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# VULCAN HISTORICAL REVIEW

**VOLUME 26**

**2022**

RACE, CLASS, & GENDER THEMATIC EDITION

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 06** *Letter from the Editors*
- 07** “King”  
*Alan Atkins*
- 08** *Inventing the African American*  
*Kamau Bamidele*
- 15** *1967 Detroit Riot*  
*Chris Bertolini*
- 22** *Redneck Revolutionaries: The Young Patriots and the Rainbow Coalition*  
*Emily Ann Wilson*
- 33** “Downtown Mobile, 1953”  
*Brianna Carnley*
- 34** *Antisemitism Omitted: Failings in the Media Framing of the Crown Heights Riots*  
*Josef Brock*
- 43** *African American Housing and the Urban Crisis*  
*Austin Dennis*
- 51** *Lifting As We Climb: Black Women’s Role in Constructing and Sustaining Black Power, 18th Century to the Present*  
*Alexis Cathcart*
- 61** “It is Entirely Possible for a Black Girl to be Loved”  
*Alan Atkins*
- 62** *Lincoln: The Gradual Emancipation Project, A Story of Growth*  
*Charlie Crepps*
- 75** *Anti-Abortion Activism and Advances: A Historography*  
*Haley Wells*
- 86** *John F. Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress: An Origin Story*  
*Michael Davis*
- 93** “A Photo of my Grandparents, 1954”  
*Brianna Carnley*
- 94** About the Contributors & Editors

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The editorial staff is pleased to present the 26th edition of the *Vulcan Historical Review*. Last year, the *VHR* celebrated a quarter century of publishing the outstanding historical scholarship of UAB's history students and we are grateful to be part of this tradition as we maneuver through the challenges of Covid-19. In this thematic edition, we pay particular attention to marginalized histories dealing with race, racism, class, and gender in the United States. As disingenuous debates around Critical Race Theory and its purported use in K-12 schools polarize our nation, this edition unapologetically grapples with histories that may be uncomfortable for some persons to discuss. Acknowledging themes of U.S. history that do not maintain the dominant notion of willful blindness to past and present injustices is a first step towards unity, liberation, and equity for us all. This special edition aims to make historical scholarship accessible to everyone and we strive to construct a space where people can proudly engage with topics they are familiar with and ones they may have never thought deeply about. We hope that readers will engage these topics in a way that challenges them to think critically about past traditions and present injustices. The cover art, titled "Spirit of the African Woman", exemplifies the themes of this edition. Women of African descent, particularly in the US, sit at the oppressive intersections of race, class, and gender. This publication is dedicated to the lives, resistance, and activism of Black and African descended women across the globe. The 26th edition of the *VHR* represents the power of our voices and what can be done when we use them as a vehicle to articulate, understand, and struggle to change our current system and structures.

The publication opens with a powerful and relevant critique of Black citizenship in the United States, followed by the Glenn Feldman Memorial Writing Award winning narrative of police discrimination in the context of the 1967 Detroit Rebellion. Next, we move to a piece that explores the history of the Young Patriots and their role in strengthening paths for solidarity among oppressed people through anti-capitalist organizing. The next article raises questions about antisemitism in the Black community during the Crown Heights Riots of 1991 and the media's role in misframing the event, followed by an essay that traces the history of the urban crisis and its disproportionate effect on Black Americans during the 20th century. We then turn to the

Virginia Van Der Veer Hamilton Award winning narrative of Black women and their bounteous contributions to the Black Freedom Struggle, particularly the Black Power movement. The journal concludes with three articles that delve into the legacy and growth of one of America's most polarizing figures, Abraham Lincoln; a timely piece that traces the implications and development of anti-abortion activism in the U.S.; and a review essay that outlines the origins of JFK's Alliance for Progress in the context of the United States' multifaceted relationship with Latin America. Interwoven throughout the journal are stunning pieces by artist Alan Atkins and nostalgic poetry by Brianna Carnley that complement the themes of this edition.

The 26th edition would not be possible if not for the endless amount of care and guidance we have received from a number of individuals. First, we would like to extend ample appreciation and gratitude to our faculty advisor, Dr. Andrew Baer. His never-ending encouragement of our work and infectious passion for history exemplifies what it means to invest in the success of UAB's budding historians. We would also like to thank our Chair Dr. Jonathan Wiesen, our Administrative Associate Melanie Daily, and our Office Services Specialist Jerrie McCurry for their unceasing support and encouraging attitudes. Many thanks to the English Department and the Art and Art History Department, especially Dr. Alison Chapman and Dr. Margaret Jay Jessee and Laura Merrill and Melissa Yes, who directed us towards talented students willing to submit work that beautifully rounds out this publication. We are immeasurably thankful for our graphic designer Tierra Andrews, who gracefully brought our visions of the *VHR* to life, and to the previous executive editor, Sheila Blair, for her insight and friendship.

Lastly, we would like to extend appreciation to the UAB Department of History. The knowledge, guidance, and encouragement that faculty have consistently provided to students and their passion for doing history has made it possible for the *VHR* to exist for more than a quarter century. We thank our department faculty, our student contributors, and our readers for giving UAB undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to build upon 26 years of historical scholarship that represents the department and the Chi Omicron Chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society.

# KING

Alan Atkins



## INVENTING THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN

Kamau Bamidele

The so-called “African-American” never arrives in Amerika as a person, but is manufactured within the borders of the Amerikan settler-state as a political entity. The “African-American” is conceptualized only through the vehicles of genocide, theft, and enslavement imposed on us as a byproduct of Euro-American capitalist hegemony. “African-American” is oxymoronic and alienates Afrikans from our sovereign past. Thus, African-Americans are not, and can never be, a people with their own sovereignty. When the ships docked, it was Afrikans (of various ethnicities) who emerged from the hold as slaves, Afrikans who labored in the fields, and Afrikans who fought an ongoing 500-year struggle for liberation, not Amerikans. When described by the land we are indigenous to, as opposed to the land of our captivity, the narrative of our existence here (and the understanding of our status) changes. The decision, then, to consider us “African-Americans” has been an intentional one. When examining the chronology of the phrase “African-American,” we find a term that did not come into popular usage nationally until the late 20th century, as most Afrikans were called “Afrikans,” or “Negroes” upon their arrival in Amerika. By tracking the origins of the term “African-American” from its first known usage, we gain a clearer image of how the African-American is conceptualized in the Amerikan socio-political imagination. Specifically, we can come to grasp how there were political ramifications and benefits for the ruling class in extending faux Amerikan nationalism and identity to the enslaved Afrikan, and retracting the claim to said identity whenever it was beneficial.

