolved to a point in which it is a visual culture. No longer are we represented by oral and written means; visual communication is much more popular. Traditional school experiences juxtapose this idea. Students are still bound by books and written texts in order to receive information. Educators need to be willing to continue to learn how to introduce new modes of expression in their classroom.

Topics like the Civil Rights Movement are often whitewashed in educational texts. Because most films are produced outside of K-12 schooling environments, producers are able to recreate controversial situations, relationships, and people. This paper will provide summaries and analyses of three modern films depicting different aspects of the American Civil Rights movement. It will then discuss why showing these films in classrooms are worthwhile.

*Introducing the films*

Historical film projects have created controversial figures and taken controversial figures and turned them into likable characters. The Civil Rights movement has been portrayed in film time and time again, each with a slightly different take. *The Help* tells the story of a White woman in Jackson recording the stories of Black maids, and ultimately publishes them. This film creates white saviors, a specific character type in media, often seen in pieces that discuss issues pertaining to people of color. *One Night in Miami* focuses on four prominent Black men in the 1960s; Malcolm X takes the main stage. The film wrestles with Malcolm's stiff exterior and anxious personal life. *Selma* tells the story of the Selma Marches in 1964. The film highlights Martin Luther King's actions and how they led to the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Each protagonist in these three films is understood by audiences differently. How a Civil Rights activist is appreciated in film greatly depends on the general public's pre-existing opinion of the character. Regardless of a production team's goals, an activist's infamy or other characteristics influence the audience.



### *The Help*

*The Help* was directed by Taylor Tate and released in 2011, grossing \$216 million worldwide and receiving positive reviews from critics.<sup>1</sup> The movie takes place in Jackson, Mississippi during the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan, a new college graduate, wants to become a writer. She is given the chance to have a book published, but the story hinges on Black maids being willing to speak to her about their experiences working for White families. The issue lies in finding Black help that was willing to risk their livelihoods for Skeeter’s writing.<sup>3</sup> Minny Jackson begins to work for Celia Foote after being fired by a different White woman.<sup>4</sup> After gathering enough stories, Skeeter publishes her book, which is a massive hit. Skeeter chooses to stay in Jackson instead of moving to New York City with the promise of a job in a publishing agency.<sup>5</sup>

Hollywood has a tendency to find a newsworthy topic and exploit it; despite the

Civil Rights Movement being a “hot” topic in America for decades, it was mostly left out of the film industry.<sup>6</sup> However, in recent years, stories about the era of civil rights have graced screens. The development of white savior stories has become prevalent in American films. These stories amplify (or overamplify) a white character’s influence regarding issues faced by people of color.<sup>7</sup> The white character rescues non-white characters, often learning more about the problem than they originally knew and evaluating how they contributed to the problem. It makes the white character appear as the hero of the story, despite the size of their role, or the danger the characters of color face fighting issues.

*The Help* created two white savior characters: Skeeter and Celia. The women become white saviors through different experiences. Skeeter is meant to be portrayed as a young woman who does a great service by exposing the nature of treatment White employers subjected their Black help to. She does this without

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<sup>1</sup> “The Help,” IMDb (IMDb.com, August 10, 2011), [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1454029/?ref=mv\\_sr\\_srg\\_0](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1454029/?ref=mv_sr_srg_0).

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*. DreamWork Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, Paramount Vintage, StudioCanal UK, 2011. 1 hr., 35 min. <https://play.hbomax.com/page/urn:hbo:page:GYe7uAggQIZyQwgEAAAAf:type:feature?source=googleHBO MAX&action=play>

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>6</sup> Housley, Jason. “Hollywood and The Civil Rights Movement.” *Black Camera* 19, no. 1 (2004): 7.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

realizing the importance of what she is doing. The film also emphasizes how she will be viewed in the White community, breezing past the reality Black women will face if the location of the book is revealed. Skeeter's risks are overplayed (especially because she is promised a job if the book sells well) while the maid's risks are underplayed, painting Skeeter ultimately as the hero of the film. This imagery is only furthered as Skeeter chooses not to accept her dream job working in a New York publishing firm to stay in Jackson and help the women who gave her stories for her book.

Celia is slightly different. She hires Minny after being unable to find help for her house. She wants to impress her husband and the women of Jackson. She treats Minny with kindness and does not seem to grasp certain societal expectations, like the help and employers eating at different tables and the help and employers not being "friends." During one specific scene, Celia takes Minny by the arm, walks her into the house, and offers her a coke.<sup>8</sup> In another scene, Celia and her husband offer Minny a meal (prepared by Celia) at their dining room table.<sup>9</sup> The film alludes to the idea that because of Celia's kindness, Minny's

problems are lessened or completely gone. This then creates the idea that a white woman's kindness solves issues that are systemic racial issues, when in reality, Minny and the rest of the Black community face issues that could only be corrected through legislative changes.

However, different from most narratives, both of these characters are women. By regendering the white savior, two things occur. The first is the idea that they may not be able to be saviors because they also come from oppressed communities. Because they are not men, it is assumed they do not have the power to overcome societal beliefs regarding their own womanhood, let alone fight against anti-Blackness. The second is that they become harder to identify because of tropes surrounding what a woman is supposed to be and how she is supposed to act.<sup>10</sup> Both of these women hold stereotypical traits, such as kindness and empathy. Celia also yearns to be a mother, another trait that has been associated with femininity. Because they have "female" characteristics, audiences need to decipher what aspects are stereotypes and which are aspects of the white savior trope.

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>10</sup> Brett Seekford, "To Kill a Mockingbird, The Help, and the Regendering of the White Savior,"

*James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2016): pp. 6-12, <https://doi.org/https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/jmuri/vol4/iss1/1/>.

Despite having stereotypical personality traits, the women defy traditional womanhood in different ways, making it easy to see how they fill their white-savior roles. Skeeter is considered a tom-boy; she is a college graduate who does not plan to marry until she has established her career. She grew up in Jackson and, after graduating from college, returned, continuing to be well-liked until she gave a voice to Black maids.<sup>11</sup> Celia moved to Jackson and married her husband because of an unplanned pregnancy. She is also one of the loudest women in the movie, trying to push herself into Jackson's social circle. Until hiring Minny, she did not have help in her house. Because of this, she is regarded as an outsider by most White women but yearns to be accepted.<sup>12</sup>

Ultimately, the regendering of the white savior in *The Help* created a character that was not as easily identified as in other films, such as *Green Book* and *Hidden Figures*. The two women appear as outcasts who do not fully understand societal roles, instead of two women extending a hand to the Black community in Jackson. The audience feels its heartstrings being tugged

at as Celia is outcasted by other women in Jackson, both because of her own identity and because she hired Minny.<sup>13</sup> Skeeter is threatened by another White woman after realizing that the book featured her home.<sup>14</sup> If Skeeter and Celia had been written as male characters, it is much more likely that this character trope would be more apparent. As a result, Skeeter and Celia become characters that are endearing to the audience; the two women are effective in their roles of "hero."

### *One Night in Miami*

Starkly different from the two White women of *The Help* are the four men of Regina King's *One Night in Miami*. More specifically, the four Black men in the film. Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, Jim Brown, and Cassius Clay (more famously known as Muhammad Ali) are the focus of this 2020 film. It was released directly to Amazon Prime Video streaming, receiving glowing reviews from critics and the general audience.<sup>15</sup>

The four men unite in Miami, Florida in 1964 to watch Cassius Clay box in the championship round.<sup>16</sup> After Clay

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<sup>11</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, Tate, director. *The Help*.

<sup>15</sup> "One Night in Miami..." IMDb (IMDb.com, January 8, 2021), <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10612922/>.

<sup>16</sup> King, Regina, director. *One Night in Miami*. Amazon Studios, 2020. 1 hr., 55 min. <https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/amzn1.d>

wins, the men return to X's motel room to celebrate. Instead of celebrating, the men have a serious night. Coming from different backgrounds (one activist, one football player, one singer, and one boxer) the men have curt conversations about the Civil Rights Movement and Black support of the movement. Paranoia, racism, and Islamophobia are all commented on in the film, as Malcolm criticizes his friends but also speaks to them about his decision to leave the Nation of Islam.<sup>17</sup>

Going into production, director Regina King had a unique problem. How does one create a positive protagonist out of a man disliked or misunderstood by many Americans? Malcolm X's legacy is often misinterpreted or never properly learned. Media pushes X's original ideas, many of which the Nation of Islam was responsible for propagating. The figure seen in much of American media is a representation of Malcolm X prior to his revelation about black and white segregation, "white devils," and many of his polarizing ideas.<sup>18</sup> King directed a film that humanized X, showing anxiety, paranoia, and friendship as a way to

create a likable (or at least neutral) film character.

Casual Islamophobia arises throughout the film as X's friends Cooke and Brown try to discourage Clay from converting to Islam; Muslims do not drink, smoke, or "have fun."<sup>19</sup> If a friend does not accept you for something as personal as religion, it makes an onlooker feel sorry. This usage of stereotyping lends itself to the audience feeling empathetic toward Malcolm X.

*One Night in Miami* was a refreshing media perspective of Malcolm X. The film shows how Malcolm was a polarizing figure but did not villainize him, which is an overarching theme across Hollywood film. The activist has been painted as one who advocated for violence, black-and-white separation, and the Nation of Islam. Time and time again, the media forgets that X gave up those ideas after his journey to Mecca to complete Hajj, an important Muslim pilgrimage. He gave a voice to "the subterranean fury, [gave] it a voice, not a gun... and [staved] off the rising violence with which he and every human being must

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<sup>17</sup> King, Regina, director. *One Night in Miami*.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Horne, "'Myth' and the Making of 'Malcolm X,'" *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (April 1993): pp. 442-444.

<sup>19</sup> King, Regina, director. *One Night in Miami*.

struggle when men are brutalized by men.”<sup>20</sup> However, it is important to keep in mind that many audience members may not have this complex understanding of X and how his ideas evolved before his assassination. The movie ultimately portrays this; Malcolm X never advocates for the men to pick up arms and storm cities, he implores his friends to use their fame and resources as a voice for the voiceless.<sup>21</sup>

*One Night in Miami* also does an excellent job of portraying Malcolm X as the man most people know. Known for being strong-headed throughout his life, Malcolm X is presented as a man firm in his stances and was not afraid to tell someone if they did not align with what he thought was right. Because of this, he was often seen as judgmental towards his friends and American society.<sup>22</sup> He and Sam Cooke butt heads several times as Malcolm chastises him for not doing enough for the Black community and Civil Rights Movement. “...He longed for peace and believed it could only come when men were honest with each other.”<sup>23</sup>

This chastisement could turn audiences against Malcolm X, or there could be a moment of realization that he was not the man that the media at the time painted him as. Shortly after his assassination, James Loomis wrote to the editor of the New York Times explaining that Malcolm X was not the violent figure that White media made him out to be during his life. Loomis did admit that the activist was set in his ways; he set the way for future Civil Rights activists “much as the Old Testament laid the foundation for the New Testament.”<sup>24</sup> If a film viewer was somewhat familiar with X after his Hajj, they would understand, much as Loomis did, that X’s original separatist ideas were not the ideas that he died with. *One Night in Miami* portrays Malcolm X in a light that allows the audience to better understand his purpose, looking past the “harsh” exterior of his words.

### *Selma*

*Selma* was directed by Ava DuVernay and released in 2014. It was popular with critics and well-liked by general audiences, grossing more than \$66

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<sup>20</sup> James Loomis, “Letter to the Editor - Death of Malcolm X,” n.d.

<sup>21</sup> King, Regina, director. *One Night in Miami*.

<sup>22</sup> King, Regina, director. *One Night in Miami*.

<sup>23</sup> James Loomis, “Letter to the Editor - Death of Malcolm X,” n.d.

<sup>24</sup> James Loomis, “Letter to the Editor - Death of Malcolm X,” n.d.

million worldwide.<sup>25</sup> The film opens in 1963 with four girls running down a stairway. A bomb is set off, killing all four girls; the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing sets the emotional tone for the remaining film.<sup>26</sup> It then moves to 1965 in Selma, Alabama, where Black Americans are being turned away from voting. Martin Luther King Jr. was called down to help advocate for voting rights legislation that would protect Black Americans from poll taxes and tests.<sup>27</sup> After arriving in Selma, he quickly butts heads with local activist groups. There are several scenes in which King meets with President Lyndon B. Johnson to pressure him to pass voting rights legislation.<sup>28</sup> Eventually, King and other activists plan to walk from Selma to the state capitol, Montgomery. During the first attempt, protestors are brutally beaten by police officers and rush back to Selma to escape said violence.<sup>29</sup> During the second march, King decides to turn the group around to avoid traps set by police or White aggressors along the way.<sup>30</sup> Finally, backed by the state, King and thousands of

protestors completed the 50-mile march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.<sup>31</sup> The movie closes with the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and King's speech in Montgomery.<sup>32</sup>

King had relationships with powerful White individuals, such as President Johnson. Often, an activist who has this kind of support will be much more successful in their cause because it seems reasonable. *Selma* highlighted these relations, showing the president and his advisors in several scenes.<sup>33</sup> This association implies backing from the federal government. It creates a positive air around King, something that the audience can recognize and absorb.

Martin Luther King gathered more support than other activists during the Civil Rights Movement. As seen in *Selma*, King directs a group and few and far in between are the decisions made by the other members. Even fewer are activists not in King's posse. Malcolm X, for example, was mentioned but never seen.<sup>34</sup> President

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<sup>25</sup> "Selma," IMDb (IMDb.com, January 9, 2015), <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1020072/>.

<sup>26</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*. Pathé, Plan B Entertainment, Harpo Productions, Ingenious Media, Celador, Cloud Eight Films, 2014. 2 hr., 33 min. <https://www.showtime.com/movie/3505943>

<sup>27</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>28</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>29</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>30</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>31</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>32</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>33</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>34</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

Johnson makes a negative comment about X, saying King is better suited for the American people because he is not as radical.<sup>35</sup> The audience can speculate who Johnson means when he says “American people,” but if the president sees King as a more palatable Black activist, it can be assumed that America is synonymous with White and not all Americans. Little else is said about X; his ideas, policies, speeches, and actions are not mentioned. If an audience member has little knowledge about the other activist, it is likely that they would have a much more positive thought process about King and his actions from there on.

*Selma*, much like the other two films, casts its main protagonist in a neutral, if not positive light. However, part of this positive atmosphere around King may have been from the lack of other important stars in the Selma March. The film never refers to the other celebrities that came down to Alabama, many of whom were actors. The decision to not feature more of Hollywood in *Selma* enlarges the light shown on King.<sup>36</sup> This issue continues throughout the film;

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<sup>35</sup> DuVernay, Ava, director. *Selma*.

<sup>36</sup> Jeffrey Knapp, “Selma and the Place of Fiction in Historical Films,” *Representations* 142, no. 1 (2018): pp. 113.

<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Knapp, “Selma and the Place of Fiction in Historical Films,” 114.

DuVernay wanted to create a “‘demonstration of our moral certainty’ – sacred art,” so, while she wanted to produce a history piece, she had other motives.<sup>37</sup>

By creating a piece about King and the people of Selma, the director chose to eliminate other aspects of the historical narrative.<sup>38</sup> DuVernay does not change King’s actions, making him a historically accurate figure in the film, but she does omit aspects of events that bolster King’s role, which ultimately pushes him to the front of the film and enlarges his moral character.<sup>39</sup> Historians took issue with this because it “‘egregiously distorts a significant element of that history,” changing the emphasis each individual carried within the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>40</sup>

*What does this all mean?*

The film industry, after long avoiding The Civil Rights movement, has begun to produce film after film about it. *The Help* focuses on Skeeter, with Black maids as supporting characters despite their

<sup>38</sup> Adolph Reed, “The Strange Career of the Voting Rights Act,” *New Labor Forum* 24, no. 2 (August 2015): pp. 33

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey Knapp, “Selma and the Place of Fiction in Historical Films,” 92-94.

<sup>40</sup> Adolph Reed, “The Strange Career of the Voting Rights Act,” 34.

stories being the reason for her success. This paints Skeeter as the hero of the movie, emphasizing her role as a White savior. Minny is influenced by a second White savior, Celia, as the woman's kindness seems to alleviate Minny of all problems. The two White women sneak under the radar as saviors because their gender makes their powerlessness evident. *One Night in Miami* attempts to show Malcolm X in a more humane light, in an attempt to make audiences more willing to understand him and his goals as an activist. The United States has a perverse idea of X; Regina King's film attempts to display how X's frustration and curt way of speaking was only because of his passion and desire to find equality and Black rights in America. *Selma* creates a reverent picture of Martin Luther King by maximizing his role in the Selma Marches in 1964. Differently from X, King already has a respected and positive legacy, making the production much more palatable to many more people. The four protagonists in these three films produce different reactions from an audience. The way a Civil Rights activist is able to be understood and appreciated in film greatly depends on the general public's pre-existing opinion of the character of character-type.

#### *Applying these films to teaching*

Film differs from written sources because it has the ability to bring people, places, and events to life. Too often

educators rely on students being able to read well to understand the deeper nuances and feeling of the writer or the details being described. Choosing to present information through visual sources evens the playing field for many students because they do not need to rely on their reading skills. Using film provides a new way to learn; it provides auditory and visual learners a positive experience. Captions can provide students who are hard of hearing or in need of written reinforcement to read what is being said. Film has the ability to serve as a platform that benefits many types of learning.

As mentioned in the previous section, the film industry has recently started to embrace the production of film that focuses on the United States Civil Rights movement and the treatment of People of Color in American history. Due to this, there has been an uptick in historically accurate films that celebrate influential members of the Black American community. Often, film directors have much more freedom than textbook creators do. Films are able to incorporate aspects of history that have been whitewashed or completely removed from educational sources. The United States has a heavy history of whitewashing curriculum related to the Civil Rights Movement. The three films described in the first section are films that I have deemed as accessible and useful to teaching. Each film provides viewers with a different understanding and line of inquiry regarding civil rights and the



role in which people played in the movement.

*The Help* conveys an important message about the white savior complex. Despite financially providing for the Black women who shared their stories with her, Skeeter would never have suffered the same backlash and potential violence that these women would have if it became apparent that these stories were from Jackson. Skeeter's race keeps her away from loss of employment, finances, and the potential for violent retaliation. Class lectures or discussions about how history has shown that identities dramatically shape a person's quality of life can be related to the way Black women were forced to work in harsh conditions and Skeeter was able to write about these experiences and create a best-seller. In addition to this, class discourse after viewing could include a conversation about the introduction of White characters in Black stories and the space they then take away from Black individuals. *The Help* serves as an introduction to race and the way it shapes experiences.

*One Night in Miami* retells the story of Malcolm X, Jim Brown, Sam Cooke, and Muhammad Ali reuniting in Miami for the boxing match. However, the film does something that most media does not. Malcolm X has been villainized throughout American media. This film allows Malcolm to be seen as a person with emotions, fears,

and friendships. This humanizing aspect disrupts the narrative that most textbooks create. Very rarely does media, especially literature, acknowledge Malcolm's humanity. They paint him as a hard radical. This film could also be used as a segue into Malcolm X's life and ideas after his hajj, a Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

*Selma* takes place in Alabama before the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed. It focuses on Martin Luther King Jr., but also incorporates activists that are taught about less often such as John Lewis. Showing this film allows students to understand that MLK did not act alone and was often called to areas to act as the face of a movement. The film also illustrates the violence against Black Americans and Americans that supported integration and equal rights. It does so in a matter that makes viewers understand the severity, but it does so with becoming too explicit. For instance, the film opens with the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church Bombing. It shows the four young girls that would be killed but the bombing does not show the individuals.

As discussed, the usage of film can be an effective use of media in the classroom. It is used far too often; written sources are no longer reflective of today's society. With the recent boom of media representing the Civil Rights Movement or racial inequality, it seems clear that film

needs to be present in classrooms while teaching these events and concepts.

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## Twentieth Century Women Across Cultures

Freddy Blake

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War is dispassionate in choosing its victims. It causes all participants, voluntary or involuntary, to suffer. And yet, throughout history, women have been defined by many social studies curricula as noncombatants, unable to wield a weapon against their enemy despite remaining on the receiving end of the opposition's weapon. Women in twentieth century warfare instead contribute to the war effort from the homefront, taking the positions typically held by men who had left for the warfront. However, war is by nature chaotic and often has little respect for the socially manufactured lines of home and war fronts, potentially blurring the physical gap between the two. This is certainly the case on the eastern front of World War II for the Soviet Union. As Germany advanced far into Soviet territory in 1941, the warfront was pushed ever closer to the heart of Soviet noncombatants' homes. These civilians, both men and women, became motivated to fight to reclaim their homes, supported by

the national ideal that all Soviet citizens must be willing to fight and die for their motherland. One woman in particular, Lyudmila Pavlichenko, became the embodiment of this ideal, and her career "exemplified the activism fostered in young women" of the time.<sup>123</sup> Through her memoir *Lady Death*, Pavlichenko details the proximity the war had with the typical Soviet citizen as hometowns were transformed into battlefields. This blend of home and war fronts is a foreign concept for the United States however, emphasized throughout Lyudmila's reflection on her time spent in the western nation in 1942 as she drew comparisons between Soviet and American women. Therefore, Lyudmila Pavlichenko's story may be used in history classrooms as a case study to allow students to explore the roles of women in World War II as well as note the differences between

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<sup>123</sup> Roger D. Markwick and Euridice Charon Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline in the*

*Second World War*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 204.

Soviet and American cultures in an era directly preceding the Cold War.

Female soldiers were not unheard of in the Soviet Union by 1941. In Soviet mythology and history, women were often portrayed as “being physically strong and capable of fighting.”<sup>124</sup> Prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, approximately 6,000 women were enlisted as soldiers in the Russian military. During the civil war following the Revolution, somewhere between, “73,000 and 80,000 women served on the Bolshevik side.”<sup>125</sup> After the Russian Civil War’s conclusion, the Constitution of 1918 established voluntary military service for women. Soviet women were given equal rights to men in Article 122 of the 1936 Constitution. Of particular note is Article 133 of the same constitution, in which it is stated that, “The defense of the fatherland is the sacred duty of every citizen of the USSR.”<sup>126</sup> These two Articles, when considered together, created a sense of military duty for every Soviet citizen, regardless of gender. This is evident in the feelings of many Soviet women as they remembered their enlistment, such as Svetlana Katykhina who recalls that, “My father was the first to leave for the front.

Mama wanted to go with my father, she was a nurse, but he was sent in one direction, she in another. I kept going to the recruitment office, and after a year they took me.”<sup>127</sup> Each member of Svetlana’s family enlisted in the Soviet military, including both Svetlana’s mother and Svetlana herself. Pavlichenko herself echoes this call to arms, stating that, “everyone who was confident in military knowledge and skills, regardless of his or her sex or national affiliation, had to join the ranks and make whatever contribution they were capable of to wipe out the German Fascist invaders.”<sup>128</sup> Soviet citizens were united against Germany through their national sense of duty to military participation in conjunction with their united hatred for the aggressors invading their home.

Alongside legal support offered to Soviet women prior to the war, it was not abnormal for Soviet women to learn to work with firearms as citizens. In 1918, the *Vsevobuch* was created, requiring all male citizens between the ages of 18 to 40 to complete eight weeks of military training. This training was also offered to women,

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<sup>124</sup> Reina Pennington, "Offensive Women: Women in Combat in the Red Army in the Second World War," in *Journal of Military History* (2010), 778.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 779.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 779.

<sup>127</sup> Svetlana Aleksievich. *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2001), 58.

<sup>128</sup> Liudmyla Mykhailivna Pavlychenko. *Lady Death: The Memoirs of Stalin's Sniper*, (Strawberry Hills, NSW: Read How You Want, 2021), 133.

although participation was voluntary.<sup>129</sup> Lyudmila's first experience with shooting occurred far prior to the war through a shooting club offered to workers at Lyudmila's factory, where her "enthusiasm for rifle-shooting began, [alongside her] apprenticeship as a sharpshooter."<sup>130</sup> Lyudmila then pursued her hobby in the form of a two-year-long curriculum at Osoaviakhim sniper school from 1937 to 1939. Lyudmila did this not explicitly out of her own interest in sniping, however, but because the activity of Germany in Europe in the late 30s that led Lyudmila to believe her sniper skills, "might come in handy."<sup>131</sup> Lyudmila was a rare case in the sense that her intention of fighting in the Red Army as a sniper existed prior to the war encroaching upon the Soviet Union's territory.

Upon Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, only about 1,000 women were active in the Soviet military.<sup>132</sup> The battlefield quickly reached Soviet citizens' doorstep, forcing families that were able to evacuate east. Olga Vasilyevna, an eventual Soviet soldier, recalled that her "war began with evacuation... I left my home, my youth. On the way, our train was strafed, bombed."<sup>133</sup> It was at this point that the lines between

war and homefront began to blur for Soviet citizens, causing both men and women alike to enlist in the Red Army. In the first few weeks, tens of thousands of Soviet women volunteered. Most were rejected.<sup>134</sup> Lyudmila Pavlichenko, despite graduating with top marks from the Osoaviakhim sniper school, was initially rejected, recalling that the military registrar, "looked at me with a harassed expression and said: 'Medical staff will be enlisted from tomorrow.'"<sup>135</sup> It is this initial rejection of female soldier applicants in the Soviet Union that displays that women's enlistment in the Red Army did not stem solely from Soviet social leniency towards women on the frontlines, as Soviet culture—like most nations in the mid-twentieth century—viewed women as a means of support during wartime. As the war progressed, however, "female volunteers were increasingly accepted."<sup>136</sup> On the second day of war, a request was made for 40,000 women to be called up for medical duties. By August of 1941, another 14,000 women were recruited as drivers. This trend continued until 1943, wherein,

Soviet women had been integrated into all services and all military roles, ranging from traditional support roles

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<sup>129</sup> Pennington, *Offensive Women*, 779.