The earliest known place where the term “African-American” appears is in an 18th century pamphlet, authored by someone

who identifies as an African-American. Written in Philadelphia in 1782, “A Sermon on the Capture of Lord Cornwallis” begins with an address to the then lieutenant governor of South Carolina, Christopher Gadsden.<sup>1</sup> In this dedication, the author describes themselves as “not having the benefit of a liberal education,” and that they “[have] been an eye witness of [Gadsden’s] indefatigable industry in [his] country’s cause.” Concluding, the author proclaims “that the ruler of the universe may crown with success the cause of freedom, and speedily relieve your bleeding country, is the hearty wish of an African American.”<sup>2</sup>

From this document, we can see the historical conditions under which the African-American emerges, and two claims can be made with some confidence: First, it is highly unlikely (and there is indeed no evidence to suggest it) that the author of the document introduced “African-American” into the lexicon of late 18th-century Amerika. Though this is the earliest documented usage of the term, it is more plausible that it was already in some degree of circulation among certain groups and localities, rather than invented in this text. This suggests that the “African-American” was, at the very least, occupying space in the Amerikan imagination during the late years of the Amerikan Revolution. The second thing we can ascertain from this document is that the “African-American” was a politicized entity from the outset, and that there is no divorcing of that entity from Amerikan nationalism, and even patriotism. This is best seen in the author’s last statement to Gadsden, about the “hearty wish of an African American” being an independent Amerika relieved from war.<sup>3</sup> The author here does not express any hopes that they or their people (Afrikans) might be relieved from captivity, but

rather that Amerika as a nation would be liberated. Though it is indeed a sample size of only one, it is highly improbable that these ideas generated individually and were entirely self-contained, especially when one considers that ideas must be synthesized dialectically, which is to say, through the confrontation between contradicting ideas.

The lack of any earlier documentation that identifies Afrikans in Amerika as both “African” and “American” leads us to conclude that the emergence of the “African-American” coincided not simply with the emergence of Amerika, but Amerika as a nation-state. The implications of this dual emergence are obviously manifold; however, contrary to the more wildly propagated present-day narrative—that Afrikans were the first true “patriots” because of their presence in the war-torn landscape of the Revolutionary war—the vast masses of Afrikans were either enslaved and forced to go to war by their masters, or compelled to struggle for whichever force of the conflict that might emancipate them, a fact known and feared by Amerika’s bourgeois rulers.

This is evident from the documentation of the time. In the original draft of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson articulated the concerns of many regarding the desertion of Afrikans to the British cause, writing, “[King George III] is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them.”<sup>4</sup> Generally speaking, there was an aversion to arming Afrikans by the Amerikans (and indeed the English), who foresaw the possibility of insurrection, as prior to November of 1775, all Afrikans who had not initially joined the conflict at its opening were barred from serving in the Continental Army. However, following the issuing of Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation that month, which promised freedom to any enslaved Afrikans who joined the British Army, there was an immediate turn in the attitudes of many

regarding Afrikan participation in the war.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the following month George Washington wrote to John Hancock, “it has been represented to me that the free negroes who have served in this Army, are very much [dissatisfied] at being discarded—as it is to be apprehended, that they may seek employ in the ministerial Army—I have presumed to depart from the resolution respecting them, & have given [license] for their being enlisted, if this is disapproved of by Congress, I will put a stop to it.”<sup>6</sup> By 1778, Congress had knocked down the existing barriers stopping Afrikans from enlisting, and individual states and townships had begun to appeal directly to enslaved Afrikans by offering them emancipation. Subsequently, many Afrikans joined the Continental Army; though, notably, most were relegated to service positions and were never armed.<sup>7</sup>

We see here that the decision to recruit Afrikans as members of the Continental Army, was motivated by fear of Afrikan desertion to the British. As a means of enticing Afrikans into service, they were offered an opportunity to integrate the Amerikan settler-state as Amerikans. More than an actual law or statement that explicitly declared Afrikans as Amerikans however (which we wouldn’t see until the 14th Amendment), at this particular moment, being an “Amerikan” was embodied principally by the promises of “liberty” through emancipation, and entrance into capitalist property relations as landowners through the promise of land grants offered by various states during the war.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly relevant in the case of free Afrikans, who would not have needed emancipation, and thus would’ve required other motivation to participate in this war. Thus, as early Amerikan nationalism, rooted in bourgeois concepts of “liberty” and “independence” that were tied to land ownership, was ostensibly expanded to include the material wants of Afrikans, many Afrikans who had not joined the British (or had remained out of the conflict entirely) became patriots. In this way, we see how nationalism



1903 political cartoon depicting a statue of Abraham Lincoln standing over emancipated Africans, while Theodore Roosevelt stands before it, gripping the 15th amendment in his left hand and placing his right hand on the shoulder of an African man. Library of Congress.

functions as a tool for organization, only being necessary in the context of a state or people that (whether legitimately or not) are seeking to consolidate power. For America's bourgeoisie, there would have only been a net positive benefit to extend the American identity to a people who had already demonstrated the capacity to flock to the lines of the enemy.

In reality, though, this moment of fraternity in American nationhood was brief, as the claim of Africans to Americanness was never meaningfully substantiated by either the total abolition of slavery or the guarantee of full participation in white liberal democracy. This is an episode

that would repeat with the frequency of America's involvement in wars or in times of great international and national tension. During the American Civil War for example, the aim of the Union (and its leader Abraham Lincoln) was to crush the Southern rebellion and secure the stability of the Union as one entity. Though perceived by revisionist historians to, from the outset, be a war against slavery, the conflict was, as Lincoln articulated in his preliminary proclamation of emancipation, "[to] be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is, or may be, suspended or disturbed."<sup>9</sup> The only reason federal power was used to emancipate any slaves at all (though, critically, these were only slaves in the Confederate states) was to make Africans eligible to enlist in the Union army, which by that point had lost much of its strength, as the Union did not have enslaved Africans to rely on as a productive force while sending soldiers to combat the Confederacy (something the Confederacy had, by contrast).<sup>10</sup> Again, in this example, though "American" does not appear in either transcript of the Emancipation Proclamation, the concept of "liberty"—and, principally, the opportunity to struggle for liberty—were seen at the core of being American. This is evident particularly from some African perspectives of the conflict, related in statements such as, "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth or under the earth which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States," that were made, in this case by Frederick Douglass in a speech referenced by W.E.B. DuBois in *Black Reconstruction*.<sup>11</sup> Looking even further ahead, we see how after the "permanent" ratification of Africans as "Americans" by the 14th Amendment, the threat of revocation of that status (accompanied by the consequences

**“ The idea that a people stolen from Afrika, enslaved in Amerika, and subsequently excluded from virtually all aspects of Amerikan citizenship could be "American" is an inherent contradiction propagated by the ruling class as a means of curtailing Afrikan enmity for empire, and securing Afrikan support for Amerikan nationalistic endeavors. ”**

that would follow being deemed "un-American") was used to intimidate Afrikans into compliance with the will of the bourgeoisie. There is perhaps no greater example of this than the persecution of Paul Robeson by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) for his claim that Afrikans in the United States could not be made to go to war against the Soviet Union on the behalf of Amerikan imperialists.<sup>12</sup> In this case, after attempting to intimidate Robeson directly into condemning communism and failing, the committee sought out other Afrikans to denounce Robeson and reaffirm the commitment of the entire race to Amerika; the most famous among them being Jackie Robinson. As a means of protecting his attempt to integrate Major League Baseball, in 1949 Jackie Robinson capitulated to the desires of HUAC and testified against Robeson, stating that he did not believe Robeson could speak for all or even the majority of Afrikans in Amerika, as he and many other "Americans" cherished Amerika, and would not relinquish the freedoms offered to them by turning against their country.<sup>13</sup> The entire debacle reveals that, much like with emancipation in the Civil War era and the revolutionary era that preceded it, integrationism in this period was the objective. Many thought that integration would both legally and practically secure Afrikans as Amerikans, and the desire of many Afrikans to fully assimilate to the Amerikan identity was given functionality by the ruling class (in this case to quell any sympathies Afrikans nationally

had for communism and the USSR).

Clearly, the marriage of the Amerikan identity to Afrikans through the conception of the "African-American" had a multitude of purposes: for the rulers of Amerika, it meant Afrikans could be recruited into the various wars and national projects through nationalistic rhetoric; for Afrikans, the acceptance of the "African-American" was born from a desire to enter into and remain within white liberal democracy. This all, however, examines the purely political ramifications of the imposition of the Amerikan identity for Afrikans and the ruling class, and we must also address the psychological impact it had for Afrikans specifically. In the 19th century, there was a vested interest by many Afrikans to strive towards the eradication of the various ideological and cultural aspects of their Africanity as a means of assimilation. In the article, "Struggling with the Past: Some Views of African-American Identity," Brian W. Thomas addresses this phenomena. He writes, "During the early to middle nineteenth century, a time when recognizable expressions of African culture flourished in various parts of the United States, some influential black leaders shunned descriptive labels that contained 'Africa.'"<sup>14</sup> The "some" described here is not limited to lesser known leaders either, as even Frederick Douglass "argued for the 'American-ness' of [his] people, a stance that prioritized economic and political goals over African identity."<sup>15</sup> Though



A photo of Paul Robeson, an actor, singer, athlete, and socialist who was investigated by the House on Un-American Activities during the early 1950s before being called to a hearing to ascertain whether he was a communist in 1956. Wikimedia Commons

there were instances of nationalist organizations and certain religious sects, like the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) who stressed being Afrikan, by the 1830s many Afrikans had come to distance themselves from “Afrikan” as an identity in reaction to the emergent Afrikan colonization movement.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, the process by which the Afrikan becomes “Amerikan” incorporates more than simply bourgeois politics, but promotes a unique alienation of the Afrikan from their history all on its own. In understanding why Afrikans appeared to embrace this during the 19th century, we must also consider that the typical processes by which Afrikans might assimilate were largely ineffective or unavailable. As it is described in *Freedom on My Mind* by Deborah Gray White, Mia Bay, and Waldo Martin, during the years prior to

the ratification of the 13th amendment, the means by which Afrikans might be emancipated were, “assimilation into an owner’s kinship network by marriage and manumission – a legal process that slave owners could initiate to grant freedom to a favored slave.”<sup>17</sup> Both of these methods however, were obviously rare and occurred on a more individual basis that did not make them viable for collective emancipation. With the above context, when thinking back towards the historical conditions under which a document such as “A Sermon on the Capture of Lord Cornwallis” emerged, the sort of nationalistic rhetoric featured in the document and the psychology of the (presumably) Afrikan author becomes even more clear.

It serves here, having fleshed out a few of the various causes and effects that accompanied the emergence of the “African-American”, to reiterate that this was not an identity that had any real collective presence in the Amerikan imagination until the mid-20th century. In a way that is not indistinct from the settler population of Amerika only propagating the “history” and “culture” of Amerika during conflict with other nations (or even during internal conflicts such as the Civil War), so too were Afrikans considered anything but Amerikan at all points outside of when it suited ruling class interests. Citizenship was, time after time, denied to Afrikans. Rebecca Kook, situating the first emergence of the “African-American” identity in the collective Amerikan imagination, speaks to such things in her article, “The Shifting Status of African Americans in the American Collective Identity.”<sup>18</sup> Taking the ratification of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments as a starting point, Kook writes, “By establishing equal citizenship, the [13th, 14th, and 15th] amendments allowed Americans to think of their civic nation as inclusive. Their quick reversal, however, exemplified by the establishment of the Jim Crow system in the South, and the maintenance of severe informal discrimination in the North, in effect rendered this

short lived.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, nearly two centuries after the initial appearance of “African-American” in the pamphlet,<sup>20</sup> Kook states, “as late as the 1950s, African Americans were portrayed [in history textbooks] as part of American history only in their capacity as slaves.”<sup>21</sup>

“ **Clearly, the process by which the Afrikan becomes “Amerikan” incorporates more than simply bourgeois politics, but promotes a unique alienation of the Afrikan from their history all on its own.** ”

We observe here the conditionality on which the “African-American” exists. The African-American can win Amerikan wars. The African-American can be the critical voting bloc for a major political party. The African-American can be a patriot, and have nationalistic pride. This all, however, requires the

extinction (physically, culturally, and psychologically) of the Afrikan, and is achieved only on the condition that we submit unconditionally to the will of Amerika’s oligarchical rulers. In the end, we are never granted true compensation for the sacrifices we make, as our status as “Amerikan” is perpetually extended and revoked according to bourgeois needs. Thus, the “African-American” was a political invention. The idea that a people stolen from Afrika, enslaved in Amerika, and subsequently excluded from virtually all aspects of Amerikan citizenship could be “American” is an inherent contradiction propagated by the ruling class as a means of curtailing Afrikan enmity for empire, and securing Afrikan support for Amerikan nationalistic endeavors. When Afrikans reckon with our own captive status and indigeneity, we cease to be the wretched children, the “second-class citizens” of the Amerikan settler-state, constantly seeking admittance to the shining city on the hill, and instead become displaced Afrikans. We cease to be the tortured builders of this land, martyred for its creation, and instead become the survivors of protracted genocide. Most importantly, we cease to ask for power, scrambling for whatever scraps of influence or autonomy are granted to us by the capitalist state apparatus, and instead become a people whose sole task (if we hope to survive) is to build the power necessary to topple said state, liberate our ancestral home, and liberate ourselves by doing so.

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## 1967 DETROIT RIOT

Chris Bertolini

*Winner of the Glenn Feldman Memorial Writing Award*

The Detroit Police Department's discriminatory practices towards black Detroiters and the city's white liberal power structure's failure to provide equal opportunities and decent standards of living to many of its black residents caused the Detroit Riot of 1967. To many black Detroiters, police discrimination acted not only as yet another impediment to their attempts to live as freely as their white counterparts but as the physical representation of those impediments. Indeed, the uniformed policeman's ubiquity in Detroit's black neighborhoods in the years before the riot made the police the primary symbol of discrimination to black residents.<sup>1</sup> Those that rebelled did so primarily as an act of defiance towards the city's police department. The city government's failures to properly address systemic inequality provided the conditions under which some black Detroiters rioted, but the riot itself would not have occurred without widespread police discrimination.

In the early morning of July 23, 1967, the Detroit Police Department raided the United Community and Civic League, a "blind pig"—or illegal bar—in Detroit's majority-black 12th Street district. Officers encountered an all-black crowd celebrating the safe return of friends who served in the United States war effort in Vietnam; the police shut down the party and evacuated all 82 attendees. Black residents who lived near the blind pig began to pour outside, trying to figure out why the police had raided a welcome-home party. While the police figured out what to do with the evacuated party guests, onlookers, by this point accustomed to inexplicable police activities in their neighborhood, suspected the police had brutalized the occupants of the blind pig. Although untrue, these rumors spread quickly, and the crowd grew agitated.