<sup>130</sup> Pavlychenko, *Lady Death*, 32.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>132</sup> Pennington, *Offensive Women*, 780.

<sup>133</sup> Aleksievich, *The Unwomanly Face of War*, 92.

<sup>134</sup> Pennington, *Offensive Women*, 780.

<sup>135</sup> Pavlychenko, *Lady Death*, 54.

<sup>136</sup> Pennington, *Offensive Women*, 780.

like medical service, to primarily defensive work in antiaircraft defense, to offensive combat roles in the infantry, to artillery, and armor, as well as the partisan movement.<sup>137</sup>

While Soviet women had to begin their fight in the war prior to reaching the battlefield by gaining a foothold into the army, they quickly emerged victorious as the Red Army sought out additional manpower.

Lyudmila Pavlichenko and other Soviet women snipers were able to prove themselves effective on the battlefield. Women began to gain more respect in the eyes of Soviet military commanders. Pavlichenko's sniping instructor, Alexander Vladimirovich Potapov, told Lyudmila that, "he was sure that women – not all, of course – were better suited to sniper operations... [women] had a considered and careful approach to the process of firing."<sup>138</sup> Soviet Major General Morozov stated that superior female marksmanship was due to their enhanced sense of touch allowing for the

smooth pulling of a trigger, insinuating that, "innate feminine characteristics... predisposed women to surgical killing."<sup>139</sup>

The Soviet government, recognizing women's aptitude for the sniper role in combat, began training female snipers on the front lines.<sup>140</sup> Early Soviet media reports on female soldiers often masculinized names to hide female involvement.<sup>141</sup> However, this shifted as the war went on, as in March 1942 the Russian tabloid *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published the sentiment, "If a young Soviet woman patriot is burning to master the machine gun, we should give her the opportunity to realize her dream."<sup>142</sup>

Lyudmila's experience echoed these social changes. After struggling to gain even a rifle with which to prove herself,<sup>143</sup> Lyudmila was able to quickly rise up in rank after proving her abilities. She was promoted from private to corporal after recovering from shrapnel wounds<sup>144</sup> and was later given her own sniper platoon to select and instruct in late 1941.<sup>145</sup> While she continuously faced many fellow Soviets who doubted her abilities as a soldier due to her gender, she encountered just as many who recognized her talents. Pavlichenko returned from the

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 782.

<sup>138</sup> Pavlychenko, *Lady Death*, 42.

<sup>139</sup> Markwick and Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline*, 211.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>141</sup> Richard R. Muller and Amy Goodpaster Strebe, "Flying for Her Country: The American and Soviet

Women Pilots of World War II," in *Journal of American Studies* 43, (2009).

<sup>142</sup> Markwick and Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline*, 211.

<sup>143</sup> Pavlychenko, *Lady Death*, 58.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 107.

frontlines in 1942 after having killed over 309 enemy soldiers.<sup>146</sup>

Lyudmila, after being injured for her fourth time in 1942, was taken away from the frontlines and sent to the USSR's western allies to pressure political leaders into opening up a second front against Germany. Lyudmila begins her journey in the United States, where she is subject to the drastic cultural shift between Soviet and American values during a time of war. Lyudmila is interviewed repeatedly, and she finds herself growing increasingly aggravated at the sense of calm and the focus on pointless subjects rampant within the U.S. In one press conference, Lyudmila is asked if women were, "able to use lipstick when at war," to which Lyudmila replied, "Yes, but they don't always have time. You need to be able to reach for a machine gun, or a rifle, or a pistol, or a grenade."<sup>147</sup> In the United States, says Lyudmila,

I feel like the butt of jokes,  
the object of idle curiosity,  
something like a circus act.  
Like a bearded woman. But  
I'm an officer of the Red  
Army. I have fought and will  
go on fighting for the

freedom and independence of  
my country.<sup>148</sup>

For a society so distanced from the forefront of war, the United States' culture viewed Lyudmila as an individual from another world, an object needing pity due to the "need" of Soviet Russia to employ their women—who, from the American perspective, should be distanced from conflict—as frontline soldiers.

During her trip to America, Lyudmila came into contact with feminist world leader Eleanor Roosevelt. When meeting with Lyudmila over breakfast, Eleanor noted that, "If you had a good view of the faces of your enemies through telescope sights, but still fired to kill, it would be hard for American women to understand you, dear Lyudmila."<sup>149</sup> Lyudmila responded that the difference between American and Soviet women stems not from their ability and willingness to kill, but from the difference between American and Soviet circumstances in the war. Lyudmila,

explained to those living in a  
state far from the struggle  
against Fascism that we had  
come from a place where  
bombs were destroying towns

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<sup>146</sup> Markwick and Cardona, *Soviet Women on the Frontline*, 203.

<sup>147</sup> Pavlychenko, *Lady Death*, 305.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

and villages, blood was being spilt, where innocent people were being killed, and my native land was undergoing a severe ordeal. An accurate bullet was no more than a response to a vicious enemy.<sup>150</sup>

Soldiers fought in World War II from both the U.S. and the USSR. However, while Soviet women were given rifles and machine guns to defend their homes from the frontline, “uniformed women from the United States did not participate in organized combat.”<sup>151</sup> So what was the difference between Soviet and American women in the mid-twentieth century? How were Soviet women capable of pulling the trigger of a rifle pointed at their enemy, while American women—or rather their media representation—remained preoccupied with the attractiveness of their uniform? The gap between American and Soviet female participation in the military did not stem from cultural nor biological differences, but from the circumstances of the war itself. While the United States remained free of foreign invaders or bombings, the Soviet Union was subject to constant pressures, bombing runs, and gunfire. In the United States, women who desired to participate on

the frontline of World War II had to travel thousands of miles to the medical tents.<sup>152</sup> For women in the Soviet Union, the frontline came to them.

These conclusions can be applied in a (likely high school-level) history classroom to lead students to think more about the cultural gap between Soviets and Americans prior to the decades-long Cold War. Rarely are personal interactions between the two superpowers brought into the classroom, and equally rare is a case study portraying women as strong and deadly representatives of their nation on the frontline in times of war. Lyudmila Pavlichenko’s story brings both of these seldom-discussed aspects of history together, creating a perfect case study to use as a medium to bring historical context and personal perspectives from the mid twentieth century into the modern classroom. Students may be encouraged to use Lyudmila’s story as a source for a research paper or the excerpts about Lyudmila’s visit to the US as a basis for a student-led project. With the American curriculum often restricted to a western-based perspective on World War II and the Cold War, Lyudmila Pavlichenko’s memoir allows for a drastic change in perspective

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>151</sup> Barret Litoff Judy and David C. Smith, “American Women in a World at War,” in *Magazine of History* 16, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.



and representation of the “enemy’s” culture in contrast to our own.

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**History Book Club with Kapka Kassabova’s *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria***

Emily Boland

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History classes are often labeled as boring and repetitive by students. This begs the question of how to engage students to quell this historical boredom. Educational theory suggests students become more involved the more they are engaged and care about what they are learning. That being said, to engage students, I suggest History teachers can implement a history book club that allows students to pick books that they want to read and can relate to history.

In this article, I will suggest using Kapka Kassabova’s book *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria* to be included in the proposed history book club as an example of a book that both captures the interest of students and serve as a link to learning about a country like Bulgaria which is rich with natural resources and long history. The culture and history of Bulgaria can be encapsulated through Kassabova’s writing is

significant as her individual experience can illuminate students on life in communist Bulgaria. Also, the individual experience and the feelings Kassbova has throughout her childhood and later return to post-communist Bulgaria. Therefore, a history book club centered around Kapka Kassabaova's book *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria*, would explore the struggle for identity and belonging as he reflects on her past and present self, which, could lead to more knowledge about Bulgaria as a springboard to learn the about other countries as well.

The architecture of communist Bulgaria is easily identified, and the uniformity of the architecture contributes to Kassabova's struggle for identity and belonging. The impact of the communist bloc housing can be seen through Kassabova's childhood recollection of her home. Kassabova recalls waiting for an apartment and finally getting placed in an apartment that was small and on a nameless street. The lack of a street name distorted Kassabova's sense of home, and is affirmed by a school project where she had to write about her home and the address. The solution to the nameless status of her street

was solved by her mother's suggestion of writing about her ideal home on Strawberry Street. However, the teacher returned the assignment with a red pen written on the paper, chiding young Kapka for not facing the reality of life as most lived in block-style apartments.<sup>153</sup> Through this experience, Kassbova learned to conform to communist standards of education that included unity under the communist identity, as a result, individualism was not valued. The role of housing and architecture in communist regimes in Europe in the late to middle twentieth century is explained by Michael Kelleher's journal article "Bulgaria's Communist-Era Landscape." Through this journal article, Kelleher defines the landscape of Bulgaria after residing in Bulgaria for a number of years. Through exploring the rigidity and uniformity, Kelleher claims Bulgaria utilized the Soviet Union's model for architecture and design to better show the legacy and impact of the communist identity within a non-Soviet nation, Bulgaria.<sup>154</sup>

This opens another interesting line of historical inquiry, using the architecture of a country as the hook to investigate the different historical styles of architecture and

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<sup>153</sup> Kassabova, Kapka. *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria*. New York, NY: Skyhorse, 2009.

<sup>154</sup> Kelleher, Michael. "Bulgaria's Communist-Era Landscape." *The Public Historian* 31, no. 3

(2009): 39–72.

<https://doi.org/10.1525/tpb.2009.31.3.39>.

the corresponding connection to important periods of history.

This perspective adds to and validates Kassabova's childhood account of the housing in Bulgaria being drab and uniform. Moreover, the connection between Kelleher's article and Kassabova's writing shows the influence of housing on one's identity and how the uniform structure voided individuality through the definitive architecture which promoted communist ideals and upheld a common communist identity. Overall, showing one aspect of Kassabova's struggle with identity in communist Bulgaria and the importance of uniformity and realism under communism.

Furthermore, Kassabova's identity was challenged by governmental upheaval and the fall of communism in Bulgaria. Through *Street Without a Name*, the reader can experience the turmoil and tumultuous end to the People's Republic of Bulgaria. The brewing of change is addressed by Kassabova as well as the uneasy atmosphere within her school and home as rumors of a murdered journalist and a bloodless governmental coup were looming. The stress of the uniformity that consumed Kassabova's identity was threatened and with the "televised execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu by a three-man fighting

squad" the fate of the Bulgaria Kapka knew was in shambles.<sup>155</sup> Kapka referred to the end of the People's Republic of Bulgaria as the last act of a forty-five-year-long theater" which indicates the manufactured identity of communism was gone, leaving her to reconstruct herself and her identity and belonging within the world. However, this experience while individual to Kassabova was a collective memory for citizens of Bulgaria. Therefore, this memory can be viewed through the idea of collective and intergenerational memory, as her experience was of a child being told by her parents. This can be used to discuss the ongoing turmoil in the modern world, as well to investigate other historical examples of government upheaval.

The significance of collective and intergenerational memory is highlighted in Paul Thompson's journal article "Community and Individual Memory: An Introduction." Thompson addresses the impact of collective memory that is passed down from generation to generation on the testimony of historical accounts.<sup>156</sup> This can be applied to Kassabova's account as she is informed of the political upheaval by her parents not through her direct self, which shows the use of collective memory within Kassabova's book. Thus, displaying the transformation and destruction of Kapka's

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<sup>155</sup> Kassabova, 120-2.

<sup>156</sup> Thompson, Paul. "Community and Individual Memory: An Introduction." *The Oral History*

*Review* 36, no. 2 (2009): i-v.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20628065>.

communist identity with the fall of the Bulgarian communist regime. This information can be used to bridge discussions and lead to further explorations of other former communist governments since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Moreover, emigrating from Bulgaria resulted in a massive shift in Kassabova's sense of identity and belonging. Kapka throughout her book glimpses toward her present self as her book splits between her past in Bulgaria and revisiting Bulgaria as an adult. However, the process of leaving and immigrating removed Kassabova's Bulgarian past as she writes about her fascination for other countries except for Bulgaria "rids herself of two things. One, her Bulgarian past" and the question of "where are you from?"<sup>157</sup> This indicates an internal struggle for belonging and identity, as Kassabova feels nationless and represses her past as she separates herself from her childhood under the Bulgarian Communist regime. The act of immigrating distorts one's life as they uproot themselves from their daily life. Also, within the context of Bulgaria, Anna Krasteva's journal article, "post-communist discovery of immigration: the case of Bulgaria" fills in the missing information on migration patterns within communist and post-communist Bulgaria.

Krasteva explains why emigration was uncommon in communist Bulgaria, as the state was closed, meaning no one left.<sup>158</sup> Subsequently, the collapse of communism in Bulgaria resulted in newfound freedom of emigration. This assertion of Krasteva relates to Kassabova, as her family took advantage of the release of emigration. This could lead to a fuller discussion of social culture and the ramifications of various emigrations in history.

However, the impact of immigration on Kassabova's fragile identity resulted in an aimlessness and loss of belonging overall. This is observable in the second half of her book as she revisits Bulgaria and writes she is "a ghost from the past, but it isn't their past."<sup>159</sup> This indicates a disconnect of self and a fragmented identity that Kassabova, as she is haunted by her past life in Bulgaria. Moreover, this idea of change and disconnect of identity is addressed in Gabriele Linke's journal article "'Belonging' in Post-Communist Europe: Strategies of Representations in Kapka Kassabova's *Street without a Name*." Linke connects sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity to apply to the fragmentation of Kassabova's life as written in her book. Linke claims the constant shift and

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<sup>157</sup> Kassabova, 2.

<sup>158</sup> Krasteva, Anna. "Post-Communist Discovery of Immigration: The Case of Bulgaria."

*SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe* 9, no. 2 (2006): 25–34.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43293155>.

<sup>159</sup> Kassabova, 280.

difference to her Bulgarian past is the result of liquid modernity changing her view of her past self and the relationship she had with her Bulgarian and communist identity.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, this creates a disconnect regarding her identity, as she cannot fully acknowledge her past and how her past impacts her present sense of belonging and identity. Once again, this profound writing can serve to link the many stories of people like her to build an understanding of the long-term impact of history now generations past.

However, Kassabova's work, while insightful, is not flawless and is subject to review and criticism. One such review comes from the *Harvard Review*, which reviews the book from the perspective of an average reader. The reviewer is Carmen Bugan, and she explains the concept of Kassabova's book is interesting and important to learn about. The criticism of the book is in the structure, Bugan as she claims the book reads as a travel guide as opposed to a memoir. However, she appreciated the themes of restlessness and the struggle for identity within the book, as well as the quality of the writing.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, the

analysis published by Claudia Duppé is titled "Tourist in Her Native Country: Kapka Kassabova's *Street without a Name*." This review differs, as Duppé focuses on the aimlessness and tourist-like status of Kassabova during her visit to Bulgaria. This review takes an academic and thematic approach to Kassabova's memoir and explores the role of immigration on her identity shifts throughout the book.<sup>162</sup> Overall, the reviews of *Street Without a Name* are positive and cite the impedance of reading to better understand life during and after communism. It is always historically important to present a full picture of history, both good and bad, in addressing the criticism, students themselves can hopefully make informed judgments about the importance and validity of her claims.

To conclude, Kapka Kassabova in her memoir *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria* is a powerful individual account of life under communism and after. Also, Kassabova through her own struggle for identity and belonging explains to the reader the mindset and reality of those who grew up under communism. This is shown

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<sup>160</sup> Linke, Gabriele M. "Belonging' in Post-Communist Europe: Strategies of Representations in Kapka Kassabova's *Street without a Name*." *European Journal of Life Writing*, 2 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.5463/ejlw.2.46>.

<sup>161</sup> Bugan, Carmen. "Street without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria." *Harvard Review*, September 18, 2020.

<https://harvardreview.org/book-review/street-without-a-name-childhood-and-other-misadventures-in-bulgaria/>.

<sup>162</sup> Duppé, Claudia. "Tourist in Her Native Country: Kapka Kassabova's *Street without a Name*." *Facing the East in the West* 138 (2010): 423–36. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042030503\\_030](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042030503_030).

through the separation of the book into childhood and revisiting Bulgaria, as this shows the time Kassabova took to heal and feel ready to face her past. Moreover, the rigidity and uniformity under communism definitively impact a person's identity, as Kassabova struggled to adjust to the Western world's looser restrictions. Overall, *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria* is an important read to gain perspective and understanding of life under the iron curtain and after the fall of the iron curtain. The use of books like *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria* can be used to make connections to social, political, and geography as a means to hook the students with real-world insights provided by individuals who actually lived the history that is being covered in various classes. Perhaps, using primary sources like *Street Without a Name: Childhood and Other Misadventures in Bulgaria* can break the notion of boring history and bring events of the past to life today!

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## Bartolomé de Las Casas: Defender of the Indians

Dan La Botz

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Figure 1: Theodore de Bry's illustrations to Las Casas' *Brief Account of the Conquest of the Indies*.

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Bartolomé de las Casas was born in 1484 in Seville, to a French immigrant merchant family that had helped to found the city. One biographer believes his family were *conversos*, that is, Jews who had converted to Catholicism. As a child, in 1493 he happened to witness Christopher Columbus' return from his first voyage to the Americas to Seville with seven Indians and parrots that were put on display. Queen Isabella ordered the Indians to be returned to their native land.

Bartolomé's father, Pedro de las Casas, joined Columbus on his second voyage and brought home to Seville as a present for his son Bartolomé an Indian. In 1502 Pedro took Bartolomé with him on the expedition of Nicolás de Ovando to conquer and colonize Española (in English the island of Hispaniola, today made up of the Dominican Republic and Haiti). Bartolomé conducted slave raids on the Taino people (who were virtually annihilated by the Spaniards) and was rewarded with land and became the owner of a hacienda as well as slaves. In 1506 he returned to the University

of Salamanca, where he had previously studied, and then traveled to Rome where he was ordained, becoming a priest in 1507.

When in 1510 Dominican friars led by Pedro de Córdoba arrived in Santo Domingo, they were horrified at the Spaniards' treatment of the Indians, the massacres, the brutality of slavery, and the intense exploitation of the natives and they denounced it. Las Casas rejected the Dominicans' criticism and defended the *encomienda* system by which Spaniards distributed laborers to the conquerors.

In 1513, Las Casas joined the expeditions of Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar and Pánfilo de Narváez to conquer Cuba, acting as chaplain. He witnessed horrifying murders and torturers of the indigenous people. Once again, he received a reward, this time of gold and slaves. For a year he lived as both colonist and priest. Then in 1514, while studying the Book of Ecclesiasticus, he came across a passage that called his beliefs into question. It read:

*If one sacrifices from what has been wrongfully obtained, the offering is blemished; the gifts of the lawless are not acceptable. ... Like one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the man who offers sacrifice from the property of the poor. The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a man of blood.*

Reading this passage — and no doubt meditating on the horrors that he had both participated in and witnessed — Las Casas suddenly decided to break with his past. He gave up his haciendas, his *encomienda*, his slaves. He began to encourage others Spaniards to do the same, but of course they refused and they resented him. Las Casas then traveled to Spain to take his case to King Ferdinand, and he succeeded in having one meeting with him, but then the monarch died in 1516. Many of the other higher-ups in the Spanish state and Church, such the Bishop of Burgos, Juan Rodríguez de Fonseca, who controlled the Crown's business in the Americas, were themselves *encomenderos* who profited from the labor of the indigenous and they rejected Las Casas' appeals to protect the Indians. Fearing that the entire population of the Indies, the Caribbean islands, might be annihilated, Las Casas wrote his *Memorial de Remedios para las Indias* (Memorandum on Remedies for the Indies) to be presented to the regents who now rules, calling for a moratorium on all Indian labor to protect the indigenous people and allow the recuperation of their populations.

Convinced by Las Casas' argument that the Indians needed to be protected, one of the regents, Cardinal Ximenes Cisneros, put the Carmelite monks in charge of the Indies. Las Casas himself was given the official title and position of "Protector of the Indians. Under pressure from Las Casas, in



1542 King Charles V promulgated the New Laws to protect the Indians from exploitation.

King Carlos V, concerned about conditions in the Spanish American colonies decided to organize a debate between the two principal intellectuals on opposite sides of the question. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, claimed that the indigenous people of the Americas were barbarians: ignorant, unlettered, and unreasoning, incapable of learning anything except the simplest tasks. The Spaniards, he argued, being superior in intelligence and morality, had the right to make war on them and conquer them. The Indians were, he said, incapable of governing themselves. He argued that they were sunk in depravity, worshiping idols and engaging in human sacrifice. He quoted the Bible and other authorities to argue that in ancient times such people had been justly

exterminated or enslaved. Natural law, he averred, dictated that the Spaniards, superior in intelligence and morality, should govern them.

In response, Las Casas either refuted Sepúlveda's arguments, such as the claim that the indigenous Americans were ignorant and incapable of governing themselves, by providing evidence of their intelligence and self-government, or he argued, as in the case of idolatry and human sacrifice, that these practices had to be seen as demonstrating their religious inclination, their attempts to worship God. Las Casas denied the Spaniards' right to ever invade, occupy, conquer, and subject the indigenous. He argued that the Spaniards' wars against the Indians were unjust and therefore enslavement of the Indians was illegal and wrong, since only the captives of a just war could be enslaved.

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De Las Casas and Sepúlveda Debate Treatment of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas

Theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda



“The servitude contracted in a just war is legal, and the booty acquired becomes the rightful possession of the victor. But concerning these barbarians, the plight of the Indians defeated by Spanish arms in formally declared war is very different from the circumstances of those who, through prudence or fear, delivered themselves to the authority of the Christians. Just as in the former case the victorious prince may determine, according to his will and right and bearing the public good in mind, the fate of the vanquished, in the latter both civil laws and *jus gentium* (international law) would rule unjust to deprive the natives of their goods and to reduce them to slavery; it is, however, licit to keep them as stipendiaries and tributaries as befitting their nature and condition.”

“The nature of their governance over the barbarians must be such that the latter will not be given, through the granting of a degree of freedom unwarranted by their nature and condition, the opportunity to return to their primitive and evil ways; on the other hand, they must not be oppressed with harsh rule and servile treatment, for, tired of servitude and indignity, they may attempt to break the yoke to the peril of the Spaniards.”

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas



“Among our Indians of the western and southern shores (granting that we call them barbarians and that they are barbarians) there are important kingdoms, large numbers of people who live settled lives in a society, great cities, kings, judges, laws, persons who engage in commerce, buying, selling, lending, and the other contracts of the law of nations . . . Reverend Doctor Sepúlveda has spoken wrongly and viciously against peoples like these, either out of malice or ignorance . . . and therefore, has falsely and perhaps irreparably slandered them before the entire world? From the fact that the Indians are barbarians it does not necessarily follow that they are incapable of government and have to be ruled by others, except to be taught about the Catholic faith and to be admitted to the sacraments. They are not ignorant, inhuman, or bestial. Rather, long before they heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion and custom . . . Since, therefore, every nation by the eternal law has a ruler or prince, it is wrong for one nation to attack another under pretext of being superior in wisdom or to overthrow other kingdoms. For it acts contrary to the eternal law, as we read in Proverbs . . . ‘This is not an act of wisdom, but of great injustice and a lying excuse for plundering others.’”

Questions:

1. What term does Sepúlveda use to describe the indigenous people of the Americas?
2. According to Sepúlveda, when are slavery and “booty” justified?
3. What does Sepúlveda recommend for governance in the Americas?
4. What evidence does De Las Casas offer to refute claims made by Sepúlveda?
5. If you were in the audience during this debate, what questions would you ask them?
6. Whose position do you agree with more? Why?

## **The Failures of the Recovery from the Great Recession**

Michael Meeropol and Jared Ragusett

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When Barack Obama took over as President, there were fears that the United States was heading for a re-run of the Great Depression. The financial meltdown that became apparent during calendar year 2008 had sparked a dramatic recession – which has come to be known, with 20-20 hindsight, as the Great Recession. When Obama took office, the economy was hemorrhaging 700,000 jobs a month. The unemployment rate had climbed to 9 percent and was still increasing. Something had to be done.

Obama's program passed the House and Senate in March of 2009. It was just enough to stop the bleeding and begin what turned out to be a painfully slow recovery. But because of a combination of Democratic timidity and Republican opposition, the size of the macroeconomic stimulation contained in the Recovery Act was much too small. In order to get the 60 votes needed to defeat a Republican filibuster, the Obama Administration had to pare back their proposed spending increases and tax cuts in order to satisfy the deficit hawks among the Democratic majority.

The result was a historically slow recovery which, the writers believe, was the reason the House flipped to the Republicans in 2010, the Senate flipped to the Republicans in 2014, and one of the reasons

Donald Trump was elected President at the end of Obama's two terms. This paper details the macroeconomic impact of the Obama Recovery program and compares several important macro-economic indicators from that recovery (2009-2017) to previous recoveries from recessions in the post-World War II era. The variables investigated include the ratio of investment to gross domestic product (GDP), the rate of growth of productivity, the ratio of consumption to GDP, the unemployment rate, the capacity utilization rate, the employment-to-population ratio, and the rate of growth of real GDP.