**“Forty-three people died during the riot; civilians killed six of them. Thirty-one civilians died at the hands of policemen, National Guardsmen, or federal troops.”<sup>3</sup>**

About an hour after the police had first entered the United Community and Civic League, someone threw an empty bottle through a police cruiser's rear window. The riot had begun, but the looting, burning, and killing that made the riot famous would not reach full force until the afternoon.<sup>2</sup>

Civilians, however, only committed a small number of the riot's most violent crimes. Forty-three people died during the riot; civilians killed six of them. Thirty-one civilians died at the hands of policemen, National Guardsmen, or federal troops (and the seven "accidental" deaths include three victims shot by law enforcement by mistake).<sup>3</sup> The police played a more violent role in the riot than the rioters. The police's role during the riot, however, only makes sense when placed in the context of Detroit's postwar reform efforts—police or otherwise—and the department's relationship with black residents before the riot.

### **Detroit 1945-1967: "The Model City"**

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, Detroit thrived. The nation's all-out-industrialization during the war brought jobs and money back to Detroit after the Great Depression

sucked the vitality out of the city's automobile industry. The Big Three companies of automobile production—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—supplied many of the nation's military vehicles; after the war, they redirected their focus to the booming personal car sector.<sup>4</sup>

The explosion of jobs in the automobile industry attracted many rural and Southern migrants whose hometowns did not reap the benefits of wartime industrialization. Detroit's population peaked in the years following the Second World War at over 1.8 million. It became the fifth biggest city in the United States by 1950, with only New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia surpassing it in population.<sup>5</sup>

Black workers comprised a large number of the city's industrial immigrants during the war. The black population of Detroit had steadily increased since the early twentieth century when black people from the rural south headed to urban, often northern environments. By 1950, black Detroiters made up sixteen percent of the city's huge population, a ratio that quickly rose as white Detroiters flocked to the suburbs between the end of the war and the riot.<sup>6</sup>

From the perspective of white outsiders, and many white Detroiters as well, the city's white liberal power structure, which generally dominated city politics between the end of the war and the beginning of the riot, presided over a city with uncannily peaceful relations between black and white citizens. However, tensions lurked below the calm façade that white Detroiters either could not understand or met with willful ignorance. The city's postwar successes often acted to the detriment of its black residents. Black Detroiters, many of which had come to Detroit because of the explosion of jobs in the automobile industry, often found themselves shut out of the factory floor by the discriminatory practices of automobile manufacturers and the United Auto Workers (UAW). During and after the war, the UAW shifted its focus

from progressive politics to guaranteeing higher wages for its members. Automobile manufacturers no longer had to make concessions to progressivism to prevent strikes. As a result, automobile manufacturers had no reason to guarantee black workers equal access to jobs, promotion, seniority, or even pay.<sup>7</sup>

Freed from the necessity to make token gestures towards social justice, many of Detroit's industrial firms followed white Detroiters into the suburbs. Most black Detroiters could not work at these relocated firms; homeowners associations and discriminatory loaning practices prevented black people from buying houses in the suburbs. Nor could they easily commute. Affordable public transportation did not extend beyond Detroit's city limits, and black residents owned cars at a significantly lower rate than their white counterparts. While white Detroiters fled to the suburbs, black Detroiters stayed tethered to the city, usually in all-black or majority-black neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup> By 1960, the black proportion of Detroit's population had almost doubled to twenty-nine percent. Just five years later, that proportion sat at an estimated thirty-four percent.<sup>9</sup>

Black Detroiters suffered the consequences of white Detroiters' flock to the suburbs amidst the national suburbanization trend. The suburbanites took their money, and their jobs, with them. Between 1954 and 1967, black unemployment remained significantly above six percent—unemployment levels characteristic of a recession. Unsurprisingly, black Detroiters did not attain middle class status in large numbers. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders determined that, nationally, more black people made fewer than \$3,000 than made more than \$7,000—the “middle class” amount—in 1966. Two-thirds of the former group, or about twenty percent of all black people, made no economic gains between 1947 and 1966. Most



Henry Maier, Mayor of Milwaukee; Mayor John F. Collins; Jerome Cavanagh, Mayor of Detroit. Mayor John F. Collins records, Collection #0244.001, City of Boston Archives, Boston

of this group languished in crowded, low-quality housing in central cities, so they certainly accounted for more than twenty percent of Detroit's black population.<sup>10</sup>

To its credit, Detroit's white liberal power structure, especially the administration of Mayor Jerome Cavanagh (1962-1970), did respond to the plight of the city's black citizens with attempts at progressive reform. The national and local reform efforts, however, emphasized job training, token welfare, and urban renewal. The latter just as often displaced black residents as it did help them, and the other two proved too minor to address black Detroiters' grievances. The national War on Poverty did enable many black Americans to break into the ranks of the middle class, or at least find jobs, but it helped white Americans at a much greater rate. Mayor Cavanagh bought into the War on Poverty's lukewarm reform efforts, using funding from the Model Cities Program to

encourage greater black participation and representation within the city's white liberal power structure.<sup>11</sup>

Under Cavanagh, Detroit's black population fared much better economically than most of the country's black residents. They had more jobs and made better wages than black residents of most other cities. The city even escaped unscathed from the 1964 wave of riots that swept the nation.<sup>12</sup> But the city's reform efforts did not eliminate racial strife. The national media may have considered Detroit a model city of race relations, but the city's cheerleaders soon realized that their reform efforts had only delayed the expression of black discontent; the city's reforms only calmed the surface. Nothing demonstrates this better than Detroit's efforts at police reform and the department's relationship with the city's black residents.

### **Black Detroiters and the Detroit Police Department**

In the aftermath of the nationwide riots that characterized the "long, hot summer" of 1967, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, recognizing that police misconduct and discrimination played a large role in causing the riots, recommended that police departments across the country implement certain reforms to decrease the likelihood of the riots recurring. The Commission's suggested reforms included integrating police forces, training officers in public relations and racial sensitivity, developing mechanisms to better handle citizens' complaints, and making steps towards equality in police protection (black neighborhoods almost always suffered from higher crime rates than white ones, despite the much greater presence of police officers in black neighborhoods).<sup>13</sup>

The Commission believed these reforms would prevent potential riots in the future. Detroit, however, had already implemented most of the proposed reforms by 1967, and these reforms failed to prevent the riot; Detroit instead

suffered the deadliest and most destructive riot in the nation since the 1860's. The reforms did not do enough to repair the broken relationship between the police department and black Detroiters.

Before the election of Jerome Cavanagh in 1961, the Detroit Police Department acted with violent impunity in its quest to weed out crime. Police officers arrested people they suspected might have committed a crime without having to worry about "probable cause" stipulations or other legal formalities. They preyed primarily on poor and black Detroiters, dragging many of them to stationhouses to undergo interrogation sessions with the goal of securing a confession. Officers commonly used racial slurs when dealing with black citizens, but the city's blacks had to respond respectfully. Misfortune befell the black Detroiters who did not address a police officer as "sir." The city's officers would often subject "disrespectful" black men to alleyway interrogations—beatings—and then charge them with resisting arrest or disorderly conduct. The city government did nothing to stop this, and black Detroiters had no immediate legal power to force them to do so.<sup>14</sup>

Black Detroiters could, however, vote, so when Jerome Cavanagh and his police reform platform challenged the previous administration in the 1961 mayoral election, they threw their weight behind Cavanagh's successful campaign. Mayor Cavanagh's administration immediately set out to improve the broken relationship between the city's black residents and the police department.<sup>15</sup> In 1962, police commissioner George Edwards led a massive recruitment drive, seeking to hire more black officers to the force. Edwards' successor, Ray Girardin, furthered these efforts at integration. Girardin integrated the city's Detective Bureau by placing at least one black officer in each precinct. He also drastically increased the number of integrated patrol cars and

staffed several departments with their first black employees. By 1967, the police department's civilian wing had eliminated many of the department's administrative barriers to black Detroiters.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the commissioners' efforts, the department's integration project failed. By 1967, only five percent of the police force consisted of black officers. Many black Detroiters simply had no desire to join the department, given its discriminatory history towards the city's black residents. Those who did join often did not stay long. White officers, angry at the civilian administration's insistence on integration, sometimes refused to train black officers, so black officers resigned rather than deal with workplace discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

Police discontent with reform extended beyond officers' disdain for workplace integration; white police officers consistently undermined the Cavanagh administration's attempts at police reform. For example, when the Cavanagh administration mandated that officers attend racial sensitivity and public relations training, officers said they found it useless. They held similar opinions of the Citizens Complaint Bureau, a new department through which citizens could report police misbehavior. Detroit's police officers preferred the violent approach to policing of the previous administration and, according to Alex Elkins, "continued to operate by the get-tough logic of the war on crime."<sup>18</sup>

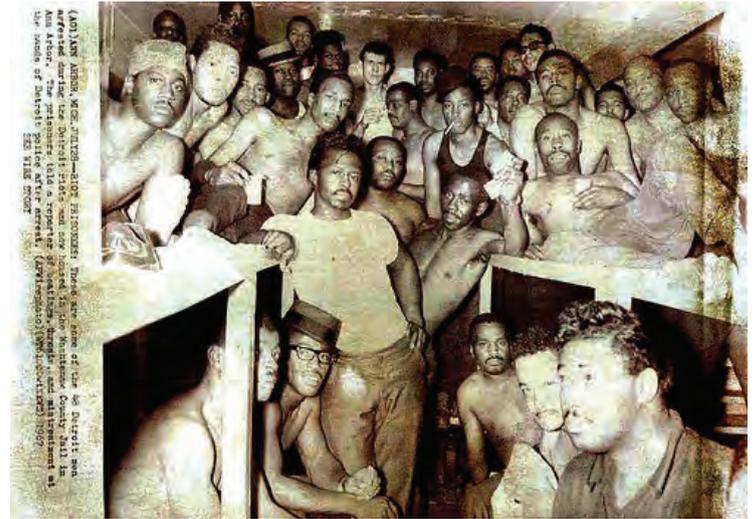
Despite the Cavanagh administration's reform efforts, the city's police officers continued to operate much as they had under the previous administration. Black Detroiters suffered as a result of the department's continuity. Officers arrested black citizens at a much higher rate than they arrested white ones. They also patrolled more regularly and in greater numbers in black neighborhoods—including along 12th Street where the riot took place. Police officers essentially became part of the physical landscape of black Detroit

neighborhoods. Their increased presence did not correspond to a decrease in crime. Indeed, some black Detroiters wondered why street and violent crimes occurred so much more frequently in their neighborhoods than in the rest of the city when the police department devoted so many cops to their neighborhoods.<sup>19</sup>

Police officers certainly provided some level of protection of life and property to black Detroiters. To some black Detroiters, however, it seemed like officers spent less time protecting them than they did antagonizing them. Detroit's black residents found the common practice of frisking especially demeaning. Police officers could frisk any Detroiters at will, so long as the officer doing the frisking framed it as necessary for crime prevention. Since frisking depended on the discretion of individual police officers, cops frisked black Detroiters—especially young black males—much more frequently than white residents. No police practice humiliated or angered black Detroiters as much as frisking did.<sup>20</sup>

Black Detroiters had long suffered from police discrimination, but the political and social climate of the 1960s magnified both black discontent and police distrust of black citizens. The Civil Rights Movement took the nation by storm, forcing white Americans to reconsider their relationships to their black compatriots and empowering traditionally oppressed African Americans to act against their oppressors. These developments terrified white power structures, such as the Detroit Police Department. Many police officers came to associate black Detroiters with social upheaval and revolution. In such a climate, police officers viewed racial discrimination as necessary for the preservation of the world they had long known, one in which black Detroiters would remain subservient to the white power structure.<sup>21</sup>

The riots that rocked so many American cities in 1964



Prisoners from the 1967 Detroit riots, housed temporarily in the [old] Washtenaw County Jail. by In Memoriam: Wytan is marked with CC BY-SA 2.0. Creative Commons

further convinced police officers of the need to monitor Detroit's black citizens. Detroit did not experience a riot in 1964, and although local, state, and national officials lauded the city for it, police officers likely recognized that their discriminatory practices would catch up with them eventually. Officers anxiously responded to the riots of 1964 by heavily-handedly trying to prevent a riot within their own city. They ended up catalyzing one instead.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Detroit Police Department and Law Enforcement During the Riot**

The relationship between the Detroit Police Department and black Detroiters reached a postwar nadir during the 1967 riot. The city's black residents saw that the Cavanagh administration's reforms had curbed neither economic and housing inequality nor police discrimination. When onlookers began to spread rumors of police brutality after the July 1967 raid of the United Community and Civic League bling pig, the city's black residents naturally believed them. They had long witnessed police brutality and discrimination first-hand. To many black Detroiters, it seemed like the police department

**“ Private citizens, institutions, and governmental bodies at every level had created “two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” African Americans in urban centers could not better their situations under the auspices of the contemporary institutions, no matter how liberal their intentions.**

did not extend its mandate to protect and serve Detroit’s black citizens or their neighborhoods.

Police action during the riot affirmed their attitudes. Detroit police officers and National Guardsmen arrested about 7,200 people during the six-day riot, with 3,000 of these arrests occurring on the riot’s second day. Although white Detroiters also looted stores once the riot broke out<sup>23</sup>, law enforcement officials disproportionately arrested black men.<sup>24</sup> In their desperately violent attempts to quell rioting, police officers subjected those they arrested to impromptu “alley courts” in which officers would beat suspects until they confessed to participating in the rioting and looting. Those who made

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it to the stationhouse before undergoing interrogation often did not fare much better; at the Tenth Precinct station, police did not allow suspects to use the station’s telephones. Many victims later accused officers at the Tenth Precinct station of police brutality and sexual assault.<sup>25</sup>

Law enforcement officials killed thirty-four Detroiters during the riot. They performed most of these killings after the most destructive periods of the riot had ended. Official violence increased as civilian violence waned, which, according to Albert Bergesen, indicates “an increasing lack of organizational or normative control over the actions of officials.” Bergesen draws attention to “personal attacks” by law enforcement officials on black Detroiters to illustrate his point: in these “personal attacks,” officials murdered black men for no apparent reason; they had committed no crimes and they posed no threat to officials.<sup>26</sup>

These personal attacks included the three men killed by police officers at Algiers Motel. Following the murders, officials threatened witnesses with death if they refused to immediately return home. The same witnesses encountered National Guardsmen while fleeing, who greeted them with racial slurs and blamed black Detroiters for retaliatory police violence when witnesses tried to explain what happened at Algiers Motel. When family members inquired into their relatives’ murders, police officers refused to speak with them, instead threatening to kill them if they went to the precinct’s stationhouse.<sup>27</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, in its retrospective assessment of the nation’s riots in the summer of 1967, laid the blame for the riots firmly on white America. Private citizens, institutions, and governmental bodies at every level had created “two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.” African Americans in urban

centers could not better their situations under the auspices of the contemporary institutions, no matter how liberal their intentions.<sup>28</sup>

The Commission recognized that those black Detroiters that rioted in July 1967 did so as an expression of rage and frustration towards the city's police department and white liberal power structure. Police officers demonstrated that institutionalized discrimination against black Detroiters permeated the Detroit Police Department by their actions

## ENDNOTES

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3 Bergesen, Albert, "Race Riots of 1967: An Analysis of Police Violence in Detroit and Newark," *Journal of Black Studies* 12, no. 3 (1982): 261-274, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy3.lhl.uab.edu/stable/2784247?sid=primo&seq=1#metadata>.