The results of the comparisons are striking. Real GDP growth was slow through 2016. Investment incentives were severely damaged by the housing bubble during the years 1995-2005, followed by the housing bubble meltdown during the years 2005-2009. Thus, during the Obama recovery, housing investment barely budged, reducing the overall level of investment. This led to a miniscule productivity growth rate. Meanwhile, consumption spending which is the key incentive for the revival of investment during business cycle upswings rose slowly as well. It also took a long time for the unemployment rate to fall to its pre-recession level.

This disappointingly sluggish recovery was the culmination of a number of long run trends that had slowed the economy during the entire period since the early 1970's including the long-term slowdown in GDP growth per capita since the early 1980s.

During the Obama recovery, the unemployment rate declined very slowly. Obama won re-election but up and down the ballot – including in many state legislatures and the House of Representatives beginning in 2010 – Republicans cashed in on the impatience of citizens with the slow pace of recovery. The economy did not get back to “normal” until 2016 but it was too late for the Democrats. Trump was able to ride to a razor thin victory in part on the strength of disappointment by many people who had voted for Obama – both rural whites in key states like Wisconsin and Michigan who switched to Trump, as well as Black voters whose turnout fell in Detroit, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Milwaukee with devastating electoral consequences for three crucial battleground states (Krogstad and Lopez, 2017).

When President Obama took office, all eyes were focused on the short-run challenge of the Great Recession. Here's how his Council Of Economic Advisers stated it, a year later, in the Economic Report of the President, 2010:

“In December 2007, the American economy entered what at first seemed likely to be a mild recession. ... [R]eal house prices (that is, house prices adjusted for

inflation) had risen to unprecedented levels, almost doubling between 1997 and 2006. The rapid run-up in prices was accompanied by a residential construction boom and the proliferation of complex mortgages and mortgage-related financial assets. The fall of national house prices starting in early 2007, and the associated declines in the values of mortgage-backed and other related assets, led to a slowdown in the growth of consumer spending, increases in mortgage defaults and home foreclosures, significant strains on financial institutions, and reduced credit availability.

By early 2008, the economy was contracting. Employment fell by an average of 137,000 jobs per month over the first eight months of 2008. Real GDP rose only anemically from the third quarter of 2007 to the second quarter of 2008.

Then in September 2008, the character of the downturn worsened dramatically. The collapse of Lehman Brothers and the near-collapse of American International Group (AIG) led to a seizing up of financial markets and plummeting consumer and business confidence. Parts of the financial system froze, and assets once assumed to be completely safe, such as money-market mutual funds, became

unstable and subject to runs. Credit spreads, a common indicator of credit market stress, spiked to unprecedented levels in the fall of 2008. The value of the stock market plunged 24 percent in September and October, and another 15 percent by the end of January. [O]ver the final four months of 2008 and the first month of 2009, the economy lost, on average, a staggering 544,000 jobs per month, the highest level of job loss since the demobilization at the end of World War II. Real GDP fell at an increasingly rapid pace: an annual rate of 2.7 percent in the third quarter of 2008, 5.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008, and 6.4 percent in the first quarter of 2009” (ERP, 2010: 26-27).

Here is how President Obama himself described the crisis that greeted him when he took office:

“Last January, (2009) years of irresponsible risk-taking and debt-fueled speculation—unchecked by sound oversight—led to the near-collapse of our financial system. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs each month. Over the course of one year, \$13 trillion of Americans’ household wealth had evaporated as stocks, pensions, and home values plummeted. Our gross domestic product was falling at the fastest rate in a quarter century. The flow of credit, vital to the functioning of businesses

large and small, had ground to a halt. The fear among economists, from across the political spectrum, was that we could sink into a second Great Depression” (ERP, 3).

Later in the same message he noted that there were also long-term problems that his administration had to confront:

“At the same time, long before this crisis hit, middle-class families were under growing strain. For decades, Washington failed to address fundamental weaknesses in the economy: rising health care costs, growing dependence on foreign oil, an education system unable to prepare all of our children for the jobs of the future. In recent years, spending bills and tax cuts for the very wealthiest were approved without paying for any of it, leaving behind a mountain of debt. And while Wall Street gambled without regard for the consequences, Washington looked the other way.

As a result, the economy may have been working for some at the very top, but it was not working for all American families. Year after year, folks were forced to work longer hours, spend more time away from their loved ones, all while their incomes flat-lined and their sense of economic security

evaporated. Growth in our country was neither sustained nor broadly shared. Instead of a prosperity powered by smart ideas and sound investments, growth was fueled in large part by a rapid rise in consumer borrowing and consumer spending” (ERP, 5-6).

The Council of Economic Advisers elaborated a bit more on these long-run problems:

“...even before the crisis, the economy faced significant long-term challenges. As a result, it was doing poorly at providing rising standards of living for the vast majority of Americans...Beginning around 1970, slower productivity growth and rising income inequality caused incomes for most families to grow only slowly. After a half-decade of higher growth in the 1990s, the real income of the typical American family actually fell between 2000 and 2006” (ERP, 28).

As to what had caused the increase in inequality and slower productivity growth over the long run, the Council members were silent. They did, however, identify a rising share of debt-financed consumption as the problem for the decade since 2000:

“The expansion of the 2000s was fueled in part by high consumption. [T]he share of

GDP that takes the form of consumption has been on a generally upward trend for decades and reached unprecedented heights in the 2000s. The personal saving rate fell to exceptionally low levels, and trade deficits were large and persistent. A substantial amount of the remainder of GDP took the form of housing construction, which may have crowded out other kinds of investment. Such an expansion is not just unstable, as we have learned painfully over the past two years. It also contributes too little to increases in standards of living. Low investment in equipment and factories slows the growth of productivity and wages” (ERP, 29-30).

In order to assess whether the Obama Administration’s plan for recovery from the Great Recession was a success or failure, one must first explain how to judge success or failure. In the Economic Report of the President for 2017, Obama’s Council of Economic Advisers certainly argued that what they had done since January 2009 had been a great success. Here is how they argued:

“Over the two terms of the Obama Administration, the U.S. economy has made a remarkable recovery from the Great Recession. After peaking at 10.0 percent in October 2009, the unemployment rate has been cut

by more than half to 4.6 percent as of November 2016 ... Real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita recovered fully to its pre-crisis peak in the fourth quarter of 2013, ... As of November 2016, the economy has added 14.8 million jobs over 74 months, the longest streak of total job growth on record. Since private-sector job growth turned positive in March 2010, U.S. businesses have added 15.6 million jobs. Real wage growth has been faster in the current business cycle than in any since the early 1970s” [ERP: 217: 21].

The forceful response of the federal government to the crisis in 2008 and 2009 helped stave off a potential second Great Depression by setting the U.S. economy on track to rebuild, reinvest, and recover. Everything the Obama Council of Economic Advisers marked in their 2017 report is correct. Their emphasis on the importance of both the fiscal stimulus of the Recovery Act, and the temporary payroll tax holiday is not misplaced. Unfortunately, because of the political constraints on big deficits and the almost universal opposition of the Congressional Republicans, the Obama Administration had to be content with a fiscal stimulus, despite being the largest in the post-World War II economy, turned out to be woefully insufficient.

What was left out of the Council of Economic Advisers’ celebration of the successes of the post 2009 recovery was a sense of how the post 2009 period – the

period of recovery according to the National Bureau of Economic Research’s Business Cycle Dating Committee – compared with recoveries from previous recessions. In general, it is essential that such comparisons be made across the board so that we can judge whether a particular set of policies was successful or not. The economy did recover. By the time Obama left office in 2017, all economic indicators were significantly better than they were when he took office. If that is all the evidence that is needed, then every President from Truman to Obama, except Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush and Donald Trump, represents an economic success story.

However, if we are going to use the comparative analysis, we have to compare apples to apples. Our comparative data will cover the quarters of recovery --- from the trough to the peak. We will compare the data for the recovery from the Great Recession with previous recoveries going back to the 1961-70 period. As always, we will use the quarters of recovery as identified by the NBER’s Business Cycle Dating Committee.

The next, and most significant question is: What are the standards of success? We have already indicated that the rate of growth of real GDP per capita is a crucial element of economic success. But growth has never been smooth. From the initial discovery back in 1819 that there is a “business cycle,” it has been apparent that economies organized by some variant of free-market capitalism grew by fits and starts surging forward in periods of growth, only to have them interrupted by what were

called in the 19th century “crises.” Long run economic growth was powered by such surges of expansion. It is during these surges (officially called recoveries in the literature these days) that improvements in productivity occur for the most part because of high levels of private investment.

Investment and productivity growth represent the “supply side” of economic growth. But investment actually does dual duties because it is the most dynamic element in aggregate demand. When it is rising rapidly (evidenced by a high ratio of investment to GDP) it stimulates an increase in aggregate demand. When that ratio falls, it causes slowdowns and even recessions. These swings in investment have ramifications via the multiplier effect on consumption, by far the largest contributor to the “demand side” of economic growth. While investment changes introduce the major dynamic into the system, it is the growth of consumption that sustains it. Sometimes, export surges can play an important role and during wartime government spending plays a major role as well.

Meanwhile, productivity growth is the process that enables economic growth. All investments both in physical and human capital increase the capacity of the economy to produce. To the extent that the investment utilizes the newest technology, it plays a major role in increasing productivity. An increase in productivity makes it possible for wages to increase without cutting into profits, and for profits to increase without depressing wages. Thus, a higher rate of productivity growth during a period of

economic recovery indicates that the economy is doing well, whereas a slowdown in productivity growth indicates the opposite. Though journalists, politicians and the public usually see GDP growth as the key to an economy’s success, from an economists’ point of view the gold standard of success is a high rate of productivity growth – because that facilitates higher economic growth and a rising standard of living.

So the rate of growth of productivity and the ratio of investment to GDP are both extremely important indicators of economic success. For investment, the standard of success is whether there is a relatively high ratio to GDP, which would show investment playing a very positive role. A relatively low ratio to GDP shows that investment is failing to provide the important dynamic element. The ratio of consumption spending to GDP shows how a growth spurt is sustained.

Our final standards of success relate to how close our economy comes to meeting its potential during a period of expansion. The usual standard of success, and the one that often has important political ramifications, is the civilian unemployment rate. Unemployed resources represent a waste of potential. In this paper, we choose to use three variables representing three different ways to measure the closeness to potential experienced during a recovery: unemployment, capacity utilization and the employment to population ratio. Though unemployment is the one most quoted in the media, there has always been an argument within the economics profession about how



much unemployment is “voluntary.” Voluntary unemployment is not a waste of potential as the individual making the decision is unwilling to commit that potential to employment.

To further complicate the idea that the civilian unemployment rate measures a waste of human resources, we have the argument introduced by Milton Friedman that there is a “natural” rate of unemployment. That concept has been joined by the idea that there is a “non-accelerating-inflation rate of unemployment” (or NAIRU). At either or both of these rates, which have never been precisely identified numerically and which have changed from time to time, one could argue that the economy is not wasting resources because rates of unemployment below either the “natural” rate or the NAIRU are unsustainable.

In order to avoid arguing about how much of measured unemployment is truly involuntary, we also present the capacity utilization rate. This is a true measure of deficiency of aggregate demand because except for some minimal downtime for either routine maintenance or re-tooling, excess capacity is a clear waste of economic resources. Finally, the employment to population ratio avoids the knotty issue of how many people without jobs are truly not in the labor force. It captures the discouraged workers who never get counted in official unemployment statistics while still underestimating the under-utilization of human resources because it fails to measure involuntary part-time work. We believe all three of these statistics can give us a sense

of how close to optimum utilization of resources an economy comes during a period of expansion. We also note that the impact of government spending, as evidenced by the data, was insufficient to propel a vigorous recovery given the severity of the downturn and the deep dive in the investment to GDP (I/GP) ratio.

With this plan, we can now turn to actually measuring the recovery from the Great Recession against previous recoveries starting with the 1961-70 recovery. The quarters between the troughs (1961, 1970, 1975, 1982, 1991, and 2001) and peaks (1969, 1973, 1980, 1990, 2001, and 2007) provide our data for the comparisons with the recovery from the Great Recession. In order to avoid the impact of compounding over recoveries of different lengths, we utilize averages over the course of each recovery as the basis for comparisons.

To assess the recovery from the Great Recession, we begin in the second quarter of 2009, and end when Obama left the White House in the first quarter of 2017. Even though the recovery did not end until the Covid-19 pandemic threw the economy into a very deep recession in the second quarter of 2020, our job is to describe the economy during Obama’s administration. First look at the ratio of gross investment to GDP. The reason we use gross investment rather than net investment is because even though the depreciation part of gross investment does not involve any net increase in the capital stock, the capital bought to replace that part of the capital stock that is “wearing out” will fix the newest technology and thus contribute to economic growth. In addition,

the spending to replace wearing out capital has a multiplier effect just like any other spending.

Taking every recovery going back to 1961, all recoveries showed an average I/GDP ratio above 17 percent except for the 1961-70 recovery where investment as a percentage of GDP was below that level. The recovery from the Great Recession was significantly lower than the previous recoveries averaging just over 16 percent.

But that does not fully capture the seriousness of the problem. When President Obama took office, the I/GDP ratio was 12.7 at the trough of the Great Recession. Unfortunately, unlike some earlier recessions (1974 and 1982 for example), when the ratio rebounded dramatically (reaching 17% in 1976 and over 20% in 1984). It took three years between 2009 and 2012 for the I/GDP ratio to reach 15.5%. It averaged only 16.2 percent of GDP for the entire period through 2017Q1 and in fact never broke 18% until after 2017. The reason for the sluggish recovery of investment is easy to see, the fall in residential housing investment that had been the proximate cause of the Great Recession. From a ratio of 6.6 % of GDP in 2006, housing investment plummeted to 2.6 % of GDP at the depth of the Great Recession and had slowly climbed only to 3.9 % of GDP by the end of President Obama's second term. This ratio was lower than the previous nadir of residential investment as a percentage of GDP at the end of the 2001 recession (4.8%). If housing investment had just returned to that level, overall investment

would have broken 18% significantly earlier.

Because investment is the driving force of the economy's dynamic, we should expect that the sluggish recovery of the I/GDP ratio to have a significant impact on the rate of growth of productivity, the rate of growth of the economy, and the variables that measure how close to potential (sufficiency of aggregate demand) the economy is. Sure enough, the numbers bear this out. The rate of growth of productivity was most dramatic in the 1961-70 recovery, averaging over 3 percent per quarter. After disappointing numbers in the 1970s, the rate of growth of productivity averaged 2 percent or higher per quarter over the three recoveries beginning in 1982 – averaging 2.6 percent between 2001 and the end of 2007 which was the peak before the Great Recession. Unfortunately, the disappointing numbers from the 1970s returned with a dismal 1.1 percent average in productivity growth over the entire recovery period through the first quarter of 2017. That coupled with disappointing numbers for unemployment, (7.3 percent average) capacity utilization (75.8 percent average) and especially the employment-to-population ratio (58.9 percent average) combine to explain the disappointing overall per capita GDP growth.

Except for the recovery from the dot-com bubble recession (2001-2007), every recovery going back to the 1960s had experienced per capita GDP growth averaging 2.5 percent or better. But as the economy struggled to slowly rise from the trough of the Great Recession the rate of

growth of per capita GDP averaged only 1.4 percent per quarter through 2017. That is even lower than the 1.9 percent in the 2001-2007 recovery.

The unemployment rate had been trending upwards since the 1961-1970 recovery, averaging over six percent per quarter beginning with the 1971-74 recovery until the recoveries of 1991-2000 and 2001-2007 where the rates were 5.5 percent and 5.3 percent respectively. Similarly capacity utilization has been trending down since the robust 86 plus percent in the 1961-70 period. After an upward move in the 1991-2000 recovery, it resumed its downward trajectory, ending up averaging the lowest since World War II over the recovery from the Great Recession. The same trend appears in the employment-to-population ratio, which jumped up to an average of 63 percent in the 1991-2000 recovery only to average 58.9 percent in the recovery since 2009.

This is where the insufficiency of the macro-economic stimuli engaged in by the Obama administration (and we repeat, we understand how they were politically constrained, especially after “the worst” of the Great Recession had passed and the economy was clearly in recovery) reveals itself. The extraordinary nature of the deep dive that occurred in investment and the growth of GDP called for a significantly bigger stimulus to aggregate demand than in previous periods. Government spending at levels similar to previous business cycle recoveries was not enough.

The only departure from previous government stimuli during recoveries was the increase in transfer payments. Unfortunately, this only has a multiplier effect through its impact on consumption but the data shows that the ratio of consumption to GDP was less than a half a percent higher than in the previous recovery. There is no question that the federal spending stimulus would have had to be much higher than it was for the recovery to have any hope of being as good as previous ones.

We contend that despite the laser-like focus of the Obama Administration on getting the economy moving again as symbolized by the Recovery Act’s unprecedented explicit efforts to use fiscal policy to induce a robust recovery (the Congressional Budget Office concluded that the Recovery Act provided a stimulus spending level of \$739 billion), it did not come close to closing an aggregate demand shortfall that was estimated conservatively at \$1.2 trillion.

It is also important to add that the Federal Reserve’s expansive monetary policy seemed to have no positive impact on investment, particularly the interest sensitive housing sector, given the free fall of the housing market after the collapse of the bubble – almost a textbook example of the simple argument that the Fed cannot push on a string.

Initially, the Recovery Act did what it was supposed to. The federal budget deficit ballooned to 9 percent of GDP in 2010 and the unemployment rate began to fall. But when the Recovery Act spending began to

peter out, the Republicans who had taken control of the House in 2010 forced the Obama Administration to compromise and agree to a set of spending restraints known as a “sequester.” The result was that the federal deficit, the major impetus to the economy when investment spending lags, fell so that by 2013 it was only a bit over 4 percent of GDP.

Thus, it took all the way to 2015 for the unemployment rate to get back to what it had been before the Great Recession. This long, laborious struggle by the economy just to get back to square one, no doubt due to the fact that the I/GDP ratio never achieved the peak it had reached in the previous four recoveries.

In this extraordinary period when the economy was attempting to dig itself out of the hole created by short-run financial meltdown and the bursting of a housing bubble that left residential investment way below recent levels for the entire course of the recovery, a much higher level of government stimulus would have been necessary. Obviously, the Obama Administration and its allies in Congress cannot be totally faulted for this because after 2010, Republicans were in control of the House of Representatives and after 2014, Republicans took control of the Senate as well. The Obama Administration did make efforts to get an infrastructure bill passed a number of times but the Republicans in Congress blocked them. Despite wholesale opposition, the Obama Administration was able to increase stimuli via a temporary suspension of two percent from the Payroll Tax. They were able to do this by delaying

the automatic expiration date of the George W. Bush tax cuts, scheduled to sunset after 2010, for two years which got Congressional support for the payroll tax holiday and expansion of unemployment compensation. After 2013, some of those tax cuts were made permanent while the payroll tax holiday ended. Unfortunately, the initial proposal for the Recovery Act was much too low and in order to get 60 votes in the Senate to break a Republican filibuster against it, the initial proposal was cut back slightly.

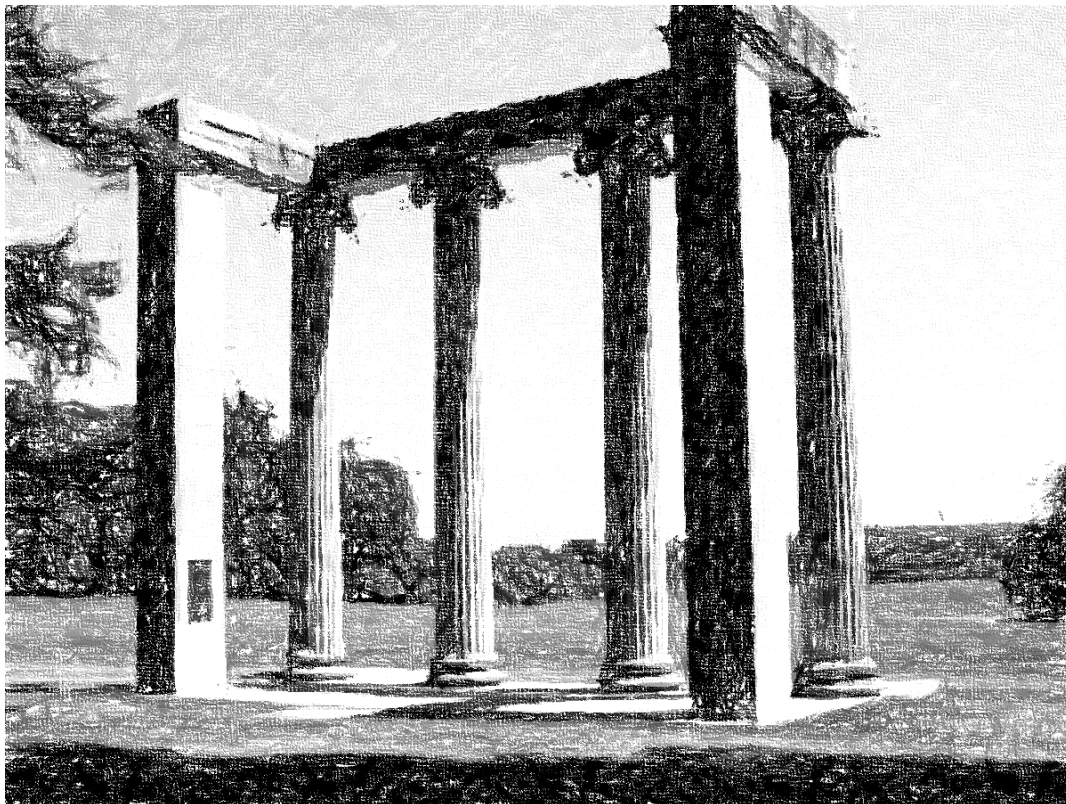
The economy is not just numbers like GDP and Investment. Ultimately, the key to economic well-being is the real income of ordinary Americans. We believe that the statistic identified as the median income of year-round full-time workers is indicative. Beginning in the third quarter of 2009, by the first quarter of 2017, the weekly real earnings of workers over 16 had risen the grand total of 2.03% for an average of about .28% a year. These were significantly lower than in previous recoveries though it is fair to say, median income growth was very slow for the entire period after 1980.

With 20-20 hindsight, the initial bill should have had a section that called for spending the same amount again if after two years, the unemployment rate had not fallen substantially. Given that previous deep sharp recessions (1974, 1981-82) experienced strong rapid recoveries, such a provision might have been sold as “insurance” against such a sluggish recovery and might have passed. But of course, hindsight is always 20-20.

The unfortunate result of the fact that the recovery from the Great Recession was much too slow and that median incomes of ordinary Americans hardly budged during the recovery was the high level of dissatisfaction within large swaths of the American people. Though there are many reasons for the surprise victory of Donald J. Trump in the 2016 election, one element that clearly contributed to it was the failed recovery from the Great Recession.

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## The Transformation of Regional Politics in Philadelphia

Kevin McCabe

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The dawn of urbanization in the U.S. arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, from which came rapid innovations in transportation and construction technology. The colonial legislation put in power by the founding fathers was tested immensely by the growing population of urban life. The necessities of sustaining an exponentially large and dense city seem evident at first glance: political, economic, and social representation, a stable job income for single or multi-family homes, access to public services, and affordable housing stock. Unfortunately, as one may notice by the pattern of urban decline as early as the 1950s, accomplishing such a feat is nearly impossible with the lack of quality political representation for marginalized members of the urban community. Philadelphia, faced with the issues of urban decline, embarked on a project of urban renewal to revamp the public and private housing sector, introduce new forms of transportation for suburban commuters, and fix the educational landscape of the city. Similarly to other cities facing urban decline, the ‘City of Brotherly Love’ has seen countless projects

or urban revitalization that historians, over time, began to view differently. *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal* by John F. Bauman (1987) indicates that historians viewed the solution to Philadelphia’s housing segregation, job discrimination, deindustrialization, and part of its economic decline issues through government intervention in the public housing sector. Carolyn T. Adams, author of *From the Outside In* (2014), exemplifies the shift of focus to local and federal intervention in Third-Sector organizations, and the lack thereof, in the startup of big industrial and transportation renewal. Similarly to Bauman, Adams refers to many of the solutions and ideas being created from a local level and being affected by public preference and federal policy. Lastly, *The Problem of Jobs* by Guian A. McKee (2010) takes a more positive outlook on urban renewal in Philadelphia, claiming that despite providing mixed results, the actions of a new form of Liberalism, local and federal policies, and initiatives slowed the progress of deindustrialization and moderated its effects.<sup>163</sup> Over the last 30 years, the scholarship on Philadelphiaian

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<sup>163</sup> Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 67.

policies toward reshaping the historical city has changed dramatically from a focus on blaming federal policy, suburbanization and deindustrialization, the failure to provide adequate public housing and proper restructuring of the city's inner-city blocks as the cause of economic decline and racial conflict. A newer approach to these issues is to take a city-wide approach to how local politicians and project professionals maneuvered a complex level of federal aid, Third-Sector organizations, and an angry white working class to achieve successes in some areas and failures in other neighborhoods.