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8 Andrea A Burns, "Waging Cold War in a Model City: The Investigation of 'Subversive' Influences in the 1967 Detroit Riot," *Michigan Historical Review* 30, no. 1 (2004): 3-30, accessed March 31, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20174058>.

9 *Report of the National Advisory Commission*, 248.

10 Ibid, 251-266.

11 Alex Elkins, "Liberals and 'Get-Tough' Policing in Postwar Detroit." In *Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies*, ed. Joel Stone, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), <https://bit.ly/3N5zeCv>

12 Sidney Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration*,

during the riot. They vindicated black Detroiters' lack of faith in the white liberal power structure's ability to correct racial inequality through the city's reform efforts. By responding to black Detroiters' frustration with the white liberal power structure with violence—more violence than the rioters had initially used—officers reinforced many black Detroiters' belief that police officers symbolized and embodied racial discrimination in the city.

*Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 32.

13 *Report of the National Advisory Commission*, 299-307.

14 Elkins, "Liberals and 'Get-Tough' Policing," *Detroit 1967*.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid, 106-111.

17 Ibid, 106-108.

18 Elkins, "Liberals and 'Get-Tough' Policing," *Detroit 1967*.

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## REDNECK REVOLUTIONARIES: THE YOUNG PATRIOTS AND THE RAINBOW COALITION

Emily Ann Wilson

In the spring of 1969, the Chicago branch of the Black Panther Party announced the formation of the Rainbow Coalition—an inter-racial, anti-capitalist organization which aimed to unify marginalized communities in pursuit of material equality and an end to racism. In addition to the Black Panthers, the Rainbow Coalition was made up of the Puerto Rican Young Lords as well as a group of white Appalachian migrants known as the Young Patriots Organization (YPO). While there is a great deal of historical precedent for solidarity among Black and Brown peoples, the Young Patriots’ success in organizing white communities on the basis of anticapitalism alongside the Panthers and Young Lords significantly complicates narratives of interracial organizing in the Black Power era, as history has often painted alliances between *the* Black Panthers and the middle-class white ‘New Left’ during this period as tenuous, at best. Wrapped within the story of the Young Patriots and their role in the famous Rainbow coalition are profound insights into the nature of intersectional anti-capitalist organizing, and by studying the actions and ideology of the Patriots, as well as their limitations, one can better understand the ways in which they both drew from and helped strengthen existing pathways for solidarity among oppressed peoples.

Although the Young Patriots were founded in Uptown Chicago, their story does not begin there. Instead, it begins in small, rural towns across Appalachia, where class hierarchy and stark inequalities in landownership combined with underdevelopment and a lack of jobs to create the abject poverty in which most of the Patriots were raised. In *Revolutionary Hillbilly: Notes From the Struggle on the Edge of the Rainbow*, former Patriot Hy Thurman recollects his experience growing up in rural Tennessee as he worked in

the fields alongside his single-mother and siblings starting at the age of three.<sup>1</sup> He describes the hardship which pervaded Appalachia, an existence dominated by manual labor, cruel landlords, worn-out clothes, and empty stomachs.<sup>2</sup> The collapse of the job market only worsened conditions as the corporatization of farming, increased importation of foreign goods, and the mechanization of both coal mining and agricultural production eliminated mining jobs and undermined local farmers to the point of eviction.<sup>3</sup> Deep class divisions and local corruption meant police harassment and violence was near-constant, Thurman explains, as cops “would arrest and falsely accuse young men and women for crimes...committed by the more privileged in the county.”<sup>4</sup>

These conditions across the rural South led to the ‘Great Migration’ of both Black and white southerners to industrial cities in the Midwest as they searched for jobs and improved standards of living. In the 1973 article “Appalachia’s Hillbillies Trek North for Jobs,” William K. Stevens wrote about the mass migration for the *New York Times*:

For three decades and more the hillbillies have trekked northward from the green hills and coal country of job-poor Appalachia, seeking the steady employment and solid security offered by the industrial Middle West...Though the vast interstate Movement of these fiercely proud and independent but often shy and diffident people has paralleled that of the blacks, it has been much less noticed.<sup>5</sup>

As white Appalachians fled to major city centers in the Midwest they often found themselves compared to and in competition with Black migrants, just as Stevens’s article demonstrates. Using Detroit ‘hillbillies’ as his example,

Stevens calls white migrants an “economic success story,” lauding the fact that whites had “pulled themselves [out] of the inner-city ghettos” and were not “about to create their own version of the black, Chicano or Indian Dower movements” despite their newfound ‘hillbilly’ pride.<sup>6</sup> “That is just not their way,” Stevens insists, “they have not generally proved to be the organizing or joining kind, so independent are they. Nor have they seemed to find a sufficient cause for grievance.”<sup>7</sup> This, of course, proved not to be the case.

When Hy Thurman told his older brother Ralph he planned to join him in Chicago—a place Hy had idolized as a ‘gangster’ town, a wild-west with high-rises where “anyone could get rich”<sup>8</sup>—Ralph’s message to his younger brother was clear: “There is no promised land.”<sup>9</sup> This was not enough to deter Hy from leaving Tennessee, however, and when he arrived in Chicago in March of 1967, he was met with the same violent and impoverished conditions that met millions of southern migrants in industrial centers across the country.<sup>10</sup> In “Storming Hillbilly Heaven: The Young Patriots Organization, Radical Culture, and the Long Battle for Uptown Chicago,” Jesse Ambrose Montgomery explains that “many [of] the cities they arrived in—with their promise of steady, well paid industrial work—were beginning to register the early shudders of deindustrialization. Most migrants arrived with little to their name and settled in poor parts of the cities or in outright slums.”<sup>11</sup> Poor housing, underemployment, and police brutality plagued migrant communities. Hy Thurman described Uptown Chicago as a place where glass littered the ground, “trees and grass were practically non-existent,” and children in worn-out clothes “played in the street alongside passed out drunks” and stood on the corner begging for money.<sup>12</sup>

Martin Krzywy explains that government-established programs in Chicago failed to meet the needs of residents, particularly in poor neighborhoods like Uptown, where

people instead “relied on a patchwork of privately funded organizations to fulfill many of their basic needs, receiving food donations from the Campbell Soup Company and employment training and placement from the Chicago Conference on Religion and Race, while medical services like the Board of Health clinic maintained limited and inconvenient hours.”<sup>13</sup> Police harassment was also incessant, as Chicago PD heavily patrolled Uptown and other poor neighborhoods in search of trouble. Despite crime in Uptown being comparable to that in other Chicago neighborhoods, Krzywy points out that “the white Southern community in Uptown...garnered a reputation for knife-fighting, public drunkenness, and other forms of criminal disorder that...resulted in a high degree of police brutality and repression.”<sup>14</sup> Ultimately unable to escape the abject poverty and police violence from which they originally fled, groups of white Appalachian migrants were radicalized in cities across the North and Midwest as they sought an end to their own oppression and found solidarity among other oppressed peoples.

When the Thurman brothers, along with Jack “Junebug” Boykin, Doug Youngblood, and Bobby McGinnis, decided to transform their local street gangs, the Peacemakers and the Goodfellows, into the more explicitly political ‘Young Patriots Organization’ in 1969, they did so by following closely in the footsteps of both the Jobs or Income Now Community Union (JOIN) and the Black Panther Party. In the midst of the Civil Rights Movement in 1963, a group of predominantly middle-class white college students, known as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), were inspired to create community programs in poor urban areas under the name JOIN with the goal of “[winning] ‘short run social reforms’ that would create conditions for leadership and participation beyond campuses and the South.”<sup>15</sup> Students moved into the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago as founders were “anticipating a spike in joblessness and a recession, [and] looking...to

locations where a truly bottom-up organization might dovetail with the civil rights movement and growing radicalism among discontented middle-class youth.”<sup>16</sup> Police brutality, along with unemployment, was JOIN’s primary focus when trying to connect with Uptown residents, and as Hy Thurman explains, JOIN organizers “began hanging out with street guys, drinking in their bars, smoking weed and [engaging] them on police brutality and other issues that effected their everyday lives.”<sup>17</sup>

In August of 1966, JOIN organizers marched on the police station in Summerdale alongside former Peacemakers, members of the Goodfellows, and other community residents in order to demand the firing of a particularly brutal cop, Sam Joseph, and a general end to police violence. Thurman notes “the civilian review board that the protesters were demanding never materialized, but the beatings, arrests, and harassment continued,” if not worsened.<sup>18</sup> Police targeted attendees of the ‘March on Summerdale’ and other anti-police actions around Uptown with arrests, raids, and beatings, particularly singling out activists who ended up on Detective Joseph’s personal “enemy list.”<sup>19</sup> Another march on Chicago City Hall in September of 1966, led by Goodfellows and JOIN, continued their call for a citizen review board “to investigate and stop the Summerdale Police District from ‘framing, beating, and killing people they don’t like.’”<sup>20</sup> With their demands still unmet by early 1967, activists from JOIN and the Goodfellows began organizing their own “police watch committee modeled after the Black Panther Party’s ‘Police Patrols’ in Oakland, California.”<sup>21</sup>

By 1968, JOIN had a strong presence in Uptown as its membership among residents grew and the community was increasingly active in organizing against their own oppression. Though students had “for their part, believed that the [role] of an organizer was to work themselves out of a job and allow the community leadership to have control over

their own destiny,” when Uptown leaders like Bobby McGinnis and Peggy Terry asked SDS to leave, it created strife among students genuinely dedicated to the cause.<sup>22</sup> In spite of SDS’s work to help residents combat unsuitable housing and police brutality, community leaders felt it was essential that Uptown “organize its own,” in part due to the irreconcilable class differences between students and full-time residents. Thurman explains that “class and cultural differences were sources of tension” as some residents felt “students had the opportunity to return to their middle-class homes when it suited them.”<sup>23</sup> Community members in Uptown, on the other hand, had nowhere else to turn—having already been driven from their homes in Appalachia into cycles of urban poverty—so they felt students were more inclined to misunderstand the reasons for criminal behavior and ongoing poverty and less invested in the well-being of the neighborhood, especially as some left in favor of the anti-war movement.

Within months of the JOIN split, the Young Patriots branched off in search of more radical, community-based organizing and began attempting to unify Uptown. From their eleven-point platform demanding “decent housing, prisoners’ rights, and an end to racism,”<sup>24</sup> to the structure and focus of their community-aid programs, the Young Patriots drew heavily on the work of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords, both of whom were already organizing widely throughout Chicago.<sup>25</sup> In the 1969 documentary film *American Revolution II*, Howard Alk and Milk Gray captured the early days of the Patriots’ formation, as filmmakers not only interviewed community leaders, but also sat in on small parties in Uptown apartments where young white men with thick Southern accents debated the reason for poverty, the cause of the Vietnam war, and how to organize their community in search of solutions to the problems they faced. In addition to these scenes of parties and heated debates among Patriots, the film shows Black Panther leader Bobby Lee, along with other

rank-and-file members of the BPP, as they attempted outreach in local bars. That is, until the two narratives merge in a small community center as Lee enters alongside the Patriots, discussing the need to organize Chicago in favor of meeting the needs of the poor, both Black and white. *American Revolution II* exemplifies the deep connections between the Black Panthers and the radicalization of Uptown's poor whites, as well as the role of the Panthers' own ideological transformation in the formation of the Young Patriots leading up to the Rainbow Coalition.<sup>26</sup>

In May of 1969, the newly formed Young Patriots made their direct-action debut as they swarmed the East Chicago Avenue police station alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords in protest of the murder of Young Lord Manuel Ramos by an off-duty police officer.<sup>27</sup> As the Patriots marched on the police station, taunting officers with chants of "pig" and breaking windows along the street, they cemented their organization's commitment to radical anti-police demonstrations that crossed racial and ethnic lines. A month later, the Black Panther Party would announce the Rainbow Coalition.

At the Black Panthers' United Front Against Fascism Conference (UFAF) in Oakland, California in July of 1969, members of the YPO would give rousing speeches on stage and stand shoulder to shoulder with Panthers in a powerful display of solidarity.<sup>28</sup> In *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin note that this display at UFAF was a direct manifestation of the Black Panther Party's recent shift in ideology as they sought to widen their revolutionary appeal across racial lines. Bloom and Martin explain that "in July of 1969, two weeks before the United Front Against Fascism Conference, the Panthers changed point three of their Ten Point Program from 'We want an end to the robbery of the white man of our Black Community' to 'We want an end to

the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community' [emphasis in original]."<sup>29</sup> This inter-racial appeal for revolution, however, came at a cost. As Sonnie and Tracy explain in *Hillbilly Nationalists*, the Black Panthers and Young Lords saw their membership drop after they announced the Rainbow Coalition with the Young Patriots, but both Bobby Lee and Cha-Cha Jiménez emphasized "it was a necessary purging."<sup>30</sup> In Lee's words, "Rainbow Coalition was just a code word for class struggle."<sup>31</sup>

It was this reformation of revolutionary ideology around a common class struggle, as opposed to a primarily racial or ethnic movement, which caused the Panthers, Patriots, and Lords to lose members; however, the greatest conflict that arose from this ideological shift came not from internal division, but from increased suppression by authorities at every level of government. In an interview with the *Daily World* in February of 1970, Tom Dostou, field marshal of the Young Patriots New Haven chapter, detailed the programs the Patriots had set up in collaboration with the Black Panthers, including free breakfast programs, political education classes, and a "Rainbow clinic" all designed to meet the needs of community members while forming inter-racial solidarity.<sup>32</sup> Dostou's description of "racial problems in the high schools" and the Patriot/Panther plan for political and racial education for students is particularly illustrative of the increasingly class-focused (yet still fundamentally race-conscious) ideology of the Rainbow Coalition.<sup>33</sup> He explains that "we are trying to set up political education classes for the students, the Panthers for the black students and the Patriots with the whites. We want to show the kids that bad education, unemployment and bad housing are the enemy, not color."<sup>34</sup>

By March of 1970, the YPO began distributing its own newspaper, *The Patriot*, which strongly emphasized the group's race-conscious, yet ultimately class-focused ideology.