*Public Housing, Race, and Renewal* by John F. Bauman focuses on those who debated, promoted, and shaped Philadelphia's public housing and urban development policies, and how the local and national shift of focus from public housing to rebuilding the city turned a desegregation project into a reinforcement of public housing poverty stereotypes as a federally-funded welfare program. Bauman, having written his book in 1987, comprises the oldest historical outlook of the three books being analyzed in this historiography study. Therefore, both Adams and McKee draw from elements of Bauman's argument and other authors of his time to build a comprehensive outlook on the complexity of undertaking complete urban reform in one of the oldest and historically significant cities in the U.S. Bauman utilizes the terms *professionals* and *communitarians* to

describe the progressive outlook of urban leaders during the middle of urban slum expansion in the 1920s. Adams' and McKee's central focus on the privatization of industry follows the pattern of slowing progressivism in mid-19th century Philadelphia. Bauman wrote of the tendencies of the federal government, and how the ideas around poverty-stricken areas led to the failure of public housing as a program for economic mobility: "...the federal government's rigid funding formula for public housing construction, as well as its strict guidelines for tenant selection and tenant retention, begged the question of public housing's mission. Was public housing to provide good housing for the working class, or was the program to build modern asylums where the poor could learn habits of thrift and cleanliness?"<sup>164</sup> A few ideas are present in Bauman's argument that hold merit for future scholarship on Philadelphia's inner city. Particularly, how government funding, despite having the intention of fixing blighted neighborhoods, ends up exacerbating the issue by being too strict with rules, regulations, and the location of the project. Bauman goes even further to state that the racial composition of a project was made to conform to the prevailing composition of the surrounding neighborhood.<sup>165</sup> Essentially, public housing was the same as black housing in inner-city Philadelphia. As public housing became more attached in name to the characteristics of the poor, the politically right-leaning citizens of Philadelphia lost hope that public

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<sup>164</sup> John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1987), 40.

<sup>165</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 47.

housing would help people in poverty learn habits of thrift and cleanliness. One would also argue that the idea that public housing would help the poor learn good habits solely based on the architecture itself perpetuates the notion that all people in black-majority neighborhoods promote a *culture of poverty*. The hopes of architects and city planners were quickly dashed as public opinion on public housing became politicized- it was no longer a rehabilitation program, but a public welfare program for housing the city's worst residents. Bauman also takes note of the war-spawned conservatism that swept the nation during WWII, a pattern of decentralized federal housing policy that would become a staple in how local Philadelphian officials would carry out construction projects in the future.<sup>166</sup> Federal funding would be provided for projects, but only constructed by private enterprises. This foreshadows the states' use of nonprofits to accomplish construction projects more efficiently than traditional means of project approval depicted in *From the Outside In*. The bullish conservative real estate established for new housing projects, and the use of subdivision in existing housing to create an artificially lower demand for low-income and public housing meant that Washington and the city Housing Authority were: "... sacrificing the goals of good housing and defense to the particular interests of the homebuilding and real estate industries."<sup>167</sup> The pattern imposed by the

federal and state governments is private and public organizational appeasement, an act that helped speed up the development process of housing and urban renewal at the expense of ill-planned resident displacement and the diminishment of government authority over the real estate market and urban planning. Even when projects were underway, residency was determined by the current racial composition of the neighborhood. Bauman, noticing the injustice in urban housing planning, stated: "Crassly denying the new housing to low-income black slum residents reeked of injustice... Blacks were being forced to make more than their share of the sacrifice."<sup>168</sup> Historians' views on urban redevelopment in Philadelphia have not changed from Bauman's to Adams' interpretation- despite good intentions, the fears of black slum encroachment barred minorities from economic mobility by transforming a creative, community-building public housing movement into a cookie-cutter asylum for the poor. As the Housing Act of 1954 rolled around, the idea of city rebuilding became synonymous with economic revitalization.<sup>169</sup> Forced by the realities of the failures of massive elevator towers to fix the city's housing issues, planners had to decide what locations would be best for a project's success, zoning certain areas as unsalvageable (black zones), and blighted neighborhoods as buffer zones.<sup>170</sup> This is a form of redlining that reinforced

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<sup>166</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 56.

<sup>167</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 64.

<sup>168</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 68.

<sup>169</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 139.

<sup>170</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 147.



segregated city patterns, instead of fixing the economic and social disparity between residents that are only blocks apart. Furthermore, it further ostracized inner-city black residents from society. Bauman claims that “Only a massive infusion of local, state, and federal money into housing and blight removal could make city neighborhoods ripe again for private investment.”<sup>171</sup> City politicians took their eyes off a lack of housing in certain areas to transform areas to be more appealing to *white* commuters and future residents, as only 21 percent of displaced families found satisfactory housing; in the eyes of a Philadelphian politician, urban renewal meant black removal.<sup>172</sup> Slum clearance continued, even though public housing became a welfare program: “... at the end of the decade, [the public housing program] remained demoralized and directionless.”<sup>173</sup> Federal housing policy established a framework for a decentralized program of low-income housing that favored white residents and suburban commuters to attract a larger visitor economy, at the expense of inner-city residents. Bauman shows how the government built and bureaucratically managed complexes that contrasted too starkly with American housing norms- how *too* much government involvement can create complexity in the rebuilding process when housing authorities have to adhere to a changing political climate.<sup>174</sup> Adam’s book

works to recount that moving too far in the opposite direction- losing control over infrastructure oversight- was a step in the right direction to starting larger projects, that despite being rarely beneficial to inner-city residents, were economically beneficial to the Philadelphian region as a whole.

Adams’ *From the Outside In* contradicts Bauman’s belief that Philadelphian urban renewal was a total failure, despite the shortcomings of public housing. Bauman set up Adam’s argument, relating most of the failures in the public housing sector with a shift in ideology that indicated both left and right-leaning political participants supported government intervention and federal funding, and that the division of party lines lies along the direction of the money in the public and private sectors. To set up her perspective of a new form of regionalism, Adams first had to argue against the premise that suburbs have turned their back on central cities.<sup>175</sup> A common assumption made by Bauman that Adams looks to unravel is that suburbanites, as a result of suburbanization, deindustrialization, and the policies of the state and federal government ruined the city’s economy and have made no effort to revitalize it. In fact, over the last 15 years of redevelopment, which would put it squarely in between the publication dates of Bauman’s and Adams’ books, suburbanites have recognized the critical role the city

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<sup>171</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 148.

<sup>172</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 148-150.

<sup>173</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 200.

<sup>174</sup> Bauman, *Public Housing*, 208.

<sup>175</sup> Carolyn Teich Adams, *From the Outside In: Suburban Elites, Third Sector Organizations, and the Reshaping of Philadelphia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 2014), 2.

plays in economic functions. De facto regionalism, through the use of Third-Sector organizations, blurs the lines between public and private sectors in American civic life.<sup>176</sup> City managers now turn to private investors to help finance Philadelphia's transportation system. A new issue has arisen in urban politics- whether these nonprofits, volunteer organizations, research institutions, (etc.), should be used solely to save money and avoid the regulations set by the city and federal government. By using these organizations and providing them with federal aid, they have control over the equal distribution of services and have more authority than state legislation as to where, how, and why a project will be played out. In Bauman's book, one sees the federal government's intervention forcing the hand of city planners to change the location of public housing depending on local reception and federal funding. As Adams depicts, the opinion of the urban resident no longer matters, as these non-profits do not need to adhere to the public will or make press releases on the findings and undergoing of the project. While describing the thought process of local politicians at the time, Adams states: "Politicians generally prefer to distribute dollars and services more broadly. It is virtually impossible for the city council to agree to target development dollars in only a few locations because that shortchanges other areas."<sup>177</sup> Essentially, the agreement behind using Third-Sector organizations is that some people will benefit, while others will suffer from

economic, social, and physical displacement. Therefore, the government focuses its efforts on redeveloping one area, a way for suburbanites to slowly change the city without considering the lives of the inhabitants and their organizations' effects. For example, the Vine Street Expressway, "...offers a classic example of infrastructure that serves the region's interests at the expense of city dwellers who live nearby... the initial proposal for eight lanes... would have eliminated a Catholic church and school that served as crucial institutions to Chinatown."<sup>178</sup> One may see a parallel between Bauman and Adams, as the issue of where public housing should be located meant that they were placed in predominantly black neighborhoods, further segregating the minorities that live in public housing and worsening the issue of cramped neighborhoods. Similarly, the issue of where to locate transportation services for commuters fell on black neighborhoods that were seen as 'unsalvageable', despite them being a product of a failed distribution of public services. Overall, Adams wanted to indicate how intergovernmental authorities carry out their responsibility for transportation systems that link the city to the suburbs across municipal boundaries, and the inequality present when relying on Third-Sector organizations to carry out the job of the federal and state governments.<sup>179</sup> Adams also alludes to the new centers of gravity within Philadelphia, and how the responsibility of building major districts and developing entirely new districts plays out in

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<sup>176</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 9.

<sup>177</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 21.

<sup>178</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 29.

<sup>179</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 49.

the private and public sectors. As the number of organizations grew, the power of the mayor diminished. Government and nonprofit organizations are almost equal in terms of political standing. Revitalizing Philadelphia meant two things- establishing a successful visitor and commuter economy, and reshaping the educational landscape. The City's 1960 Comprehensive Plan addressed where certain public services should be placed, as well as transportation services and the estimated amount of jobs that should be accomplished by 1980.<sup>180</sup> As Third-Sectors got involved, however, the Plan fell apart and instead the 'Building Our Strengths' city plan was enacted, a ratification of existing racial and infrastructure trends in Philadelphia. It contains a compendium of various different projects, ideas, and locations, without offering a comprehensive goal. Third-Sector organizations were hard for even the mayor to control, as their professional positions put them at the forefront of decision-making. As one will see, there are many successes and failures produced by these Third-Sector organizations, most of the failures attributed to poor planning for future usage of the project. In terms of educational attainment, inner-city school districts serve children that are from impoverished or immigrant homes, which means property tax bases cannot produce enough revenue to support schools. A high academic need and weak local tax base meant that, in the 70s and 80s, there was a large downward spiral for urban school districts nationally, from which this

pattern the Philadelphia School District reflected. As a result, the government had to intervene and take over: "The most striking change in U.S. education governance in the last forty years has been the growth of centralized state control."<sup>181</sup> If a school was labeled as distressed, it could legally be taken over by the state. Suburbanites and city dwellers alike saw budgetary shortfalls that are a result of a funding formula incapable of accounting for the city's high educational costs; restructuring the delivery of education to emphasize competition and mimic market patterns would increase consumer choice. The government was providing EMOs to the worst performing schools, which allowed private management of public schools, but after the failure of EMOs, Philadelphia backed the Charter school movement. Unlike public schools, profit-making businesses play a sizable role in the aspects of charter operations.<sup>182</sup> To make private schools and charter schools more popular, Philadelphia incorporated a portfolio model of pedagogy, where empowered teachers have direct oversight over their students, and parents were given more freedom of choice as to where their child attended school. Portfolio models, however, tended to, "... expand the geographic focus of local school leaders because locals find themselves soliciting support from many outsiders beyond their traditional and local political allies."<sup>183</sup> Regionalism is seeping into Philadelphia's educational system, and as Bauman and Adams both clearly indicate, the intersection

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<sup>180</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 81.

<sup>181</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 84.

<sup>182</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 87-88.

<sup>183</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 93.

of local and national politics became an issue when infrastructure was not being built with an image of the future, the 'bigger picture', or not being built at all. The charter operators shifted enrollments out of residential neighborhoods and into buildings in the center of the city. Although this is both better economically for the success of charter schools, as there were more students available in the area, the current pattern of location weakened the historical links between public schools and surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>184</sup> Adams and Bauman both highlight the importance of schools in fostering a community and in both cases, residential neighborhoods suffered because of the poor housing quality surrounding these schools. Public housing ended up being placed in areas with the worst housing, often disconnected from the school system after a more conservative voting base blocked public housing and low-income housing in the more affluent neighborhoods. Charter school locations ended up in two positions- either filled to its max capacity with non-caucasian students or filled to less than half-capacity with white students. Charter schools and public housing followed the same path of reinforcing residential segregation patterns, and as both Bauman and Adams write, the educational system is only getting worse as it is privatized; the state lost direct oversight over their students, and the government made no attempt to create a comprehensive plan to rebuild the city with its poverty-stricken residents in mind. Adams does not dislike the use of

Third-Sector organizations to accomplish bigger projects faster and cheaper but takes note that city and state governments are channeling dollars into organizational fields where the recipients use those public resources to *compete* rather than *cooperate* with one another.<sup>185</sup> Lodging, such as displacement and the need for new residential buildings and the refurbishment of old buildings, made the process more difficult because the well-being for the future of locals' residency depended on the layout of the city. Despite this, politicians were pushing reliance on the Third Sector anyway. A high level of public funding does not align the Third Sector with government objectives, even if Philadelphia had a comprehensive plan. Instead, public officials only put limited requirements for projects to get them approved faster. The policy around these projects favored competition between the organizations to produce greater efficiency, which then led to competition between the projects post-construction, such as with the charter school movement. Competition fosters organizational isolation- to fix this, Adams indicated a few ways the federal and state governments can navigate the current path of private and public enterprise. Adams states: "City officials should work to induce greater sectoral coherence and concern for serving Philadelphians, to see that the city gains the greatest possible benefit from its concentration of tax-exempt institutions."<sup>186</sup> Bauman's book shows how historians of the time witnessed federal funding and building

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<sup>184</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 104.

<sup>185</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 173.

<sup>186</sup> Adams, *From the Outside In*, 181

requirements, as well as public opinion on the project, as an obstacle to public housing and urban renewal's success. Similarly, Adams shows how a move in the *opposite* direction, a form of laissez-faire economic regionalism, also posed issues because of an emphasis on capitalistic competition that contradicted the government's goal of urban renewal and a lower inner-city poverty rate. The influx of suburban money bolstered the economy of Philadelphia, which disproves Bauman's scapegoating of suburbanization as the main cause of an economic decline in Philadelphia, but the oversight in fixing Philadelphia's racially segregated housing meant that the new projects were being built over the worst areas. Philadelphian low-income neighborhoods were bulldozed and rarely were residents fairly compensated.

McKee's *The Problem of Jobs* contained elements from both Bauman's and Adams' work but stood out for its usage of larger, national issues put into context for the rise of Liberalism, a continuation of unemployment issues, and a lack of racial equality in Philadelphia. As opposed to the other books, McKee emphasizes the need for jobs, specifically how left-leaning political participants' support of government intervention in the economy persisted at the local level even as national ideologies swayed in the other direction.<sup>187</sup> McKee begins his book after World War II and ends in the 1970s, a timeframe that just overlaps with Bauman's book and finishes where

Adams starts. McKee presents the history of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), a quasi-public organization that added about 68,000 jobs between 1959 and 1970, and the projects it had undertaken to promote racial equality and prevent further segregation in the city. The placement of McKee's book at the end of this historiography study, despite taking place in between Bauman and Adams, is not a mistake. McKee's book indicates the transformation of federal and local policy to reflect the involvement of Third Sector organizations: "These local policy initiatives engaged with and, in some cases, relied on the resources and incentives provided by federal programs, but they remained projects of the local state- of liberal policymakers and activists who constructed public, private, and community-based institutions that sought to address the city's loss of industrial jobs."<sup>188</sup> Bauman's book introduces the concept of using private goals to accomplish public services- McKee takes this and identifies the various projects undertaken to accomplish the Philadelphia Plan and Model Cities program, the first of which to include non-profits to shorten construction periods and bring in more jobs at a rapid rate. McKee is also innovative in his contribution to how Philadelphia's job-focused programs paralleled racial tracks; the projects that failed generally ignored the social component of industrial decline and racial discrimination in the Philadelphian industry. Specifically, how PIDC's tendency

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<sup>187</sup> Guian McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 4.

<sup>188</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 12.

to work in isolation from those most dramatically affected by economic change led to more suffrage on the part of Philadelphia's black population.<sup>189</sup> Black-run projects, which both Bauman and Adams failed to allude to, were vulnerable to the real estate market and fluctuations in federal support as a result of changing market conditions. Public action by a hostile white working-class privileged a focus on cultural factors in urban renewal over the need for a long-term plan for fixing structural economic concerns in the city.<sup>190</sup> PIDC and the Philadelphia Plan lost momentum as Liberalism lost its momentum- the national concern for the War on Poverty offered opinionated white city residents a way to lay out their concerns for undergoing an urban renewal project in already affluent neighborhoods. The focus, they believed, should be on the city's worst slums. Unfortunately, this meant continuing the residential divide of the city's black population, or in the worst cases, complete displacement and removal. McKee's analysis of the direct effect of the War on Poverty in the slums of Philadelphia draws parallels to Bauman's foundation of placing public and low-income housing in economically advantaged neighborhoods. Simply, government intervention focused on white appeasement without the realization of the importance of black economic and social participation in Philadelphia's inner city. While Bauman is pessimistic about the future, however, McKee focuses on the

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<sup>189</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 81.

<sup>190</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 111.

PIDC's victory in slowing the progress of deindustrialization and moderating its effects.<sup>191</sup> McKee brings to the table a level of optimism unseen in Bauman's perspective, while Adams adheres to a methodology of unbiased analysis of the city's and Third Sector organizations' urban renewal agenda and necessary racial progressivism. McKee and Adams acknowledge the local and federal politicians' complete disconnection between economic decline and racial inequality. McKee, however, claims that local public policy can still have a wide effect on the rate of economic change independent of racial matters.<sup>192</sup> Adams believes that economic decline is synonymous with racial inequality, dictating a change in the historical perspective that inequality should be at the forefront of urban redevelopment programs. McKee also addresses racial matters continuously throughout the book, which differs from Bauman's and Adams' use of dedicated chapters advocating the involvement of racial matters in shaping Philadelphia's urban renewal process. For example, McKee noted the shortfalls of the liberal agenda in embracing civil rights, and how the lack of black political representation in city-building meant the expansion of industry was inaccessible to inner-city residents: "... the interaction of job discrimination and industrial decline in Philadelphia had placed African Americans at a severed disadvantage in the local labor market...nonwhite men held a

<sup>191</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 67.

<sup>192</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 76.

disproportionate share of low-wage, low-scale jobs... only 8.7 percent of [African Americans held] professional and technical jobs...”<sup>193</sup> Black residents, according to McKee, act solely out of response to economic crisis in Philadelphia, making it apparent that black political participants focused on *creating* jobs, without realizing that the jobs being made were hard for the average inner-city black resident to attain. McKee ends his book with the Model Cities program, a shift from a focus on the renewal of Philadelphia’s manufacturing industry to the services industry: “... the PIDC had slowed but not reversed the decline of Philadelphia’s manufacturing sector during the 1960s and that the base of the national economy had begun to shift from manufacturing to services. This led both city and... PIDC to question whether the nonprofit corporation should continue to focus exclusively on industrial development or expand its operations into services.”<sup>194</sup> A large part of Adams’ book lies in the development of these service institutions; McKee takes note of the availability of land for future industrial uses, and Adams picks up with the various service projects conducted on that land. McKee’s analysis of the bifurcation of local and federal policy is hopeful, at the very least, that Liberalism will overtake the agendas of status-quo residential ‘segregationists’ for a more inclusive economical base in Philadelphia.

The last 30 years have witnessed scholarship on Philadelphian inner-city politics change to include the active

participation of suburbanites, the rise of Progressivism and Liberalism, and the inclusion of the black struggle for economic and social participation. At the same time, Bauman, McKee, and Adams all take note of the large number of contradictions that come into play when federal and local policy intersect. Bauman’s *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal* follows the issue of national political ideologies in the context of war-spawned conservatism, and how the failure of public housing led to a reliance on private sectors to provide housing for those in need. Private interests, however, do not always align with the public; housing was built but did not always reach a level of adequacy that modern homes have. Adams’ *From the Outside In* shows how the move towards private sector construction and subsequent failure led to a new form of regionalism based on Third Sector organizations’ involvement. To blur the lines between private and public sectors and circumnavigate the general public’s opinion on whether the project should be built in the first place, Philadelphia’s mayors utilized a growing medium of regionalism. McKee’s *The Problem of Jobs* takes into consideration this shift and depicts the transformation in ideology to include Liberalism, similar but not exact to Bauman’s interpretation of the definition of Progressivism in Philadelphian local politics. While Bauman remains pessimistic about the future of public housing and urban renewal, McKee exemplifies a shift in public opinion to focus on the positives of urban renewal, with some constructive

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<sup>193</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 119.

<sup>194</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 251.

criticism concerning how race should be considered in the application of the process; Adams represents a politically unbiased retelling of events, with many points as to how city politicians should carry construction projects in the future. All three books, however, fully understand that economic decline was tied to racial inequality and that the power of the state and Third Sector organizations are necessary to have a significant effect on the character of economic and racial progress.

Teaching racial inequality in the educational and infrastructural fields is important for closing the social and economic gap that has developed since the removal of the institution of slavery. When teaching in West Windsor South, I noticed that students were hyper aware of their social classes. The very topic of racial disparity was often talked about in the 12th grade Social Justice class I helped out in, and each and every student noted how important it was to be actively thinking about solutions to solve the issues our predecessors have created. The books listed in this historiography study are a good start to help students understand the gravity of the situation and the attempts previously made to solve the issue, especially when the

authors' research delves into the closest city to them, Philadelphia.

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## Teaching New York History: Sources for Teachers

Bruce W. Dearstyne

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The New York state social studies/history framework includes the teaching of local and New York history at the Grade 4 level and New York and U.S. history in Grades 7/8. U.S. history is the topic for Grade 11 but, given New York's historical importance over time, some of the topics such as immigration and reform movements that started in New York but spread nationally, could also be taught with a New York dimension.

New York teachers are often looking for sources for these classes. This article provides some suggestions.

**Books.** There are many books on New York history and more coming out all the time. The blog [New York Almanack](#) carries notices of new books. Books covering all of the state's history include Bruce W. Dearstyne, [The Spirit of New York: Defining Events in the Empire State's History](#), David M. Ellis, [New York: City and State](#), David M. Ellis et al, [A History of New York State](#), Milton M. Klein, ed., [The Empire State: A History of New York](#) and Joanne Reitano, [A History of New York State](#). Two encyclopedias are useful for concise information on many topics: Peter Eisenstadt, ed. [Encyclopedia of New York State](#) and Kenneth T. Jackson et al, eds., [The Encyclopedia of New York City](#). Beyond that, there are hundreds of books on local

history, and more are being published all the time. Your school or local public library should have many of these, and they are also available for purchase. Many libraries have local history sections which may include local history books and other sources and are useful venues for student research projects and field trips.

**Articles.** Articles by historians in journals are often very useful for teachers seeking information and for assignment for student readings. This journal, *Teaching Social Studies*, is the best source for writing in the field. The journal [New York History](#) and [The Hudson River Valley Review](#) provide a statewide focus. [New York Archives](#) published by the State Archives Partnership Trust, carries many articles from around the state. The Trust recently initiated [New York Archives Jr.](#) Each issue features one article from *New York Archives* magazine rewritten at an upper elementary level, community connections, related facts, and learning activities focused on primary source analysis. Regional journals such as [Rochester History](#) and journals published by county historical societies feature articles of local interest which may be of particular interest to students since the articles cover "nearby history."

**The Office of State History.** The [Office of State History](#) in the State Museum has a great deal of information on New York history on its website, online podcasts including "[A Minute in New York State History](#)", and [Empire State Engagements](#), interviews with authors of new books.

**Officially designated local government historians.** New York is the only state with a [law](#) authorizing local governments to appoint official historians. Many counties, cities, towns and villages have made these appointments; some have not. Historians' work varies depending on their priorities and support, but in many communities, they are invaluable resources and welcome opportunities to work with teachers. You can find your community's historian on the website of the [Association of Public Historians of New York State](#).

**Local history museums and historical societies.** There are hundreds of these, located in all areas of the state. Many hold sources that students could use for research, welcome visits by school groups, and seek other opportunities to work with the schools. There is no central directory but many are listed on [Wikipedia](#) or on the website of the [Museum Association of New York](#). You can follow their work, and developments in state history generally, through the website of the [Office of State History](#) in the State Museum and the blog [New York Almanack](#).

Some history programs are of particular importance because of their scope, the variety of their programs, their programs for student visits, and, increasingly, their online presentations. These include, among

others the [Buffalo History Museum](#), [Empire State Aerosciences Museum](#) (Glenville), [Eastman Museum of Photography](#) (Rochester), [Erie Canal Museum](#) (Syracuse), [Farmers' Museum](#) (Cooperstown), [Genesee Country Village and Museum](#) (Mumford), [New-York Historical Society, Museum and Library](#) and the [New York State Museum](#) (Albany) which features history exhibits, public events, and online presentations.

**State historic sites.** The state office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation maintains [state historic sites](#) and buildings in all areas of the state. They welcome school groups and some may be willing to send a speaker to the schools.

*Consider the Source: Teaching With Historical Records*, an online resource available at the State Archives, features document-based teaching activities. The Archives also gives [Student Research Awards](#) for outstanding student research using historical records.

**New York State History Day**, part of "National History Day," is a forum for students to compete for awards in several categories, including research papers, exhibits, documentaries, and performances.

**The Historians' Podcast** features interviews and discussions with experts on New York state and local history.

**Historical Society of the New York Courts** is an excellent source for New York's legal and constitutional history. Its online journal [Judicial Notice](#) features articles on important cases.

[The State Archives Partnership Trust](#) features [online podcasts and videos](#) on historical topics.

time to celebrate the state's history and historians. It would be an opportune time for attention to particular New York-related topics in schools.

**\*New York State History Month (October).** October is designated in [law](#) as [New York State History Month](#). This is a



## **The Edible Primary Source: Food as a Medium to Teach History**

Steven Jenkins

Whether it is a book, a quote, a painting or a picture, students are meant to study history through and from these meanings. While they each have validity and all have importance, some of these sources lack the reliability needed to encourage engagement in a student's mind. Primary sources can be static. Stuck in the time period they were written and while their implication and effects ripple into the present they remain stuck in the time they were made, orated or created. However, what if educators used living mediums to illustrate historical processes. That is a medium that is used physically by people in the past with continual uses today. That medium, as the title suggests, is food.

Food is somewhat of an easy to miss primary source. It is understandable of course because when comparing the constitution and a tomato, one packs an obvious greater historical punch. However, by considering primary sources as only a physical creation by a human who wrote, spoke or drew, the possibilities are limited. While the United States constitution has evolved beyond the bounds of the time it was created and has become the "living document" described in many classrooms today, so has the tomato. So has any food. This essay will demonstrate how food is a living document to be adopted in the

classroom. Food can be used in the classroom as a method of showing historical change, a method of instilling culturally responsive education into the curriculum as well as being an applicable mode of analysis to any historical period.

Food history is first and foremost about a process. Food must be grown of course. It starts with a seed, the tending of young livestock, and reproduction for generations to provide for us. It is part of the story of humankind itself. The development of agriculture, that idea so central to understanding ancient civilizations like Mesopotamia or Egypt, has been neglected in education in post-Paleolithic age discussions. Humans have created the ability to grow their own sources of food and changed environments through irrigation, terraforming landscapes and breeding plants and animals for more desirable characteristics. Humans then harvest and process those items and create a dish using those ingredients. It is a quite profound process that still is practiced everyday whether the ingredients are sourced by the cook or not. More than that, humans have assigned meaning to our food. Humans have created cultures that have holidays that revolve around crop rotations and harvests. Humans have created dishes that are synonymous with certain cultures. People

that come from the same ethnic or cultural background can share similarities beyond their geographical locations because of food. In the classroom, this is a pertinent example of the values that education wishes to attain generated through food.

Food in education is a necessary mode to encourage multicultural thought and culturally sensitive pedagogies. Each student comes from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences. Honoring these is a great goal in education. As stated by Wiley-Blackwell about Culturally Responsive Teaching, “Culturally competent teachers are committed to learning about their students' cultural resources, or funds of knowledge” (Wiley-Blackwell 1). Food history can facilitate this. Having students research, explore and learn about foods or dishes that are part of their culture allow them to critically engage with the history that has made their diverse identities. They bring their knowledge and combine it with historical records, thus, bringing their culture as a source of learning for the entire class and the teacher. They get to educate their classmates and teachers about themselves and their history.

Another issue that makes food history a great medium is its applicability. No matter the time period, individuals responded to the conditions of their time by changing their gastronomy. This can be represented in the classroom as evidence of the social changes that occur in various periods of history. For example, if a class is engaging in the topic of enslavement in America, food history can show the conditions of enslavement as well as

perseverance of enslaved Africans. This can be done through okra. Okra, a crop originating in west Africa that has become synonymous with southern cooking in America, which has its roots in enslavement. Enslaved Africans taken from the continent brought with them okra seeds. Evidenced by the unfamiliarity with the crop by early European sources in Brazil, okra was seemingly foreign to them leading to the possibility that Africans resisted slavery by bringing okra seeds as contraband (Sousa & Raizad, 2020). Beyond that, okra was repeatedly described in the personal gardens of slaves and used as a form of medicine, syncretized religious practices as well as sustenance in the face of horrible malnutrition (Eisnach & Covey, 2019). In the post-civil war era, okra expanded outside of the plantations and became part of some of the first examples of enterprising formerly enslaved persons in the form of soul cooking. Some of the first sold cookbooks created by former slaves include okra in the form of gumbo and other dishes. One of those cookbooks is titled *What Mrs. Fisher knows about old southern cooking, soups, pickles, preserves, etc.* This cookbook describes various methods of cooking with okra gained from Fisher's experiences as a former slave (Fisher, 1881). Fisher had essentially used the abject horror of slavery as a means of self-enterprise, exemplifying the importance of food culture for formerly enslaved persons. Okra became part of a series of navigations of enslaved africans against the institutions of slavery. From its arrival in America okra was a matter of resistance. This is a historical case that could be added to curricula to show the

nature of life in enslavement as well as the agency of enslaved persons in the Americas.

There are plenty of other examples that could be listed out in which food can be used as a medium of examining historical periods however the importance is implementation in the classroom. The concept of food history can be used in countless ways. As described prior food is a process. A process that mirrors human growth and development. It informs the way people react to their social constraints. Those social constraints and events that form the unique cultures of each and every student in the classroom. Food history is an opportunity for culturally relevant pedagogies where students center food as a manner to present their identities. Food history is finally a manner of applicability. It is an aspect of the historical record that is forever present and forever important to the historical process for the individuals that experienced it. It is thus that teachers must examine food as a primary source in itself. A primary source that bends time to become a fountain of educational possibilities.

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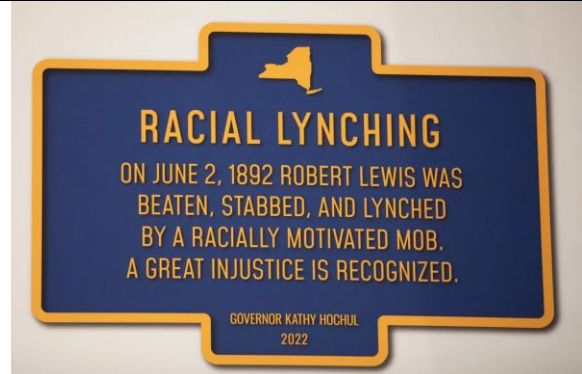
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## Teaching with Documents: The 1892 Lynching of an African American Man in New York State

Alan Singer and Janice Chopyk

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama memorializes the over 4,000 African Americans murdered by vigilante terrorism in the American South between the end of Reconstruction in the United States in 1877 and 1950 and the more than 300 victims of racial terrorism in other states. Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia were the worst offenders, but there were also significant numbers of vigilante murders of African Americans in Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. Eight hundred steel columns hang from the ceiling at the Memorial, each with the name of a county where a lynching occurred with the names of victims engraved on it. The only lynching in New York State during this period occurred in the town of Port Jervis, Orange County in 1892. Port Jervis is located on the Delaware River at the border of New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. At the end of the 19th century, it was an important stop on the Delaware and Hudson Canal for barges transporting anthracite coal to Philadelphia and New York City from Scranton area coal mines and on the New York, Lake Erie and Western Railroad.



In his new book, *A Lynching at Port Jervis: Race and Reckoning in the Gilded* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), Philip Dray [documents](#) racial violence in Port Jervis about sixty-five miles northwest of New York City. The story of what happened to Robert Lewis, a 28-year-old African American teamster and coach driver on Thursday June 2, 1892 was largely told through the eyes of white residents and white-owned newspapers. Unfortunately, there are no sources that address the Black perspective on the lynching of Lewis by a white mob. A coroner's inquest was held with witness testimony, but there is no surviving transcript. At least one witness, Officer Simon Yaple, is known to have named some of the members of the murderous mob, but none were ever tried or convicted of crimes.

Robert Lewis, described in the press as a powerful man of about five feet seven and

170 pounds, was accused of assaulting and sexually abusing a 22-year-old white woman named Lena McMahon on a riverbank where the Cuddeback Brook meets the Neversink River before it flows into the Delaware River just south of Port Jervis. Participants in the mob attack on Lewis claimed that before he was murdered, Lewis confessed to the assault and implicated McMahon's white boyfriend, Philip Foley as an accomplice. Lewis was then lynched on East Main Street, now U.S. Route 6.

Lena McMahon reported to authorities that she was approached by a heavy-set Black man with a light complexion who she did not know, although he appeared to know her. In her testimony about the assault, McMahon claimed that she was "terribly frightened" because her assailant had an "evil look in his eyes" and that after she rebuffed him he grabbed her shoulder and covered her mouth in an attempt to keep her from screaming. Local boys interrupted the attack on McMahon and her attacker, presumably Lewis, picked up fishing gear and left the scene. While McMahon initially reported that the man who attacked her was a "tramp," one of the boys later identified Lewis as the assailant.

Robert Lewis was seized by a posse on the towpath of the D & H Canal while riding on a slow moving coal barge, not a very likely escape plan and Lewis made no effort to avoid capture. He had fishing gear with him and said he was planning to spend the night fishing. Sol Carley, part of the posse that captured Lewis, claimed that he questioned Lewis while they were bringing

him back to Port Jervis. According to Carley, Lewis confessed to what had taken place, but claimed that Foley, who he knew from the hotel where he previously worked, told him McMahon would be receptive to a sexual encounter and if he wanted a "piece to go down and get it." Lewis seemed to think that the entire situation could be resolved if they questioned Foley and Lewis had a chance to speak to McMahon's father.

The initial police plan was to bring Lewis to the McMahon home to see if she could identify him, although Lena McMahon continued to maintain her attacker was a stranger, probably a tramp, who was camping in the woods. This plan was interrupted when a rumor spread that Lena McMahon had died from her wounds, dooming Robert Lewis. A crowd of over 300 white men was gathered in downtown Port Jervis. Upon hearing the rumor, it was transformed into an uncontrollable mob and murdered Lewis. Port Jervis' small African American community, in defiance of white authority, insisted on a proper funeral for Lewis and contributed funds for burial at Laurel Grove cemetery, while at least some whites tried to steal souvenir relics from his body.

Students can read, compare, and discuss newspaper coverage of the events in Port Jervis. In the age of #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, it is difficult to dissect aspects of events that took place over a hundred years ago, especially where the surviving documentation is sporadic and clearly biased. How much of Lena McMahon's story should be believed? Does questioning



her account reflect what we now recognize as gender bias? On the other hand, how much of her story was colored by racism? We know from similar accusations made by white women against Black men that led to the arrest and imprisonment of the Scottsboro Boys and the murder of Emmett Till, that in a climate of intense racism, white women protected their reputations by fabricating stories of disrespect or assault. It is hard to believe that Robert Lewis did not know that a “confession” meant a death sentence. A compelling question for students to consider is: What do the events in Port Jervis and the newspaper coverage tell us about race and racism in New York State during this period? Teachers should alert students that there are overtly racist comments in the newspaper articles, but that “negro” was in common usage at the time to describe the group of people we now call African American and was not a racist term.

*Documenting the Lynching of Robert Lewis at Port Jervis, New York*

**A. LYNCHED AT PORT JERVIS.  
ROBERT JACKSON, A COLORED  
MAN, HANGED BY A MOB.** *New York Times*, June 3, 1892

Robert Jackson, a young colored man, was lynched in this village to-night, receiving swift retribution for an assault committed this morning on Miss Lena McMahan, daughter of John McMahan of this place. The crime occurred on the outskirts of the village, near the banks of the Neversink River. Two young negroes and a crowd of children were near by, but when

the former tried to interfere Jackson kept them at bay with a revolver. He made his escape without trouble. Miss McMahan was left in an insensible condition. Her injuries may prove fatal. A posse started in pursuit of Jackson as soon as news of the assault spread . . . The capture of the fugitive was finally made at Cuddebackville, a small village on the Delaware and Hudson Canal about nine miles from Port Jervis, by Sol Carley, Duke Horton, and a man named Coleman. Jackson had borrowed a canal boat at Huguenot, and had reached Cuddebackville, when he was overtaken by the three men. On the way back to this village he confessed the crime, and implicated William Foley, a white man, who, he said, was in the conspiracy against Miss McMahan. Foley has been paying attention to the girl contrary to the wishes of her parents, and the feeling against him in this community is such that, should he be taken, a fate similar to that which has overtaken Jackson would probably be meted out to him. The news of the capture of Jackson soon spread through the town, and a large crowd of men collected about the village lock-up, awaiting the arrival of the prisoner. The word was whispered through the crowd “Lynch him, lynch him!” The suggestion spread like wildfire, and it was evident that the fate of the prisoner was sealed. On his arrival at the lock-up Jackson was taken in hand by the mob. The village police endeavored to protect him, but their efforts were unavailing. It was at first proposed to have Jackson identified by his victim before hanging him, in order to make sure of his guilt. With this object in view the mob tied a rope around his body and

dragged him up Hammond and down Main Streets as far as the residence of E. G. Fowler, Esq. By this time the mob had reached a state of uncontrollable excitement, and it was decided to dispatch him without further ceremony. A noose was adjusted about his neck and he was strung up to a neighboring tree in the presence of over 1,000 people. For an hour the body hung from the tree, where it was viewed by crowds . . . Public sentiment on the subject of the lynching is divided, although a majority approve and openly applaud the work of the lynchers, declaring that a terrible warning was necessary to prevent future repetitions of the same offense.

### **Questions**

1. Where and when did these events take place?
2. Who was Robert Jackson?
3. What was Robert Jackson accused of?
4. What happened to Robert Jackson?
5. What is the attitude of the New York Times toward these events? What evidence from the text supports your conclusion?

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### **B. Mob Murder at Port Jervis, *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 3, 1892, pg. 4**

A negro was hanged by a mob in Port Jervis on Thursday night. He was charged with the crime of violence on a white girl, who is now said to be lingering between life and death. The crime was

committed. The victim of it and two other witnesses charged the commission of it on a negro called by the name of the one who was lynched. The accused criminal was caught a long distance from the spot, while trying to run away. He was not, however, taken for identification before any of the persons who had accused him. A rumor prevails around Port Jervis that, after all, the wrong negro was captured and killed. Negroes are not easily distinguished from one another, unless by marks of identification carefully registered on scientific examination and then carefully compared when any man to whom they presumably refer is apprehended. There is very little doubt that the negro who was killed was the man who committed the crime, but there is some doubt that he was. That doubt, however slight, should harrow the memories and consciences of the men who lawlessly destroyed him. Aside from this fact, the offense of which the negro was accused but not convicted does not carry the punishment of death in this state by law. <http://www.bethlehemchurch.com/admin/La> w has found that capital punishment in cases of violence against women has been inflicted on innocent persons. The accusation is easily made. It is hard to disprove. A predisposition to believe it exists when it is brought against the lowly and the humble, the obscure or the repulsive. The pardoning power is not seldom required to rectify the errors of courts and juries in cases of violence to women. On these accounts the punishment has been reduced below the death penalty, to give time and government a chance to correct the wrongs of law. The event at Port Jervis, Thursday

night, was a disgrace to the State of New York. The heinousness of the offense may explain but does not excuse the popular violence. This is supposed to be a government of law. Citizens are supposed to be law abiding. Moral culture and obedience to law are supposed to be an insurance that communities will not take the law in their own hands in any cases, and especially in cases which excite and inflame them. It may be roughly said, so far as lynch law is concerned in New York State, that the greater the provocation the less the excuse. The crime of which this negro was guilty cannot be overcharacterized, but there are worse crimes than it, by the definition of the law of the State of New York. A worse crime is murder. Murder is the destruction of a human being without warrant of law, with malice and premeditation, and not in self defense. The hanging of the negro in Port Jervis on Thursday night mates with that definition of the crime of murder. It was murder.

### **Questions**

1. Are there features in the *Brooklyn Eagle* article you would identify as racist? Explain.
  2. Compare coverage of the events in Port Jervis as reported in the *Brooklyn Eagle* the *New York Times*. How is it similar or different?
  3. In your opinion, are there errors of fact in the *Brooklyn Eagle* account? Explain.
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**C. Port Jervis Disgrace, *The Daily Standard Union*, June 3, 1892, pg. 2**

Port Jervis has not added to her good name by the brutal murder of a negro, who was, no doubt, no less brutal than the white men who took the law into their own hands and inflicted the death penalty without sentence. Has the Empire State fallen so low that criminals cannot be punished by due process of law? . . . There is no reason why a Northern State inhabited by justice-loving people, should be Southernized by a few misguided men in a country town. A heinous crime was charged against the negro, but there was no sworn evidence that he was the guilty person. Sympathy was strong for the young woman who, it is said, suffered from the negro's violence, and this sympathy was proper and creditable; but it does not justify killing by mass meeting. It is to be hoped that every one of the men who actually took part on compassing the negro's death will be apprehended and made to feel the hand of the law he has outraged."

### **Questions**

1. How is coverage of the events in Port Jervis in this article from the *Daily Standard Union*, a Brooklyn, New York newspaper, similar to and different from coverage in the *New York Times* and the *Brooklyn Eagle*?
  2. What is conspicuously missing from this excerpt from the article? In your opinion, what does that suggest about the viewpoint of the *Daily Standard Union* about the events?
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### **D. Local Newspaper Coverage**

**Port Jervis Union:** The Excitement in this village over the lynching of the negro, Robert Lewis has abated somewhat but further developments are awaited with the most intense interest. Attention is now centered upon the work of the coroner's jury which was empanelled yesterday and whose duty it is not merely to investigate the manner of Lewis' death but if possible to trace out the leaders and instigators of mob violence and to fix upon them the responsibility which belongs to them. Public sentiment and the honor and fair fame of the village demand that an earnest effort be made to do this. Now that the excitement attendant upon the awful events of Thursday has partially subsided a decided reaction has taken place in public sentiment and there are few who do not deplore and condemn the work of the mob. It is now generally admitted that the ends of justice would have been fully satisfied by leaving Lewis to be dealt with according to the regular forms of law, while our village would have escaped the world-wide notoriety which now attaches to it as the scene of one of the worst manifestations of mob-violence which has occurred in recent years. To be known as a community controlled and dominated by lawless elements is a penalty which we must now pay.

**Middletown Daily Press:** What a hard question to decide: the right or the wrong of Thursday night's outrage in Port Jervis. One man, a father, and a county official, said: "It's all right for some of us to moralize. But put yourself in that father's place." Another man, also a father: "Those men are worse than the negro. No matter how heinous the

crime, can any human being think of a life being tugged along through public streets by a howling, half mad crowd which handled the rope, without saying 'They're brutes, and God does not sanction their work.'"

**Middletown Argus:** That the punishment so summarily meted out to the black ruffian who made Lena McMahan victim of his lust was more than merited, there is no division of sentiment . . . Lewis might better have been left to be dealt with by court and jury, inadequate though his punishment, if convicted, would be, but informal as was his exit from it, no one will say nay to it that the world is well rid of him.

**Newburgh Daily Journal:** The outbreak in Port Jervis is wholly without justification . . . The mob's crime was an attack upon the cause of law and order. It remains with the criminal authorities to deal with the perpetrators of this crime as the law provides.

### **Questions:**

1. The *Port Jervis Union* is a weekly newspaper. This issue was published two days after the events and coverage is on page 3. What is the primary focus of the article? What does this suggest about local attitudes toward the event?
2. What are the attitudes toward the events in Port Jervis expressed in newspaper coverage from neighboring towns?

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**E. The Dangers of Lynching (Editorial).**  
*New York Times*, June 4, 1892

A considerable number of persons, some of them possibly very worth citizens in a general way and others pretty certainly nothing of the kind, united on Thursday in Port Jervis to hang a negro who had committed a criminal assault upon a white girl. The feeling that actuated the mob was doubtless the same that is cited as defense for like lynching in the Southern States. It is that the penalty prescribed by law is not sufficient for the offense which is punished by lynching. It is not to be denied that negroes are much more prone to this crime than whites, and the crime itself becomes more revolting and infuriating to white men, North as well as South, when a negro is the perpetrator and a white woman the victim . . . It is unlikely that such a change in the law would diminish the number of lynchings. These are commonly committed by crowds which are animated by so furious an indignation that they would not wait for the law to take its course, even though the punishment were capital and certain, but would insist upon themselves doing their prisoner to death rather than to wait for months, or even weeks, to have him done to death by the law. This lawless temper is not commendable, and it ought to be discouraged by the law. Although it is probable that the good citizens of Port Jervis sympathized with the mob when they first learned of its murderous work, it is also probable that they are by this time ashamed of it and of their sympathy with it, and regard the lynching as more of a disgrace to the town than the crime it avenged, for which only a single brute was responsible . . . [I]t is admitted that the mob, misled by one of the rumors that spread in times of

excitement, came very near hanging the wrong man, and this is a danger that always attends the unlawful execution of justice . . . [T]he lynchers by their precipitation seem to have operated a defeat of justice almost as great as if they had hanged the wrong man. The negro not only confessed his crime, but declared that he had been instigated to commit it by a white man whom he named. . . . The greater criminal, if he be a criminal at all, is likely to go scot free because the people of Port Jervis have hastily and carelessly hanged a man who, if he had been spared, might have proved a valuable witness. This is a danger of lynching that the lynchers have incurred which they themselves must confess to be a serious drawback to the success of their method of doing justice.

### Questions

1. How does the *New York Times* describe the people who participated in the lynching of Robert Lewis?
2. In the opinion of the *New York Times*, why is the incident regrettable?
3. What evidence, if any, does the excerpt from the editorial suggest about the biases of the *Times*?

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### **F. VERDICT AT PORT JERVIS, No One Held Responsible for the Lynching of Lewis. *The Aspen Daily Chronicle*, June 15, 1892, pg. 3**

The coroner's inquest over the lynching of Bob Lewis, the negro, terminated at 4:30 o'clock yesterday

afternoon. The jury, after being out one hour, rendered the following verdict: “We find that Robert Lewis came to his death in the village of Port Jervis on June 2, 1892, by being hanged by some persons or person unknown to this jury . . . The thinking public doubts Miss McMahan’s story, as it also does Foleys . The circumstances are to conflicting. If the young woman had practically no knowledge of her surroundings from Wednesday to Thursday morning, then she must have been crazy. Not a living female would or could be hired to stay over night in Laurel Grove cemetery, as she stated she did. The stormy weather and the delicate physique of the girl would knock that story in the head. It is a fact that when Foley was arrested on the morning succeeding the assault of Miss McMahan, he trembled like a leaf and had to be supported. There is something back of the whole affair and those facts are held by Squire Mulley justice of the peace, who refuses to allow the contents of Foleys blackmailing letters addressed to Miss McMahan, to appear in print. Mr. Mulley says that the investigation of Miss McMahan and Foley will be strictly private.

### **Questions**

1. What was the verdict of the coroner’s inquest?
  2. What is the attitude of this newspaper to stories of the incident?
  3. This article appeared in a Colorado newspaper. What does that suggest about reaction to the lynching?
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### **G. MISS M’MAHON WRITES A LETTER, SHE EXPLAINS WHAT HER RELATIONS WERE WITH FOLEY.**

*New York Times, June 25, 1892:*

To the Editor of the Daily Union:

Sir: As my name has been so freely circulated throughout the press of the country during he past few weeks in connection with the infamous scoundrel, Foley, who has been airing his ignorance and viciousness in frequent letters from the county jail, that I wish, once for all, in justice to myself, to refute and brand as malicious falsehoods the statements this person has seen fit to utter. I first became acquainted with Foley when he assumed to be a gentleman, through the introduction of a mutual friend. He paid me attention, and I was foolish, as other young girls have been, to believe in his professions of friendship, and when I, in the indiscretion of youth, had some trifling difficulty with fond and loving parents who endeavored to give me wise counsel and advice, resolved to leave home, this inhuman monster egged me on and endeavored to carry into execution his nefarious scheme to ruin and blacken my character forever. When I discovered “the wolf in sheep’s clothing,” the true character of the parody of manhood, I at all risks and perils resolved to prosecute him as he so richly deserves. That resolution I still maintain, and I wish to assure the public that the maudlin, sentimental outpourings from this person, who, relying upon the fact that I was once his friend, has seen fit to make me the victim of extortion and blackmail, have no effect whatever on me, and it will not be

my fault if he does not receive the punishment he so richly deserves. There is nothing to prevent this man writing letters, and I do not consider it either wise or discreet to pay any attention to them. I simply desire to say that his insinuations and allegations are falsehoods; that my relations with him have been those only of a friend. God only knows how much I regret that. I cannot have my reputation as an honest, chaste, and virtuous girl assailed by this villain without a protest, and I ask all right-thinking people who possess these qualities to place themselves in my position and then ask if they would act differently than I have done. The evil fortune that has overtaken me has been no fault of my own, and I trust that the light of truth will reveal this man as he truly is, the author of all my misfortune. I do not intend to express myself again to the public concerning this matter, nor pay any attention to what this man may say or do. All I desire is peace, and the consideration and fair treatment that should be extended to one who has suffered untold misery, and whose whole life has been blighted by one whose heartlessness and cruelty is only equaled by his low cunning and cowardice.

LENA M'MAHON.

### **Questions**

1. Who is Lena McMahon?
  2. What prompted her to write this letter?
  3. What is missing from the letter?
  4. What does the missing part tell us about events in Port Jervis?
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### **H. Port Jervis Lynching Indictments. *New York Times*, June 30, 1892**

The Grand Jury of Orange County to-day indicted nine persons in the Port Jervis lynching case. Two of these were officers of the village . . . Five of the indictments are for assault and the rest for riot.

### **Arrested for the Port Jervis Lynching. *New York Times*, July 1, 1892**

Bench warrants for the arrest of five men indicted by the Grand Jury, and alleged to have been in the party who lynched the negro in this place, were issued to-day . . . The indictment is regarded as the weakest that could have been made.

### **Port Jervis Lynchers Not Indicted. *New York Times*, September 30, 1892**

The Orange County Grand Jury reported to-day to Judge John J. Beattie. They said they had not indicted the Port Jervis lynchers of the colored man Robert Lewis. The reason was that the Port Jervis people had failed to give the evidence necessary to indict.

### **Questions**

1. What was the final resolution of the Port Jervis lynching?
  2. In your opinion, what does this tell us about race and justice in New York in this period?
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### **References**

Dray, Philip. 2022. *A Lynching at Port Jervis: Race and Reckoning in the Gilded* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022).

**Holocaust Museum & Center for Tolerance and Education  
Rockland Community College**

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*You can find the Holocaust Museum and Center for Tolerance and Education at Rockland Community College through this [link](#).*

Legislation (A.472C /S.121B) will help ensure that New York schools are properly educating students on the Holocaust. The legislation directs the New York State Education Department to determine whether school districts across the state have met education requirements on instruction of the Holocaust, which have been required by law since 1994. It will also require NYSED to identify how non-compliant schools will close gaps in knowledge of the Holocaust in schools.

The Holocaust Museum & Center for Tolerance and Education is proud to offer a multitude of programs for Elementary School, Middle School and High School audiences as well as Professional Development for Faculty. We teach on topics ranging from the Holocaust to Genocide Studies, to Tolerance and Diversity. We customize our programs to suit the needs of your students, staff, and faculty. Our Education Department works with you to produce events and resources that will impact your school for years to come. We will help your school achieve the mandates by our New York Governor on Holocaust Education.

[Program offerings](#)

*Moral courage professional development*

Led by our Director of Education, teacher training seminars provide introductory guidance and resources on best practices for teaching the Holocaust and Genocide (Grades 6-12) and the importance of Tolerance and Diversity (Grades K-5). We also offer more in-depth seminars for teachers who wish to explore new approaches and materials to support Holocaust and Genocide education for their students.

*Anti-bias & sensitivity training*

Our Anti-Bias & Sensitivity Training helps faculty and staff combat hate and intolerance personally, professionally, and publically. Our Director of Education and Historian in Residence offers customizable seminars that draw upon the history of the Holocaust to teach the lessons of tolerance, individual responsibility, and moral courage in the workplace as well as out in our communities. Please contact our Director of Education and Historian in Residence Linda Suss today to discuss how we can support the important work you do educating our community's young people.

*Better Together workshops for teachers, administration and coaches*



Antisemitism and racism are two facets of the disease of hatred. All forms of oppression that target individuals based on their identity share an equally distressing aim of creating a hierarchy ranking of the value of human life. We at HMCTE know that this is a categorically false and damaging way to understand the world. In our eyes, all people share the same inherent dignity, worthiness, and rights – no matter who they are or where they come from. If we only examine one facet of hatred, be it antisemitism, racism, sexism, ablism, ageism, or any other type of discrimination, we are ignoring the intersectionality or overlapping forces of hatred. Where one type of discrimination exists, others will come to thrive, too. That’s why we know that it is our duty to stand up for all people and to work together to create a more just and inclusive society for everyone.

*Holocaust education for students at the museum*

Our theme for the 2022-23 school year was “Combating Hate and Propaganda.” Together we will help young people understand the historical context of building cultures of hate through propaganda and misinformation campaigns.

We will explore this topic through the history of the Holocaust and other genocides and we will apply critical thinking to how we consume media today. Programs on Moral Courage are available, as well as other topics currently under development. In order to accommodate your school’s preference on programming and dates, we are already booking for the coming school year. Whether you are interested in a tour of our permanent exhibit, the Rockland County African American history exhibit, or other educational programs, we encourage you to reach out now to ensure a meaningful visit with your students next year.

*Resilience exhibit in your school*

Host our traveling exhibit on Resilience during the Holocaust at your school. Students will have the opportunity to engage with a little discussed perspective of this history: one of individual choices, struggle, and hope. Through the exhibit and accompanying activities, Resilience connects the history of the Holocaust to each of us on a personal level and inspires students to consider how they, too, can become resilient and show moral courage in the face of injustice.

## **Preparing Students to Identify Propaganda and Misinformation**

Alan Singer

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Americans are constantly confronted with propaganda and misinformation on the airwaves and the Internet. Critics charge that former President Trump and the Republican Party in Congress are lying machines and Fox News acknowledged that some of its leading hosts knowingly mislead viewers about the validity of the 2020 Presidential election. Late night television had a heyday making fun of Congressmen George Santos (a/k/a as drag queen Kitara Ravache), but the reality is that there are a lot of liars in the House of Representatives. 147 Republicans voted to delay certification of the 2020 Presidential election.

In an October 2022 report by the Open Society Institute in Sofia, Bulgaria, Finland ranked 1st out of 41 European countries on the ability of the Finnish people to identify and resist misinformation. This was the fifth time in a row that Finland was the highest-ranking country. A major reason for Finland's success is its school programs. Finland has an especially strong overall educational system that includes media literacy starting in preschool and a systematic approach to teaching students to identify fake news.

A national media literacy curriculum was developed by the Finnish government in 2014 after Russia targeted the country with fake news stories. The attacks helped

educators and government officials understand that students were coming of age in a "post-fact" period. In a typical middle-level lesson, students will read a news article or view a TikTok video and discuss the purpose of the article or video, how and when was it written or created, the creator's motivation, and its central claims.

Developing skills needed to identify propaganda and misinformation is now included across subject areas. In math, students examine the way statistics can be manipulated in reports. In art classes, students discover how an image's meaning can be distorted. In history classes, students analyze notable propaganda campaigns in the past. Language teachers help students discover how the choice of words can be used to twist meaning and confuse or deceive readers.

The United States was not included in this survey. However studies show that media misinformation and disinformation are increasing and trust in media outlets is extremely low. According to Gallup, only 34% of Americans trust the mass media to report the news fully, accurately, and fairly compared to 76% in Finland. Twenty-eight percent of American adults reported they do not have very much confidence in newspapers, television, and radio and 38% said they have none at all.

### Fact or Fiction – Identifying Propaganda and Conspiracy Theories

These activities are part of an exhibit created by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and the United Nations Department of Global Communications, “After the End of the World: Displaced Persons and Displaced Persons Camps.” A lesson on the power of propaganda is available from *Facing History & Ourselves*

(<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/power-propaganda-1>).

### Propaganda or not?

The power of propaganda depends on the following main characteristics aimed at specific groups:

- Playing on emotions
- Attacking antagonists
- Simplifying information

Do more than half of the below apply? If so, it is most likely propaganda.

1. The message compels you to think or do something.
2. The message is addressed to a specific group of people.
3. There is an obvious and specific antagonist.
4. The message uses stereotypical images of the “other.”
5. The message presents a complex issue as actually being quite simple.
6. The message plays on your emotions.
7. The message is short and easy to repeat and makes use of slogans.

8. The message uses lies, half-truths and out-of-context truths.
9. You find the message only in restricted media channels.
10. The message uses specific symbols.

### Conspiracy theories or not?

A conspiracy theory has a firm structure. A powerful group has a secret plan which is disadvantageous for the majority and yields an advantage for the first (powerful) group.

Do more than half of the below apply? If so, it is most likely a conspiracy theory.

1. The story begins in a credible way and with clear facts but gradually becomes more improbable.
2. The story is presented as the unmasking of the real truth.
3. There is a “powerful” group of people who keep the real truth hidden.
4. Everything is part of a larger plan and the story reveals this plan.
5. The story provokes intense emotions.
6. There is extreme distrust against scientists, news media or government.
7. Discussions are not held in public forums but instead, for example, in private chats.
8. The story is often being removed from social media.
9. Fact checkers and journalists say the story is not true.
10. People who oppose the story are said to be easily duped and unable to think critically.

## Chaim Goldberg: Sharing History

Arielle Goldberg

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*The pictures referenced in this article can be viewed/retrieved [via this link](#).*

The smooth long edges and rough corners of a crisp white piece of paper are something most people do not value. Paper is a common good that is not given much thought when it is crinkled in a ball and thrown across the room. However, this is not how Chaim Goldberg viewed these simple white things — he knew they could be used to educate the world. Throughout his early artistic career, as early as four years old, he did whatever it took to obtain his medium: plain white paper. While sharing his story in a 1995 interview, Goldberg beamed with pride, knowing he had done all he could to further his career from such a young age. Goldberg was born in 1917 in Kazimierz Dolny, a small, predominantly Jewish town in Poland commonly referred to as a shtetl. In the shtetl, Goldberg spent time during his youth working small jobs in order to obtain an income to buy paper.<sup>195</sup> The paper purchased for sketching evolved to watercolor paper, canvases for oil painting, and materials for sculpture.

Early on in Goldberg's career he met Saul Silberstein, a wealthy man with a great interest in the arts.<sup>196</sup> According to Goldberg, Silberstein left an everlasting mark on his artistic career and life.<sup>197</sup> Silberstein was impressed by Goldberg's artistic ability the first time he visited Goldberg's home, which led him to spend both time and money on elevating Goldberg's talents.<sup>198</sup> He invited people from a variety of schools to view Goldberg's art. This helped to catapult Goldberg's career as he was able to bring his paintings to Warsaw, Poland. While visiting Warsaw he met with contacts of Silberstein who were predominantly doctors and lawyers.<sup>199</sup> They were impressed with Goldberg's artistic ability, and generously paid for his tuition to art school for five years.<sup>200</sup> An important step in each artist's career is finding their niche. In order to find his own niche, Goldberg spent his early life creating art through a variety of mediums and subjects. He learned that he needed to refine his subject area and have a common thread throughout his art.<sup>201</sup> While attending art school in Paris, Goldberg met Marc Chagall. It was his relationship with Chagall that

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<sup>195</sup> Chaim Goldberg, interview by, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *USC Shoah Foundation Institute Testimony*, May 16, 1995, 6:24.

<sup>196</sup> Goldberg, USC, 6:52.

<sup>197</sup> Goldberg, USC, 7:20.

<sup>198</sup> Richard Allan Victor, *The Holocaust and the Covenant in Art:*

*Chaim Goldberg, Tibor Jankay, and Mauricio Lasansky*, (Michigan: UMI Microform, 1998), 7.

<sup>199</sup> Goldberg, USC, 7:45.

<sup>200</sup> Goldberg, USC, 8:50.

<sup>201</sup> Goldberg, USC, 30:22.

solidified Goldberg's artistic subject area. Chagall felt that there was a need for art that shared the connection of Jewish life, shtetls, and tradition. Goldberg's art showed Chagall that he was the perfect artist to do so.<sup>202</sup> Chagall showed his support of Goldberg's art by purchasing his full art portfolio which depicted these images; this collection of art was "the only samples of Goldberg's early work to survive World War II."<sup>9</sup> The confidence and motivation that Chagall gave Goldberg to create art about Jewish life was a pivotal point in Goldberg's career.

Goldberg went on to expand his portfolio by sharing the horrors of the Holocaust through his art. Goldberg is one of many artists whose art shares the lives of Jewish people leading up to and during the Holocaust. These artists, poets, and writers shared their art in order to provide an insight into their experience, with the ultimate goal of preventing such an event from occurring again. Scholars have examined many artists' work that is related to the time directly before and during the Holocaust. These scholars have found that this area of art shows both history and tradition. Goldberg's art successfully preserves history by depicting the traditions and history of the events of the Holocaust, Jewish Polish shtetls, and the Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews

living within them. Goldberg's art gives a representation of Jewish life before the Holocaust and gives a fuller picture of Jewish life that goes beyond trauma. By examining Goldberg's art, people can begin to understand the lives of those impacted by the Holocaust.

### *The Preservation of the events of the Holocaust*

Goldberg, as well as many other famous artists, was able to use his own accounts and the information he gathered from people to create Holocaust art that shared his experiences with the world. This provided a visual for those who did not experience it firsthand or did not have the artistic talents to express their experiences. The Nazi's plan and goal for the Holocaust was to "complete [and enforce a] plan for the extermination of the European Jewry."<sup>203</sup> Hitler and the Nazi Party believed that "Jews' dangerous qualities were rooted in biology... [and] the inevitable outgrowth of a biological uniqueness that made them less human."<sup>204</sup> The Nazis, led by Hitler, were instructed to accomplish the goal of exterminating the Jews, and others that they did not classify as part of the superior Aryan race, by facilitating mass murder in concentration camps. Holocaust artists have

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<sup>202</sup> Goldberg, USC, 1:22:40. 9 Victor., 17.

<sup>203</sup> Christian Gerlach, "The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler's Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews," *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 759.

<sup>204</sup> Dan McMillian, *How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust*, (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 3. <sup>12</sup> Phyllis Lassner, "The Art of Lamentation: Josef Herman's Humanist Expressionism," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 37, no.3 (Winter 2019), 171-172. <sup>13</sup> Lassner., 172.

shared the experience of many Jewish people and others who the Nazis were trying to exterminate.<sup>12</sup> It was important for these experiences to be shared via art so that they would be remembered forever.

The History of the Holocaust has been preserved in many ways including poetry, writing, sculptures, and paintings. Art historians have found that through Holocaust art, one can learn about, “the experiences of the exiles... [and] we can learn that there are other ways of feeling, other ways of understanding history, and other ways of using the creative ability for expressive purpose.”<sup>13</sup> Art provides insight and a visual snapshot of someone’s life experiences. The Holocaust has been the subject area of many artists, who like writers and poets, use their art to share their life experiences. Holocaust art has an interesting dynamic – some of the pieces aim to use G-d and religion to uplift the horrific events depicted in the art, while others share the events more literally and show the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Art historians have accredited Tibor Jankay with being an influential Holocaust painter; he created an art collection that depicts the atrocities of the time period. Jankay was well-known for relishing in the positives. For this reason, Jankay’s Holocaust art is renowned for its ability to depict the horrors of what occurred during the Holocaust, while also sharing the beauty that surrounded these horrors.<sup>205</sup> Jankay’s

Holocaust art was centered around his experiences: his *Cattle Car* (figure 1) pencil sketch is an account of the time he spent in a cattle car on the way to Auschwitz.<sup>206</sup> The goal of this piece is to give the viewer an up-close perspective of the uncomfortable and crowded cattle car. The viewer's understanding of what happened is exacerbated by the faces of horror of those in the cattle car.<sup>207</sup> Jankay’s art uses symbolism for expression.<sup>208</sup> Scholars have found that the symbols that Jankay used throughout his Holocaust art emphasize the connection between Jewish people and G-d. One of the symbols that represent this connection is, “the angel hovering above the ghetto representing nurturing protection.”<sup>209</sup> Jankay’s symbolism of G-d shows the emotions he felt during the Holocaust. However, he is not the only one who had these emotions throughout the Holocaust, which is why his work resonates with many Holocaust survivors. His work serves as a visual representation that survivors can relate to.

The preservation of history and tradition has been done in different ways; similar to art, writing allows the writer to share their experiences through their work. Elie Wiesel is well known for sharing his experiences from the Holocaust in writing. In fact, he is described as being “perhaps the

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<sup>205</sup> Victor., 23.

<sup>206</sup> Tibor Jankay, *Cattle Car*, Pencil, Tibor Jankay 1899-1994.

<sup>207</sup> Victor., 24.

<sup>208</sup> Victor., 25.

<sup>209</sup> Victor., 24.

world's best-known witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust."<sup>210</sup> Wiesel's writing is known for depicting and sharing his personal experience in two concentration camps: Auschwitz and Buchenwald. He wrote the well-known Holocaust testimony, *La Nuit*, which depicts the experience that he and his father had in Auschwitz. Additionally, "Wiesel went on to achieve high visibility as a writer and human rights campaigner, winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986."<sup>211</sup> Wiesel is one of the many writers whose focus on the Holocaust has allowed others to form an understanding of the events, as their work depicts the true tragedy and horrific experiences that millions of people went through. There are also many other written formats that people have used to share their experiences in the Holocaust including poetry and diaries. By sharing their accounts in written format, they are preserved and allow for people to continue to learn and understand what occurred during the Holocaust many years later.<sup>212</sup> No matter how the experiences of those in the Holocaust have been preserved, it is important that it has been documented for future generations to learn from.

Holocaust artists bridge a gap between direct experiences and compiling accounts of other victims. Artists such as Josef Harnen used his "paintings to constitute [his] memory and grieve for the

loss of [his] family."<sup>213</sup> This allowed for the mourning and honoring of loved ones, and for their lives to be shared with the world; therefore these paintings help to educate those who did not experience the Holocaust first-hand. Additionally, this form of art shares the Ashkenazi Jewish culture, which defines many Holocaust survivors and memorializes those who were persecuted, tortured, and murdered at the hands of the Nazi Party.<sup>214</sup> The creation of Holocaust art helps people to understand the tragic events of the Holocaust. Harnen used his art to express his experiences as a refugee, allowing others to understand them. Art that shares the "century marked by war, genocide, and dehumanization" provides the world with personal accounts of the tragedies that will last forever.<sup>215</sup> A unique characteristic of Holocaust art is its ability to depict the disruption and torture of an entire group of people.<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, Holocaust artists and their preservation of history "cannot be separated from [the past and their] identification with family, community, tradition and ritual."<sup>217</sup> There is a strong overlap between Holocaust art and the art that represents the lives and culture of Jewish people leading up to the Holocaust.

Goldberg's art shows the contrast between the simplicity of life while living in a shtetl and the tragedy of the Holocaust. Goldberg created a collection of Holocaust

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<sup>210</sup> Colin David, "Elie Wiesel: Witnessing, Telling and Knowing," *Traces of War: Interpreting Ethics and Trauma in Twentieth-Century French Writing*, (Liverpool: University Press, 2018), 193.

<sup>211</sup> David., 194.

<sup>212</sup> Victor., 35.

<sup>213</sup> Lassner., 172.

<sup>214</sup> Lassner., 172.

<sup>215</sup> Lassner., 173.

<sup>216</sup> Lassner., 173.

<sup>217</sup> Lassner., 174.

art that represents the events that occurred and the torture that the Jewish people experienced. Additionally, it represents the hope that people carried with them throughout the Holocaust with G-d's guidance. Goldberg's Holocaust collection started chronologically with people who were forced out of their shtetl homes. In his collection, there were pieces of art that represented the emotions of leaving loved ones.<sup>218</sup> Goldberg's wood sculpture, *Farewell* (figure 2), depicts a family hugging goodbye at the start of the Holocaust. It embodies the unknown that people faced throughout the Holocaust, specifically when leaving their loved ones; this is shown through the tight embrace of the three figures.<sup>219</sup> Additionally, as many of Goldberg's pieces incorporate Jewish traditions, the men in the sculpture are wearing yarmulkes, which are head coverings that Orthodox Jewish men wear as a reminder of their connection to G-d.<sup>220</sup> The *Farewell* sculpture helps to capture the fear that the Jewish people faced as they were forced from their homes; this helps to preserve these emotions for future generations to learn from.

*To the Unknown* (figure 3) is another piece of Goldberg's Holocaust collection

that represents the start of the Holocaust. This piece depicts people fleeing their homes to an unknown location to escape Nazi invaded Poland.<sup>221</sup> This painting shows just some of the thousands of people who were forced to leave their shtetls. It is notable that in the hurried rush of people fleeing, they were forced to throw some of their belongings into wagons, as shown in the painting. This piece represents the experience of Goldberg's in-laws in this time period — they brought belongings with them as they fled Warsaw which they used to bribe the border patrol in order to flee Nazi invaded Poland.<sup>222</sup> This painting allows viewers to have an understanding of the beginning of the Holocaust, the effort it took to flee, as well as the disruption of lives, and the uncertainty that followed. Goldberg's art continued to depict the experiences of Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews as they were forced to leave their homes.

During the Holocaust, the Nazis forced Jewish people from Poland, Russia, and Germany into ghettos, which were created to contain these people in a specific area. Goldberg's painting, *View in the Warsaw Ghetto 1939* (figure 4), shows what it was like on the streets of these ghettos by depicting children, men, and women.<sup>223</sup> The

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<sup>218</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Farewell*, mesquite wood, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>219</sup> Goldberg, *Farewell*.

<sup>220</sup> "The Kippah (Yarmulke)." Chabad, accessed April 27, 2022, [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3913641/jewish/The-Kippah-Yarmulke.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3913641/jewish/The-Kippah-Yarmulke.htm).

<sup>221</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *To the Unknown*, wash and ink, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>222</sup> Goldberg, USC, 140:25.

<sup>223</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *View in the Warsaw Ghetto 1939*, Pen and Ink. CHG-Rosco. 33 "Warsaw Ghetto," The Weiner Holocaust Library, accessed March 29, 2022, <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/the-camps/the-warsaw-ghetto-a-case-study/>. "Warsaw Ghetto."



ghetto was a segregated portion of the city, separated by brick walls and surrounded by Nazi and Polish police.<sup>33</sup> Through his art, Goldberg was able to depict the lives of the over 400,000 people who were imprisoned in this ghetto, including Goldberg and his family.<sup>224</sup> He created art that depicted the Warsaw Ghetto from his memory, decades after his time there. Goldberg was able to preserve their experiences and express the history that would stem from the Holocaust through *View in the Warsaw Ghetto 1939*. By creating imagery that shares what the Warsaw Ghetto was like, Goldberg was able to provide the world with a visual representation of this place and was able to give people a greater understanding of the Holocaust.

Goldberg created paintings that specifically focused on the Nazi's actions prior to the extermination of people in concentration camps. *Under the Gun* (figure 5) is a sketch that shows a long, dense line of people being led into a building that is understood to be a gas chamber.<sup>225</sup> The reason this painting was titled *Under the Gun* was because Goldberg illustrated a Nazi soldier standing tall and holding a gun, which mimics the power they held over those in concentration camps.<sup>226</sup> Goldberg's painting, *Gas Chamber* (figure 6) shows the horrors that people experienced in the

deadly gas chambers.<sup>227</sup> Goldberg drew the people crouched down and weeping, which showed the horrors that they faced leading up to their imminent death.<sup>228</sup> Some people were shown pleading for their lives while being held at gunpoint, which represented their desperation. Although Goldberg was never in a concentration camp himself, he painted them based on what he had heard from others.<sup>229</sup> Goldberg painted *Gas Chambers* in 1942 while he was a refugee in Siberia. Specifically, as "the news of the mass exterminations began to trickle in by way of radio and newspaper as early as 1941... the artist, shaken to his core by the news, plunged into making a visual of the horrific news he had heard."<sup>230</sup> Goldberg created his work to express the experience of Jews during the Holocaust, whether someone else's or his own. In the case of *Gas Chambers*, he shared the experiences of those who no longer could.

Some of Goldberg's most iconic pieces that represent the Holocaust are sculptures that show Jewish people escaping the Nazi control and concentration camps. *Triumph I* (figure 7), part of a collection of Holocaust sculptures, depicts the freedom from the Nazi's control through the guidance of G-d and the appreciation that Jewish people had for G-d throughout the

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<sup>224</sup> "Warsaw Ghetto."

<sup>225</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Under the Gun*, ink, UHG-Rosco.

<sup>226</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Under the Gun*.

<sup>227</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Gas Chambers*, bronze, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>228</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Gas Chambers*.

<sup>229</sup> Cynthia Moskowitz Brody, *Bittersweet Legacy Creative Response to the Holocaust* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2001), 58.

<sup>230</sup> Shalom Goldberg, "Chaim Goldberg From the Old Shtetl of Kazimierz Dolny to the Complex Life in the Biggest City in the USA," UHG-Rosco, March 20, 2017, <http://www.chg-rosco.com/chaim-goldbergs-biography/>.

Holocaust.<sup>231</sup> *Triumph I* shows multiple figures emerging from the barbed wire of the concentration camps and climbing up towards G-d. Here, G-d is represented here with a Magen David, Star of David, a symbol that is used to represent Jewish identity and symbolize G-d's protection of the Jews. This sculpture represents the liberation of the Jewish people from Nazi control, an important turning point in this time period. Goldberg's Holocaust art is a mix of both literal examples of what occurred in the Holocaust, as well as symbolism that provided hope.

Goldberg served in the Polish army during the Holocaust; during this time he was captured by the Nazi Party and held as a prisoner of war. It was there he decided to continue creating art that shared people's lives before the war. However, directly after the Holocaust, Goldberg spent his time creating art that depicted his experiences and that of others. After he finished, he ultimately returned to his main artistic passion of creating art to share the lives of those who lived in Polish shtetls. This led Goldberg to the major focus of his career, the shtetl he grew up in, Kazimierz Dolny.

### *The Preservation of Polish shtetls Through Art*

The original subject and setting of Goldberg's artwork became his lifelong

passion. He shared his home, Kazimierz Dolny, and childhood with the world through his art. Much of Goldberg's inspiration for his art before the Holocaust came from those who visited Kazimierz Dolny, many of which stayed in his family's clapboard house.<sup>232</sup> These people became his "story" and the base for his "characters." As he grew up, he continued to create "characters" centered around those who were an integral part of life in Kazimierz Dolny.<sup>233</sup> Unfortunately, virtually all of his work from before the war was destroyed. This includes art from his collection, the art he sold, and the work he was commissioned for. Before the Holocaust, Goldberg traveled to Warsaw to create commissioned art for well-known and wealthy residents. Fortunately, "approximately fifty drawings and watercolors survived due to the fact that they were purchased by Chagall... in 1933."<sup>234</sup> While this art was saved from being destroyed, it is not readily available to the public. However, Goldberg made it his life's passion to continue making art that shared his beloved hometown with the world. He successfully shared that there was more to know about Eastern European Jews from the early to mid-nineteenth century than just the Holocaust.

Goldberg was not the only artist to represent shtetl life in their art. Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Museum in Israel, curated a

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<sup>231</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Triumph I*, sculpture, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>232</sup> Shalom Goldberg, *Chaim Goldberg Full Circle: A Journey of 12 Creative Periods & Themes*, (Boca

Raton: SHIR Art Publications, 1996), 7.

<sup>233</sup> Goldberg, USC, 2:04:50.

<sup>234</sup> Goldberg, Full Circle., 7.

collection of art from Polish shtetls dating back to pre-Holocaust Europe. The curators of this collection explain the importance of understanding what it was like to live in a Jewish shtetl. Jewish culture and tradition are strongly tied to shtetls. This is important for understanding Jewish art as many influential Jewish artists were born and grew up in shtetls, and used their art to share their experiences.<sup>235</sup> The curators at Yad Vashem focused their collection on lesser-known artists which highlights the wide variety of people that centered their work around shtetls.<sup>46</sup> The work shared in the collection is focused on many different aspects of shtetl life including “the market, professions, women of the shtetl, and Jewish learning... through the eyes of these Jewish artists.”<sup>236</sup> These aspects of shtetl life are key components in Goldberg’s art, which allow him to share Kazimierz Dolny with the world in great detail. This helps to give viewers a complete understanding of what it would have been like to live there. His art preserved a visual history of Kazimierz Dolny, which allowed for the history of those who lived there to be commemorated.

When Goldberg created shtetl art, he included a variety of characters that depict the people of the shtetl. The goal of his art was to share “Kazimierz Dolny shtetl and gather all his characters to live eternally

through his art.”<sup>237</sup> Goldberg highlights the variety of professions within a shtetl through his art. Goldberg was surrounded by people with different professions from a young age and based some of his art on his parents’ professions – his father was a cobbler, and his mother was a seamstress. Goldberg titles a group of his works *Parents II* (figure 8), which was made up of a variety of pieces including etchings, linocuts, engravings, and oil paintings. In these works of art, the viewer sees Goldberg’s parents working.<sup>238</sup> The watercolor painting *My Parents* (figure 9) is similar to the collection of pieces titled *Parents II* as it illustrates each of Goldberg’s parents intently focusing on their work, his father repairing a pair of shoes and his mother sewing a garment.<sup>239</sup> This painting was set in Goldberg’s childhood home; in the background is a piece of art hanging on the wall which is actually another one of Goldberg’s pieces. Oftentimes, Goldberg would add small hidden elements to his work, adding himself or his own paintings within different pieces. By showing his parents’ professions, he was able to share his childhood experiences with the world and preserve the experiences of the people in Kazimierz Dolny forever. Typically only one person in each shtetl was responsible for holding a specific job, which is commonly seen in Goldberg’s work. Goldberg’s sketch

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<sup>235</sup> “Representation of the Shtetl in Jewish Art: Between Reality and Fantasy,” Yad Vashem, accessed April 27, 2022, <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/shtetl-in-jewish-art.html>. <sup>46</sup> “Representation of the Shtetl in Jewish Art.”

<sup>236</sup> “Representation of the Shtetl in Jewish Art.”

<sup>237</sup> Goldberg, Goldberg From the Old Shtetl of Kazimierz Dolny, 3.

<sup>238</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Parents II*, engraving, UHG-Rosco.

<sup>239</sup> Chaim, *My Parents*, 1970, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

*Blacksmith* (figure 10) shows the blacksmith at work in the shtetl and specifically highlights the difficulty of the job and its strain on his life through his hunched position.<sup>240</sup> In the background, the shtetl of Kazimierz Dolny is in view. The blacksmith is an integral component of the shtetl, which is why Goldberg decided to include him in his shtetl art. The blacksmith was one of the many people Goldberg took inspiration from as he successfully illuminated the experiences of those living within the shtetl.

Goldberg created the painting, *Teacher* (figure 11), to represent his childhood education. The *Teacher* depicts a Rabbi and a student studying from a prayer book.<sup>241</sup> This is reminiscent of Goldberg's childhood as Goldberg, like most children in the shtetl, attended a school that was taught by a Rabbi. Further, it was Goldberg's Rabbi that later hired him to create mezuzah covers, small artistic cases which hold a parchment scroll containing blessings for a house. This Rabbi had enough confidence in Goldberg's artistic ability to hire him, which afforded Goldberg the opportunity to buy art supplies.<sup>242</sup> Because Goldberg was able to buy art supplies, he was able to hone his artistic abilities and continue his passion for preserving Jewish shtetl life. The goal of

Goldberg's art was to immerse the viewer in Kazimierz Dolny so they could understand what it was like to be an Orthodox Jew living in a shtetl during this time period.<sup>243</sup>

Goldberg was known for depicting several of the same "characters" and symbols within his art including the shtetl's water carrier. *The Water Carrier* (figure 12) shows a man balancing a stick with two pails of water on his shoulders while moving through the shtetl.<sup>244</sup> He is depicted like this in many of Goldberg's works. The background of the *Water Carrier* mimics paintings that focus specifically on the houses in Kazimierz Dolny. Goldberg's paintings built off one another to create a full representation of his shtetl from the early twentieth century. This is also seen with *Shtetl Houses* (figure 13), an engraving that shows houses built into a hill.<sup>245</sup> These are the same hills seen in *Water Carrier*.<sup>246</sup> The water carrier is also a central character in *The Shtetl* (figure 14), which is showcased in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>247</sup> This piece depicts the same hill of houses that are shown in Goldberg's other works. This creates an image of what Kazimierz Dolny looked like from the outside.<sup>248</sup> The goal of Goldberg's art was to share "Kazimierz

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<sup>240</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Blacksmith*, sketch, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>241</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Teacher*, watercolor, Artsy.

<sup>242</sup> Goldberg, USC, 15:53.

<sup>243</sup> Goldberg, USC, 1:37:19.

<sup>244</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *The Water Carrier*, ink, UHG-Rosco.

<sup>245</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Shtetl Houses*, sketch, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>246</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Shtetl Houses*, sketch, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>247</sup> "Modern and Contemporary Art," The Met, accessed April 27, 2022, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/480896>.

<sup>248</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *The Shtetl*, line engraving, CHG-Rosco.

Dolny shtetl and gather all his characters to live eternally through his art.”<sup>249</sup> *The Shtetl* depicts many figures from the town including his parents, the water carrier, and himself, shown painting on an easel. This painting preserves people in Kazimierz Dolny who observed the traditions of Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews. *The Shtetl* serves as a culmination of all the events and people within Kazimierz Dolny. Through his art, Goldberg created a visual representation of Kazimierz Dolny to be preserved for the world to see.

The population of Kazimierz Dolny was largely comprised of Jewish people, thus they are the primary subject of Goldberg’s art. Judaism is filled with many customs and traditions that were closely followed by the Jewish community in Kazimierz Dolny. These traditions are the connecting thread within all of Goldberg’s art; whether it was the depiction of traditional head coverings for men, events, holidays, or a style of dance. Goldberg has two parallel art pieces, *Seven Hasidic Dancers* (figure 15) and *Hora* (figure 16). In these paintings, the viewer can see the Jewish Orthodox tradition of men and women dancing separately. The reason for this tradition is because it “helps to preserve and safeguard a limited and therefore special connection between the genders.”<sup>250</sup> *Seven*

*Hasidic Dancers* is an ink painting of seven men dancing in a circle connected to one another.<sup>251</sup> The style of dance these men are performing is the Hora. The Hora is a traditional Jewish celebratory dance that is danced on special occasions. Goldberg created a related painting called *Hora* which shows seven women participating in the same celebratory dance.<sup>252</sup> Viewers of these two paintings are able to look back in time and “witness” the religious practices of the Jewish community in Kazimierz Dolny. Goldberg’s art showed the strong values and traditions of the Jewish people he grew up around. As an artist, Goldberg wanted people who viewed his art to feel as though they were visiting and experiencing the shtetl.

Weddings are a common subject of Goldberg’s art and Jewish practices. Throughout his pieces, there are a variety of religious Jewish symbols that are a common part of weddings. Chuppahs, or canopies, are an integral part of religious Jewish wedding ceremonies. The couple stands under the Chuppah with the Rabbi who is officiating the wedding. It is traditional for the Chuppah to be made out of a man’s prayer shawl, as seen in each of Goldberg’s paintings that feature a wedding. This is shown in *The Wedding* (figure 17).<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Goldberg From the Old Shtetl of Kazimierz Dolny, 3.

<sup>250</sup> Chana Weisberg, “Why are Men and Women separated at Hasidic Weddings.” Chabad, accessed March 27 2022, [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/504534/jewish/Why-are-men-and-women-separated-at-Chassidic-weddings.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/504534/jewish/Why-are-men-and-women-separated-at-Chassidic-weddings.htm).

<sup>251</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Seven Hasidic Dancers*, sketch, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>252</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Hora*, sketch, CHG-Rosco.

<sup>253</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *The Wedding*, 1997, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

Goldberg wanted to properly depict Jewish weddings in his art, so he made sure to include many of the Jewish wedding traditions. Many of these paintings have additional aspects that are important to the Jewish religion. Goldberg's painting, *The Wedding* (figure 18) from 1962 shows a couple after the ceremony with many members of the town rejoicing and celebrating, which is typical of a Jewish wedding. One of the central aspects of the painting is two boys holding a large loaf of challah, a traditional bread eaten by Jewish people in times of celebration.<sup>254</sup> The cutting of challah is an important component of Jewish weddings; an important person to the couple rips the challah while reciting a blessing. In his art, Goldberg provides his viewers with an understanding of key traditions that occur throughout a Jewish wedding.

As a religious Jewish boy, Goldberg kept the laws of Shabbat and illustrated his experiences throughout his art. Shabbat is an important weekly practice of Jewish life where the Jewish people honor the seventh day of creation with a day of rest. Lighting two Shabbat candles at the beginning of the day of rest is an important ritual performed by Jewish women, as it is used as a way to bring the Sabbath into a home. Goldberg has represented the lighting of candles in many different paintings. His painting, *Shabbat Candles* (figure 19), depicts a woman setting

up the Shabbat candles for her family to light at sundown.<sup>255</sup> In order to properly light Shabbat candles, the woman says a blessing and sweeps her hands over the light, and then brings her hands to her eyes.<sup>256</sup> In the painting *Before Dawn* (figure 20), the main figure is a woman lighting Shabbat candles. Throughout the background of the painting are other houses with Shabbat candles glowing in the window; this depicts the important tradition of lighting Shabbat candles in each home.<sup>257</sup> The woman is shown sweeping her hands over the light; this helps to teach viewers about the Shabbat traditions of Orthodox Jews. Additionally, it is traditional for Orthodox Jews to attend religious services at a temple on Shabbat. While both men and women attended, it was more common for only the men to go. This is depicted in the painting *Before Dawn* where the men of the shtetl are seen walking to the temple along a cobblestone path of Kazimierz Dolny.<sup>258</sup> Goldberg's Shabbat-related paintings allow the viewer to see the traditions related to the weekly day of rest, including lighting the two candles and walking to the temple. This helps to educate the viewers on the importance of traditions within the Jewish religion.

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<sup>254</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *The Wedding*, 1962, oil on canvas, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>255</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Shabbat Candles*, 1969, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>256</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Before Dawn*, 1993, oil on canvas, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>257</sup> Goldberg, *Before Dawn*.

<sup>258</sup> *Before Dawn*.

*Jewish holidays and the importance of tradition*

Holidays are a large part of the Jewish religion and thus Goldberg has made them an important aspect of his art. Many of his pieces illustrate the important traditions of each holiday. In order to understand the depth that he went through in sharing his religion with the world, it is important to examine Goldberg's holiday art chronologically according to the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah is the New Year in the Jewish religion and is celebrated with great reverence and joy. Goldberg has shared many important traditions of Rosh Hashanah through his art. During Rosh Hashanah, there is an important tradition called Tashlich, which is depicted in his painting *Tashlich* (figure 21). Tashlich, a tradition where people go to the water to empty their pockets, is performed on either the first or second day of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>259</sup> This practice is symbolic of the discarding of one's sins from their life. By depicting this aspect of Rosh Hashanah, Goldberg is capturing the traditions of Orthodox Jews during the Jewish New Year.

Another important aspect of Rosh Hashanah that Goldberg depicts in his artwork is the blowing of the shofar, a ram's horn.<sup>260</sup> In

order to show the proper use of the shofar, Goldberg created *The Shofar* (figure 22) which occurs in a temple, a house of worship.<sup>261</sup> The shofar is blown by the Rabbi during the prayer services on Rosh Hashanah to serve as a wake-up call and a fresh start to the new year. Only Orthodox men are illustrated, as men and women were not allowed to daven, or pray, together.<sup>262</sup> This is because when davening there should be no distractions between a person and their connection to G-d. *The Shofar* takes place in the lower level of the sanctuary where the men prayed. The blowing of the Shofar shows how the traditions of Orthodox Jews have been depicted throughout Goldberg's art.

Yom Kippur, a day of repentance, is arguably the most important Jewish holiday, thus it is an important aspect of Goldberg's art. A specific tradition of Yom Kippur is Kaparot which takes place the night before and is centered around transferring one's sins to a rooster.<sup>74</sup> *Rooster Blessing* (figure 23), depicts "the village inhabitants standing in line at the Shochet, or kosher butcher, with their holiday poultry."<sup>75</sup> Each village member in the painting is carrying their own chicken to participate in this tradition.<sup>76</sup> *Yom Kippur* (figure 24) shares the next step of Kaparot; a person swings a rooster over their head while reciting a prayer that symbolically transfers their sins to the

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<sup>259</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Tashlich*. 1998, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>260</sup> Lightstone, "11 Reasons We Blow the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah."

<sup>261</sup> Mordechai Lightstone, "11 Reasons We Blow the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah," accessed April 29, 2022,

[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/2311995/jewish/11-Reasons-Why-We-Blow-the-Shofar-on-Rosh-Hashanah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2311995/jewish/11-Reasons-Why-We-Blow-the-Shofar-on-Rosh-Hashanah.htm).

<sup>262</sup> Menachem M. Schneerson, "Why Separate Men and Women in the Synagogue," *The Rebbe*, accessed March 27, 1961,

rooster. This painting shows a religious man holding a rooster by its legs while moving it around his head as he takes part in the Orthodox Jewish tradition of Kaparot. The rooster looks angry and thus has symbolically taken on the sins of the man.<sup>77</sup> This is the traditional start of Yom Kippur and the removal and penance of one's sins, which is an important aspect of observing Yom Kippur as an Orthodox Jew. Goldberg felt that it was important to share the traditions of Yom Kippur in his art as it is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. In order to preserve the traditions of the holiday of Sukkot, Goldberg created multiple paintings of this holiday. Sukkot occurs five days after Yom Kippur and is symbolic of the forty-year period in which the Jews escaped slavery in Egypt and spent time in the desert on the way to Israel.<sup>263</sup> An important part of this holiday is the shaking of the lulav, a collection of four different leaves, and the etrog, a citrus fruit.<sup>264</sup> They are held together each day of Sukkot and shaken while reciting a prayer. Goldberg represents the important tradition of shaking these two objects in the painting, *Sukkot* (figure 25). In the painting, a religious man is holding the two items while looking up to

G-d and praying.<sup>265</sup> A similar image is also included in *Succoth* (figure 26), where behind the religious man shaking the lulav and etrog, are the people of the town davening in the temple. Additionally, there are prayer books that are used in order to ensure that prayers are recited properly.<sup>266</sup> These paintings together allow the viewer to understand important aspects of Sukkot and build a broader understanding of the Jewish religion.

Goldberg valued sharing his religion in his art. In order to do this, he focused strongly on holidays, including Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah is celebrated on the last day of Sukkot. This holiday honors the Jewish people's love of the Torah, a scroll containing the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>267</sup> The festivities for this holiday include men dancing while holding Torahs. For this reason, Goldberg's paintings depict Simchat Torah with traditional festive dancing. *Simchat Torah* (figure 27) is a pen and ink piece of art that shows an open Torah being held above a man's head while he is dancing around.<sup>268</sup> It is customary in Orthodox Jewish tradition that only men hold and read from the Torah and thus, that is how Goldberg depicted the celebration in

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<sup>263</sup> Menachem Posner, "What is Sukkot," Chabad, accessed April 29, 2022, [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/4784/jewish/What-Is-Sukkot.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4784/jewish/What-Is-Sukkot.htm).

<sup>264</sup> Posner, "What is Sukkot."

<sup>265</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Sukkot*, 1966, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>266</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Succoth*, 1971, watercolor and ink, Full Circle: A Journey of 12 Creative Periods & Themes.

<sup>267</sup> "Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah," Chabad, accessed April 29, 2022, [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/4689/jewish/Shemini-Atzeret-Simchat-Torah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4689/jewish/Shemini-Atzeret-Simchat-Torah.htm).

<sup>268</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Simchat Torah*, 1969, pen and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>84</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Simchat Torah*.



this painting. In the background of the piece, other Torahs are being held throughout the crowd which is another tradition of the holiday.<sup>84</sup> Goldberg's 1962 oil on canvas painting, *Simchat Torah* (figure 28), shows the community clapping in celebration.<sup>269</sup> Because of the importance of this holiday, women are present in the temple; however, in order to abide by Orthodox Jewish tradition, the men and women cannot be together in the temple and thus the women are shown in the second-story windows. It also shows the ark, where the Torahs are housed, in the front of the synagogue. During the festivities of Simchat Torah, the Torahs are all taken out of the ark and carried around the temple in seven circles called hakafot.<sup>86</sup> Goldberg felt that it was important to show all aspects of the Jewish religion and to always value joyous times and occasions in his art, Simchat Torah being one of them.<sup>87</sup> Goldberg shares the family aspect of the holiday of Chanukah in several of his paintings. Chanukah is an eight-day holiday that honors the Jewish people's success in fighting the Maccabees. Unlike many other holidays, Chanukah is not centered around community festivities, but rather celebrations in the home. A menorah is lit on each of the eight nights of

Chanukah in each family's home. Goldberg shares this tradition in *Channuka* (figure 29), a wash and ink painting, by showing a family gathered around a credenza with a menorah placed on top. Each day of Chanukah an additional candle is lit.<sup>270</sup> The menorah is an important part of Chanukah because during the time of the Second Temple of Jerusalem, the menorah was lit each night, however, the temple was then destroyed.<sup>271</sup> There was one single jar of oil that remained and it miraculously lasted eight days, which is now commemorated with the eight-day holiday of Chanukah.<sup>90</sup> Goldberg honored the miracle of Chanukah with the creation of another Chanukah painting in 1971 also titled *Channuka* (figure 30). This image once again represents a family coming together to honor the holiday with the lighting of the menorah and the reciting of prayers.<sup>272</sup> Above the family lighting the menorah is a variety of colors and shapes; within this, a menorah and a jug of oil are seen once again, which highlights its importance to the holiday of Chanukah.<sup>273</sup> Celebration with family is an important part of Judaism and is at the core of the Jewish religion; this is the reason that Goldberg centered his

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<sup>269</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Simchat Torah*, 1962, oil on canvas, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl. <sup>86</sup> "Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah." <sup>87</sup> Goldberg, USC, 2:13:10.

<sup>270</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Channuka*, 1954, wash and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>271</sup> "What Is Hanukkah." Chabad, accessed March 27, 2022,

[https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article\\_cdo/aid/102911/jewish/What-Is-Hanukkah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/chanukah/article_cdo/aid/102911/jewish/What-Is-Hanukkah.htm) <sup>90</sup> "What is Hanukkah."

<sup>272</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Channuka*, 1971, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>273</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Channuka*, 1971.

paintings around the traditions of Chanukah.

Goldberg focused on Purim in his art, which is a holiday that celebrates the Jewish people's freedom from Persia. An important part of Purim is the reading of the Megillah, the Book of Esther, which contains the story of Purim. Haman was the man who led the torture of the Jewish people while in Persia, so it is tradition to make noise when he is mentioned during the reading of the Megillah.<sup>274</sup> People will make noise with their feet, hands, and most commonly, with a gragger, or noise maker. Graggers are a key component of Goldberg's Purim art. *Purim Parade* (figure 31) shows the joyous celebration of Purim. A man is riding on a horse with a large gragger, sharing in the celebration of the freedom of the Jewish people.<sup>275</sup> Additionally, throughout the rest of the painting, there are people holding graggers.<sup>276</sup> In the distance of the piece, one can see Goldberg's "parents stand[ing] on the left, as his youngest brother Israel waves the gragger."<sup>277</sup> Another of Goldberg's pieces portraying Purim, *Chaim's Large Gregor* (figure 32), depicts a large gragger in the center of the shtetl. In this watercolor,

Goldberg and another man are at the center of the painting using the larger gragger.<sup>278</sup> This painting continues Goldberg's common thread of placing his family and or himself in his art. There are also members of the town standing in the background enjoying the celebration of Purim, as is customary in Jewish tradition.<sup>279</sup> Goldberg's Purim art shares the Jewish tradition of making noise to drown out Haman's name, as well as the celebratory aspect of the holiday. Furthermore, the traditions depicted in these pieces continue Goldberg's goal of sharing Orthodox Judaism with the world.<sup>280</sup>

The last chronological Jewish holiday that Goldberg focused on was Passover, an eight-day holiday. One of the most well-known aspects of the holiday is that chametz, or leavened bread, is not eaten and rather matzah, unleavened bread, is consumed. Passover requires very specific preparation, and Goldberg centered some of his Passover art around this.<sup>281</sup> In *Burning the Chumetz* (figure 33) Goldberg depicts "the boys [and the] shtetl's Rabbi burning small bundles of Chametz " which is not kosher for the Passover holiday.<sup>282</sup> An important aspect of Passover is the removal of all Chametz from the homes of Orthodox

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<sup>274</sup> Yehuda Shurpin, "The Origins of the Gragger: Why We Boo Haman," Chabad, accessed March 27, 2022, [https://www.chabad.org/holidays/purim/article\\_cdo/id/4321929/jewish/The-Origins-of-the-Gragger-Why-We-BooHaman.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/purim/article_cdo/id/4321929/jewish/The-Origins-of-the-Gragger-Why-We-BooHaman.htm).

<sup>275</sup> Goldberg, Full Circle., 39.

<sup>276</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Purim Parade*, 1993, oil on linen, Full Circle: A Journey of 12 Creative Periods & Themes.

<sup>277</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Purim Parade*, 1993.

<sup>278</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Chaim's Large Gregor*, 1970, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>279</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Chaim's Large Gregor*.

<sup>280</sup> Goldberg, USC, 35:50.

<sup>281</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Burning the Chumetz*, 1969, oil on linen, Full Circle: A Journey of 12 Creative Periods & Themes.

<sup>282</sup> Goldberg, Full Circle., 41.

Jews. Another important step in the preparation for Passover is the making of matzah, which is shown in *Matzah Making* (figure 34). This oil painting represents the women of Kazimierz Dolny helping the baker of the shtetl make matzah.<sup>283</sup> Further, Goldberg shares his childhood experience as he is in the forefront of the painting helping the baker create the dough used to make matzah.<sup>103</sup> These two paintings represent the work that it took to prepare for Passover and the important traditions of burning the chametz and making the matzah. These are important aspects of Passover for Orthodox Jews that Goldberg brought to life in his paintings.

In addition to the preparation for Passover, Goldberg's art also shared the traditional practice of holding a seder, the ceremony for Passover, in one's home. This is seen in both *Family Seder* (figure 35) and *After the Seder* (figure 36). *Family Seder* shows a family gathered around a table sharing a meal while holding glasses of wine.<sup>284</sup> Wine is a customary aspect of the Passover Seder because, throughout the steps of the service, each person is prompted to drink four glasses of wine. Passover is another holiday that is centered around gatherings in family homes, which explains the setting of both of these paintings. *After the Seder* shares the joyous celebration of the family at the conclusion of the holiday

meal; specifically, it shares Goldberg's sisters dancing.<sup>285</sup> Goldberg shared that his "sisters would simply get up and dance in their house-nighties, just like" in *After the Seder*.<sup>286</sup> Goldberg believed it was important to share the happiness of celebrating holidays in a shtetl.<sup>287</sup> In his holiday art, Goldberg captures Orthodox Jewish traditions for the viewer to learn from. Goldberg's art resonates with Jews who lived in shtetls because of how he depicts the traditions of each Jewish holiday.

Through Goldberg's art, the viewer is able to gain an understanding of the many important traditions of Jewish holidays. Throughout his career, Goldberg continued to create art centered around holidays as he felt that it was an essential aspect to understanding the lives of those who lived in a shtetl.<sup>288</sup> The history of those who lived in shtetls, specifically during the early twentieth century, is not to be lost in the trauma that was experienced throughout the Holocaust. This is not to take away from the experiences of those in the Holocaust, but rather to highlight the lives and religious practices of Jews prior to the tragedy. This was at the forefront of Goldberg's artistic works as he created his shtetl art to share his beloved community of Kazimierz Dolny

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<sup>283</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Matzah Making*, 1990 oil on linen, Full Circle: A Journey of 12 Creative Periods & Themes. <sup>103</sup> Full Circle., 39.

<sup>284</sup> Chaim Goldberg, *Family Seder*, 1971, watercolor and ink, Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>285</sup> Goldberg, Chaim, *After the Seder*, 1990, watercolor and ink. Chaim Goldberg I Remember the Shtetl.

<sup>286</sup> Goldberg, Full Circle., 42.

<sup>287</sup> Goldberg, USC, 10:22.

<sup>288</sup> USC, 50:30.

with the world.<sup>289</sup> Thus, he was able to preserve his early life and childhood in the art that outlived him.

Goldberg's art was successful in the preservation of early twentieth-century Jewish shtetls and allows viewers to understand what it was like to live in Kazimierz Dolny. Goldberg was able to preserve his own family history, the history of Kazimierz Dolny, and the history of Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews before and after the Holocaust. Goldberg's ability to preserve the history of his shtetl is in line with other shtetl artists. It is through the collections of these artists that modern historians are able to build a picture of what life was like during pre-Holocaust Europe. Goldberg centered his art mainly around shtetl life which proved that there was more to the Jewish European experience than the Holocaust. As seen with other Holocaust artists and writers such as Tibor Jansky and Elie Wiesel, Goldberg's art preserves the events, and thus the history, of the Holocaust and the time period in which they were alive. Goldberg's art has lived on beyond his death and will continue to serve as a representation of those who lived in the shtetls of early twentieth-century Poland.

### *Bringing art to modern-day history classrooms*

Art cultivates a climate of creativity for all students to access when it becomes a part of general education classes. Art is a

frequently unused tool within history secondary education classrooms, however, it should not be. By exploring art as a component of history classes, we can explore the often untold elements of history. This is true with Chaim Goldberg's artwork. As an artist who frequently depicted Jewish shtetl life and the Holocaust, his art allows access to personal accounts and experiences of European Jewish people in the early to mid-twentieth century. Art allows for history to be told in another format; in the classroom, we are able to explore someone's life. In this case, it is Goldberg's life we are able to learn about through the exploration of his art. Like writers, art in many circumstances builds off of itself; this is true with Goldberg. When exploring his art collection, the viewer is able to see how he threads details through many paintings. This is seen with many of the repetitive fixtures and people in his shtetl artwork, which leads the viewer to understand that these people are not only important fixtures in Goldberg's life, but in all shtetl life. An example of an important fixture in general shtetl life is the water carrier, who is depicted throughout many of Goldberg's paintings. Furthermore, Goldberg's parents, who were a cobbler and a seamstress, were depicted throughout many of his pieces. This is done to show that these jobs were important elements in Goldberg's life, and also the lives of those raised in a shtetl. By exploring this idea in the classroom, we are able to cultivate an understanding of shtetl

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<sup>289</sup> Chaim Goldberg From the Old Shtetl of Kazimierz Dolny, 22.

life in a way we could not do by just using readings.

By exploring art, we are able to view a snapshot of someone's life and develop an understanding of what the different elements of people's life actually look like. This is seen when exploring the traditional Jewish elements that Goldberg depicted in his art. He depicts Kaparot which is a traditional Jewish custom of transforming one's sins to a chicken or rooster and killing said animal as part of the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. By viewing traditions like this we are able to pull back the curtain and help students to understand and explore these traditions more deeply. This allows students to develop a better understanding of others and helps to prevent an environment of misunderstanding and othering which can occur when exploring sacred traditions, especially those that are viewed negatively in today's society.

Goldberg created his art to share his experiences and his life with the world. By incorporating art like Goldberg's into the classroom, we are not only helping to fulfill the dreams of artists like Goldberg, but we are also making history more accessible and understandable.

Often as educators, especially history educators, we try to figure out how to share history with our students in a way that allows them to picture and develop an understanding of day-to-day life. Art allows for this and brings history to our modern-day students. It provides students with a window into the past in order to guide and build their understanding. Not all artwork is a direct image that helps us picture a

historical event; however, it is often the images that do not depict a direct explanation of what the world looked like that helps to describe the emotions of the people during that time. This is seen with some of Goldberg's Holocaust artwork which shows people fighting to escape and shows the Jewish religion as something to fight for and work towards. Without art in our history classrooms, we are simply telling students about the past, rather than providing them with images to help them imagine what the world actually looked like. Once art is presented to students they can then further analyze and understand history. If it were not for artists like Goldberg, as well as many others would have a hard time understanding the history of Jewish Europeans living in shtetls, traditional Jewish rituals, and the atrocities of the Holocaust.

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## Lesson Based on the Movie *Glory*

John Staudt

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*“Let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship.”* – Frederick Douglass

### Assignment:

- Read the packet prior to our class viewing of the Edward Zwick’s film *Glory* (1989)
- Highlight/underline and annotate the most important points; be sure you review the questions before we view the film.
- Pay attention and answer the questions in the time allotted following the end of the film.

**Background:** The issues of emancipation and military service were intertwined from the onset of the Civil War. News from Fort Sumter set off a rush by free Black men to enlist in U.S. military units. They were turned away, however, because a federal law barred Negroes from bearing arms for the U.S. Army. The Lincoln administration was concerned that the recruitment of Black troops would prompt the Border States (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri) to secede. By mid-1862, however,

the escalating number of former slaves (contrabands), the declining number of white volunteers, and the needs of the Union Army pushed the Government into reconsidering the ban. As a result, on July 17, 1862, Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act, freeing slaves who had masters in the Confederate Army. Two days later, slavery was abolished in all the territories of the United States. In the Emancipation Proclamation, issued on January 1, 1863, President Lincoln announced that Black men would be recruited into the U.S. Army and Navy. Abolitionist leaders such as Frederick Douglass encouraged Black men to become soldiers to ensure eventual full citizenship (two of Douglass's own sons enlisted). By the end of the Civil War, roughly 188,000 Black men (10% of the Union Army) served as soldiers and another 19,000 served in the Navy. 40,000 Black soldiers died over the course of the war. There were 80 Black commissioned officers; 21 Black soldiers and sailors won the Medal of Honor by the time it ended. Black women could not formally join the Army but served as nurses, spies, and scouts, the most famous scout being Harriet Tubman. In addition to the perils of war faced by all Civil War soldiers, Black soldiers faced additional problems stemming from racial prejudice. Segregated units were formed with Black enlisted men

commanded by white officers. Black soldiers were initially paid \$10 per month from which \$3 was automatically deducted for clothing, resulting in a net pay of \$7. In contrast, white soldiers received \$13 per month from which no clothing allowance was drawn. In June 1864, Congress granted equal pay to the U.S. Colored Troops.

*The film: Glory* tells the story of the 54<sup>th</sup> Colored Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, one of the most celebrated regiments of Black soldiers that fought in the Civil War. Known simply as "the 54th," this regiment became famous after the heroic, but ill-fated, assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina. Leading the direct assault under heavy fire, the 54th suffered enormous casualties before being forced to withdraw. The courage and sacrifice of the 54th helped to dispel doubt within the Union about the fighting ability of Black soldiers and earned this regiment undying battlefield glory. Of the 5,000 Federals who took part, 1,527 were casualties: 246 killed, 890 wounded and 391 captured. The 54th lost a stunning 42 percent of its men: 34 killed, 146 wounded and 92 missing and presumed captured. By comparison, the Confederates suffered a loss of just 222 men. Despite the 54th's terrible casualties, the battle of Fort Wagner was a watershed for the regiment. Civil War scholar James McPherson states, that the "significance of the 54th's attack on Fort Wagner was enormous. Its sacrifice became the war's dominant positive symbol of Black courage. Their sacrifice sparked a huge recruitment drive of Black Americans. It also allowed Lincoln to make the case to

whites that the North was in the war to help bring a "new birth of freedom" to all Americans.

*Questions – Answer all questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper:*

1. List 2 reasons why men joined the 54<sup>th</sup>?
2. Why do you think the white officers volunteered to lead them?
3. Why do you think Colonel Shaw wants his regiment to lead the deadly assault on Fort Wagner?
4. In the scene just before the final attack, Shaw approaches a reporter and says, "Remember what you see here." Write a brief newspaper entry including a headline, dateline, photo (or drawing, engraving, map, etc.) and caption, and a brief (3-4 sentences) description stating what the reporter saw at the Battle of Fort Wagner.

*In-class group activity:* We will divide randomly into 4 groups. Each group will be assigned one of the images below. Your group will determine how the image represents the significance of the 54<sup>th</sup>'s achievements and legacy. Each group will then report back to the rest of the class.

*Further reading:*

Russell Duncan. *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Robert Gould Shaw*. This book contains a 67-page biography of Shaw as well as 300 additional pages featuring the various letters Shaw

wrote to family members, some of which are read in the movie.

Joseph T. Glatthaar. *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*. Paperback. Louisiana State University Press (April 2000).

David Blight's article, "Race and Reunion: Soldiers and the Problem of the Civil War in American Memory" (6, no. 3 [2003]: 26-38).



Image A: *Storming Fort Wagner*. Lithograph by Kurz & Allison, 18

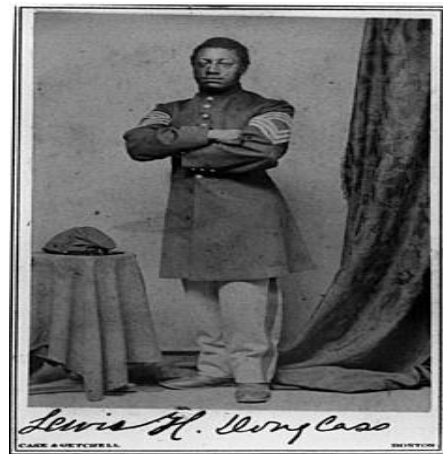


Image B: Civil War photograph of Sergeant-Major Lewis H. Douglas, one of the first troops of the 54<sup>th</sup> to climb over the walls of Fort Wagner during the attack.



Image C: Augustus Saint-Gaudens (one of the premier artists of his day) took nearly fourteen years to complete this high-relief bronze monument, which celebrates the valor and sacrifices of the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup>. Colonel Shaw is shown on horseback and three rows of infantrymen march behind. This scene depicts the 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment marching down Beacon Street on May 28, 1863 as they left Boston to head south. The monument was unveiled in a ceremony on May 31, 1897.

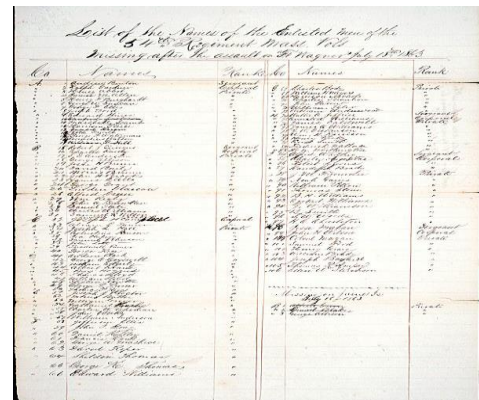
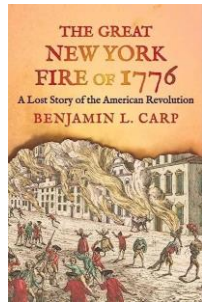


Image D: One of the 54<sup>th</sup>s casualty lists with the names of 116 enlisted men who died at the battle for Fort Wagner. National Archives, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917

Book Reviews

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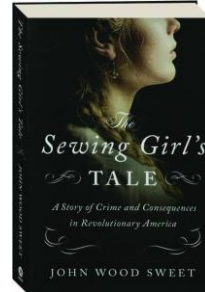
*The Great New York Fire of 1776: A Lost Story of the American Revolution* by Benjamin Carp (Yale University Press, 2023).



In many ways, New York City was the strategic center of the Revolutionary War. During the summer of 1776, George Washington threatened to burn the city rather than let the British take it and shortly after the Crown's forces took New York City, more than one-fifth of the city mysteriously burned to the ground. This book examines the Great Fire of 1776 and why its origins remained a mystery even after the British investigated it in 1776 and 1783. Benjamin Carp paints a vivid picture of the chaos, passions, and unresolved tragedies that define a historical moment we usually associate with "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Carp is a professor of history at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. He is the author of *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party* and the *Making of America and Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution*.

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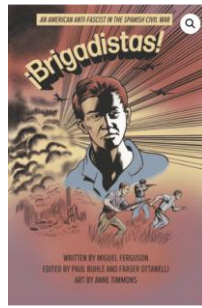
*The Sewing Girl's Tale: A Story of Crime and Consequences in Revolutionary America* by John Wood Sweet



Sweet (Henry Holt) uses the trial of the accused rapist, Harry Bedlow, of a seventeen-year-old seamstress named Lanah Sawyer in 1793 to analyze New York City's social hierarchy during the early republic. Alexander Hamilton was part of Bedlow's legal team. Bedlow's acquittal after the jury deliberated for only fifteen minutes sparked riots in the streets and ignited a vigorous debate about class privilege and sexual double standards. Sawyer received some justice when her stepfather won a civil suit against Bedlow and the family was awarded a significant sum. The book received a Bancroft Award from the American Historical Association.

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*!Brigadistas! An American Anti-Fascist in the Spanish Civil War* edited by Miguel Ferguson, Anne Timmons, Paul Buhle, and Fraser Ottanelli (Monthly review Press, 2022).

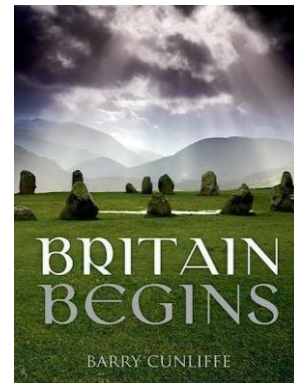


*(Review by Anika Amin, St. Ann's, Brooklyn)*

*¡Brigadistas!* is a graphic novel about the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). It tells the story of three friends from Brooklyn, New York who travel to Spain where they join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The book was super descriptive and did not include unnecessary details. This made it comprehensive but still clear and intelligible. The moments about the effects of the war and the regular people it affected were extremely powerful. The descriptions of the war's effects on children and people who were not soldiers made the graphic novel very impactful. There could have even been more of these moments included to reinforce the significance. Overall it was informative, clear, and very powerful. Although it was very clear, it could have made it easier to read if it had chapters or sections. Breaking up the text and providing landmarks throughout the story could have also made it easier to follow. Additionally, depending on the target age group, some of the terms and concepts could have been explained more to keep the writing flowing. Overall it was great to read and it presented important and difficult topics in an understandable way.

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***Britain Begins*** by Barry Cunliffe (London: Oxford University Press. 2013)



The author tells the story here of both England and Ireland because they cannot be separated easily. Since the very beginning of humans' time in that part of the world, both lands and cultures were connected. It is that united history that leads the way in this incredible story of the sometimes icy, sometimes verdant northern reaches of civilization.

The reader will find here exciting and revealing chapters in the history of movements throughout the pre-historic, Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and modern times of the isles. There are clear and helpful illustrations, and there is enough information here to fill any semester-long course on the history of England, or rather Albion, as it was first called by those who were using formal language.

The author paints rich stories onto a canvas of what was once a chilly ice-covered region and which came to be a world power. The author makes use of language, tools, science, history, and other major fields to tell about the different eras of the isles.

The years of the Celts are very intriguing ones, indeed. Cunliffe speaks of the idea that there were two entirely distinct waves of movement among them—including Iberia, Britain, Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, and Wales (pp. 248-249). He also speaks to the idea that the Celts started in the north and later in one era migrated as a large group southward to Brittany (p. 428). He has a number of additional theories related to this and other good examples of “movement.”

Another very interesting idea is that language, culture, and tools were shared up and down the west coast of Europe and up between the isles—a sort of “Atlantic” civilization (p. 344) emerging over time among the Celts. This explains linguistic and other hints pointing to migrations and movements up and down the coast—as opposed to some earlier notions of “Spanish” Celts trudging only northward to the further reaches of what came to be the UK.

Cunliffe talks about the notion of Celts moving southward—starting in Scotland and Ireland and coming down into Europe along the Atlantic. The author uses many different sorts of proof to advance this theory, at the same time he asks additional questions.

Teachers will be able to use this big book in a variety of ways. First and foremost, it is important personal reading for any teacher interested in social studies in general and in the history of English-speaking people specifically. Understanding

the history of northwest Europe is helpful in understanding the intricate connections among the Celts and Europeans, the British and the Irish, and the Scandinavian and Germanic stock among the English.

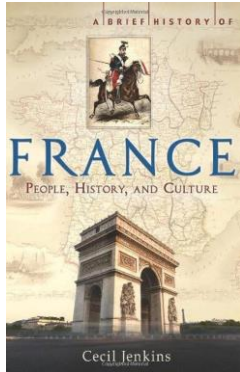
Another important use is for helping students understand the power of “movement” among peoples, the conflicts created and agreements forged, and the resulting cultural and linguistic differences and similarities resulting from peoples coming into contact. The notion of movement relates also to the traveling ideas, tools, traditions, names, weapons, foods, trades, and books, later. Any standards and benchmarks related to movement are connected through teacher use of this book as a reference and resource.

Yet another good use of this volume is a textbook for a college-level course in history, of course. Because it covers so very much information, it could also be used as a summer reading project for advanced rising college freshman students needing timely non-fiction reading.

Those four uses of the book can be joined by another one I propose here: coffee table teaser. It would be interesting to set this in plain view and see who would pick it up and want to start reading it. It has a beautiful green cover. There are in fact many photos, drawings, and illustrations inside. The cover just might draw in some unsuspecting readers.

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***A Brief History of France: People, History, and Culture***, by Cecil Jenkins (Philadelphia, PA: Running Press. 2011)



In 15 information-filled chapters, Jenkins gives us a decent amount of French history in a short book. Chapter One is called “Cro-Magnon Man, Roman Gaul and the Feudal Kingdom,” and the last chapter is called “France in the New Global Order.” By chapter 6 we are already reading about Napoleon, so if that is any indication of the coverage here you know that means most of the book is about the last few hundred years and not about Cro-Magnons or Romans or Celts. If you want more emphasis on those guys, you have to seek a different book.

Jenkins is a great writer, and he not only uses clever turns of phrase. He also uses a great deal of humor and fun in his writing. The book is enjoyable to read. I hold a BA in French Language & Literature, but I found a huge amount of information here I had not expected and had not known about before reading the book.

The book is really quite funny, at points. For example, on page 28, Jenkins explains, “Again, the old practice of dividing estates among the sons, which had created so many problems with the royal

succession, caused continual private wars among the minor nobles who had often little else to do but strike knightly attitudes.”

This striking-a-pose reference is typical of the funny ways Jenkins tells us in more modern terms what went on in the French past. See, also, the mention of Philippe IV’s “cold good looks (p. 33) and the “déjà vu all over again” discussion on page 72 and the bitchiness notes on page 75.

Without giving too much of the actual content away, I will say here that the framework of French history gives Jenkins a wonderful playground to exercise in. He enjoys writing about this topic, obviously, and the reader will enjoy finding out about some of the more interesting and sometimes weird passages of time within the French world.’

Teachers of social studies and of history will probably like the book because of its approach and clever language. More advanced students—especially those who know something of French history—may like this also. It is not a very basic review of French history, however. It does demand some overall familiarity with the topic so that the reader can follow what is happening. I have read some other similar books recently on history of countries I knew little about and feel for those who read this one if they are not somewhat versed in French history.

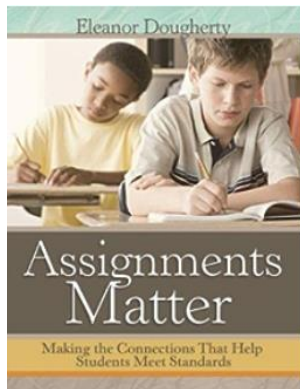
This is a brief history, indeed, and best for those who need a good review and an exciting read about the topic. I recommend the book especially for Francophiles who want another perspective. This point of view is certainly refreshing.

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***Assignments Matter: Making the Connections that Help Students Meet***

***Standards*** by Eleanor Dougherty  
(Alexandria, VA: Association for

Supervision and Curriculum Development.  
2012)



This helpful book provides information on all stages of assignments, including basic starting points, reasons for the strategies employed, assessment ideas, and rubrics to help the classroom teacher evaluate what has happened. The author walks us through why we include assignments as part of the educational process for students, how to design them, why they are important in the classroom, and what they mean outside the school also.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first, “Why and What,” explains the basics of assignments and why they matter. The second, “In the Classroom,” talks about crafting assignments and how they reflect and expand the teaching of the related topics. Included is a discussion of how to properly sequence assignments and five design principles—including literacy as common

practice (p. 88). The third section deals with assignments serving as anchors to instruction and also being used as data in themselves. These connect assignments to life outside the classroom.

Included in this short book are links to technology that will yield additional resources and ideas for designing and enriching lessons and assignments (inside cover, back cover, and p. 180). An appendix (pp. 171-180) yields even more information, including websites for assignment content and for organizations providing some interesting prompts also.

The book does reference standards and common core issues and statements, so teachers in Illinois and many other states can make use of it. In the prairie state, teachers are making use of a variety of standards, anchors, statements, and other outcomes-related guidance in their teaching and testing. There is nothing in this book that contradicts such an eclectic approach to education.

I would recommend the book as a good basic introduction for teacher education courses. The book would also be beneficial for new teachers, I think. It is clear and thorough, and I really like the examples. I think more experienced teachers who want to make more use of technology when designing units and writing lessons may wish to look into this book also.

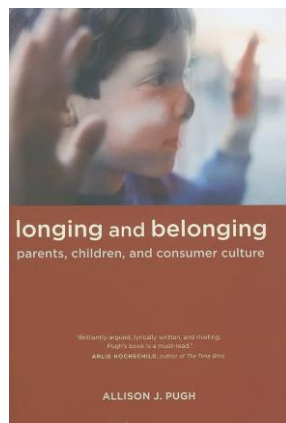
As a professional development book, this is suitable as general background



reading for teachers in different fields to come up with their own adaptations of the ideas and strategies employed. The book would also perhaps work for people coming to teaching from other fields and who have a great deal of technical knowledge on their subject but who want a thorough treatment of how to get assignments and assessments planned quickly for use in the classroom right away.

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*Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture*, by Allison J. Pugh  
(Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009)



This is a very important book for teachers, teacher trainers, and teacher candidates to read because it offers an explanation of the desires of children and the interesting way the desires are met, or not met, by their parents. In this day of increasing demand for newer and better toys and technology, children ask for more and more expensive items.

Allison Pugh uses a qualitative research approach from the side of sociology to look at the phenomenon, namely the

decision to reward children with gifts or to withhold them, and why or why not. Pugh looks at the desires and needs of kids from very disparate family backgrounds, socioeconomic class, and racial and cultural experiences in a region of southern California.

The pivotal point is the school, the type of school, including whether it is public or private, and the ways that having technology and other assets are viewed by the students. The author interviews several parents to find out how the decision is made as to whether the kids will receive something they want. In some cases, the parents do buy the items so that the kids will not stand out as being too different from others, so that the kids will be able to participate with others in their school and be able to “save face.”

Not all parents immediately purchase items for their child, however, sometimes waiting to make sure it is a wise choice or until the family can afford it. In other cases, the parents can indeed afford the time but wait before buying it. The author uses the term “symbolic deprivation” to describe parents waiting until the child truly deserves the item or it is somehow time to go ahead and purchase the gift, toy, or technology.

In this ethnographic study, the author discovers some surprising aspects many people do not consider. Parents often want their children to fit in, so buying them fruit snacks or certain kinds of lunch items is very important as they help their kids to be part of the scene. Some parents consider the

social life at school to be as important or even more important than what the kids are learning. Sometimes parents do try to get children to adopt better eating habits, but they agree to help them fit in better by purchasing trendy snacks or desserts for the lunchbox.

For a variety of reasons, parents do or do not buy certain items. Parents of all income levels explained it was a struggle to know when to say enough is enough. In many cases, the parents say they try to buy the majority of the things the kids want, and sometimes that means kids do have to wait so the family will not wind up “in trouble” financially. Still, though, kids in this study tended to eventually get the lion’s share of what they had on their conscious wish list.

Important reading for educators, this book shows the social and family side of the desires and needs of children in three very different kinds of schools. Other factors such as class and race place interesting roles in the decision process employed by parents. It is essential to better understand the kinds of pressures on kids and their parents in terms of the technology and toys so much of the kid landscape these days. Understanding what is going on behind the scenes, in the lunchroom, and in the playground can be very helpful in comprehending a little more of the kid’s world and that of the parents raising them.

It will be interesting to study these patterns and decisions after COVID-19 has come to a more secure stop at the end of the road.

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*Transformative Assessment*, by W. James Popham ((Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2008)



Unlike the majority of short paperbacks published by ASCD, this book does not seem to lend itself so well to use in very brief meetings with teachers or teacher candidates. While many ASCD titles work well on weekend retreats or for “introduction, discussion, and application” in a one-day workshop, this one may need to be used in several meetings.

Because of the complicated presentation of the four major levels of formative assessment and the steps to using each one, presenters or teacher-educators may wish to assign a chapter and then cover it separately from others. The problem with adding so much complicated work to a busy teacher’s workday or semester is that a teaching tool meant to improve one’s teaching can have an adverse effect: it can confuse educators to the point that they give up trying to use it.

The author tells us there are four different levels of formative assessment,

starting with the teacher's strategies for checking on students' ongoing mastery of concepts and ranging all the way to schoolwide implementation of the process. He tells us of the development of the term and shows the interest in this process, starting with work done by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Growing out of the work on formative assessment is Popham's work with "transformative" aspects of assessment, meaning the ways in which a school can be changed at those four levels.

Popham here presents a helpful but difficult explanation of formative assessment, beginning by explaining that this process is one used by teachers as a way to monitor student learning and by students as a way to assess whether they are digesting the pieces of information being covered by the teacher. It has a constructivist aspect to it, in that the students are supposed to get better as figuring out what they should know and how they should be able to show it.

Murky begets murky, though, and on top of the four different levels of formative assessment there are different stages that need to be given attention. This makes the confusion a little more pointed, and it may be that many busy educators simply don't have the energy to focus on what is being proposed here. There is, however, a very clear discussion of how standardized testing works, and why 1) it is not a form of formative assessment; 2) it does not necessarily reflect good teaching; and 3) it does not necessarily improve in a building

where educators have embraced the strategies and principles of formative assessment.

The above negative points having been made, I would recommend that you regard this text as a good resource and a decent overview of formative assessment and Popham's version of it. However, you as teacher educators and classroom experts in your own right will have to decide whether you have a good use for this short book. I might use it as optional reading in an advanced course for students who would have experience teaching and who could critique it for themselves.

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