A brief article titled “The Real Enemy” is particularly illustrative of this point, as it clearly explains the Patriots’ belief:

Poor and oppressed white people, like all oppressed peoples, have been blaming others for their poverty. The others usually have been other oppressed white people or peoples of color—black and brown, who are just as oppressed or more...By oppressed peoples fighting and blaming each other for their poverty, they never have the time or energy to fight the Real Enemy—the Power of the Rich.<sup>35</sup>

The goal of the Patriots and the Rainbow Coalition was to confront racism and racial inequality, but to do so primarily within the context of class and material realities; thus, racism is portrayed within Patriot literature not as a unique system of oppression, but one of many tools of capitalist exploitation more broadly.

This radical class alliance across racial lines appeared to pose a threat to local, federal, and state authorities, as Tom Dostou noted the “record of harassment” which plagued the organizing efforts of both the Patriots and the Panthers.<sup>36</sup> Police constantly surveilled their breakfast programs, intervening wherever possible in an attempt to shut down these so-called “communist organization[s].” Just hours after his interview with the *Daily World*, Dostou, along with the rest of the Young Patriots’ central committee, was arrested in a police raid “for questioning about...bombings at the home of Supreme Court Justice John M. Murtagh, presiding judge in the New York Black Panther Conspiracy case.”<sup>37</sup> Not only does this exemplify the strength of the Rainbow Coalition and the close connections between the Patriots and Panthers, it also makes clear the extent to which U.S. authorities view class struggle (even more so than race) as an existential threat to national sovereignty.

The Young Patriots, though short-lived, had an undeniable

impact on the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Their organizational efforts, alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords, deeply complicate common narratives of inter-racial organizing in the mid-20th century, narratives which often “paint [these] radical movements...as tenuous alliances between middle-class whites and more economically precarious minority groups.”<sup>38</sup> The alliance formed through the Rainbow Coalition represents a race-conscious, class-focused revolutionary ideology, where Patriots, Panthers, and Lords were able to come together for the express purpose of working and under-class liberation. So the question remains, how did this alliance come to be? How did hillbillies from Appalachia end up so deeply entangled with America’s most infamous Black Nationalist group, organizing to arm poor communities of every color and teaching high school students about the complexities of racism?

Though the Young Patriots’ origins as an organization can be traced back to middle-class white groups like JOIN and SDS, members of the YPO were predominantly working class, and their experiences both in Appalachia and in industrialized cities across the North and Midwest helped to create clear “points of solidarity”—or commonalities among oppressed groups which allow for an alignment of interests across race, class, and gender. The common narrative that alliances between *the Black Panthers* and groups like Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s and 1970s were perpetually tenuous is a testament to the difficulty of organizing across these lines without evident points of solidarity. As Bloom and Martin explain,

Young white activists did not face racial oppression. And the Appalachian Young Patriots notwithstanding, many white New Left activists came from the middle class and did not personally suffer class exploitation either...[Huey] Newton argued that because middle-

class white revolutionaries had not experienced class exploitation or racial injustice, their oppression was ‘somewhat abstract’[emphasis added].<sup>39</sup>

This “abstract quality of white revolutionary struggle,” Newton argued, “could be made real—that whites could prove their allegiance and truly become revolutionary—through support of the black struggle against oppression.”<sup>40</sup>

While middle-class whites faced a purely ‘abstract oppression,’ the Patriots lived the harsh reality of class exploitation, positioning them to create a much stronger alliance with Black revolutionaries based, not on intellectual or moral grounds, but primarily on common material needs. In November of 1969, Art Turco, an attorney with the Young Patriots, gave an interview with Charles Hightower of the Daily World in which he succinctly conveyed the underpinning of the Rainbow Coalition:

Originally, I came from the streets...I think that is why the Panthers and I got along so well from the start.’ He said that common street experiences, including ‘the junkie scene and the brutality of the cops,’ were the real basis for the Rainbow Coalition, which transcended the racism between black, white, and brown. ‘All of us had been through the hell of the slums...and we all knew how it was to hustle to stay alive.’<sup>41</sup>

Turco also spoke about the failure of other organizations to meet the needs of poor white people, stating that these organizations, presumably run by middle-class whites, did not understand the particular oppression of “hillbillies, sharecroppers, and the white poor in the cities.”<sup>42</sup> Expounding on the meaning of this oppression, Turco explains “when we talk about oppression—and it’s the same for the Patriots, Panthers, and the Young Lords—we’re talking about the essentials: food, decent housing, adequate clothing.”<sup>43</sup> The

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**The Young Patriots were distinctly aware of the similarities between their own exploitation and the oppression of communities of color, and by emphasizing the failure of both the political and corporate class (or the bourgeoisie more broadly) to meet the essential needs of the people, the Patriots, along with the Panthers and Young Lords, were able to clearly articulate capitalism and imperialism, rather than race, as the “real enemy” among them.**<sup>44</sup>

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When the field secretary of the Young Patriots Organization, William “Preacherman” Fesperman, gave his speech at UFAF,

he donned a beret with both a 'Free Huey' pin and confederate flag patch as he emphasized the importance of unity among the People against the fascist and capitalist forces which perpetually oppressed them.<sup>45</sup> His language was brash and explicitly militant as he spoke about the necessity of arming the working class: "a gun on the side of a pig means two things, racism and capitalism, and the gun on the side of the revolutionary, on the side of the people, means solidarity and socialism. Right on? Now who...is gonna let the motherfucker with the gun shootin' capitalism and racism outshoot the people?"<sup>46</sup> He also emphasized the importance of self-determination for all oppressed people, claiming as he closed his speech, a fist held in the air, "All power belongs to the People. Red Power to Sittin' Bull...and yellow power to Ho Chi Minh and Mao...and brown power to Fidel and Che...and Black power to the Black Panther Party."<sup>47</sup> Preacherman concluded this demand for self-determination by also declaring "white power to the...white revolutionaries" [emphasis added]. From the passionate militancy of his speech, to his outward denouncement of racism in favor of unity for the purpose of liberation, and even to his use of language and imagery which elicit deep ties to anti-Blackness and white violence, Preacherman's talk at UFAF acutely represents the complex, sometimes counter-intuitive revolutionary ideology of the Young Patriots.

Though they emphasized community aid and working-class unity, the Young Patriots broader ideological foundation was somewhat murky, and heavily drawn from both contemporary sources like the Black Panthers and Young Lords, as well as deeper historical traditions of white radicals. Martin Krzywy explains the ways in which the Patriots understood their radical roots, noting that,

Though American political life may have trended towards poor whites organizing along racial rather

than class lines (ignoring alliances with similarly impoverished blacks for ones with richer whites), examples such as the Progressive and Fusion movements of the late nineteenth century showed that such alliances were possible...Young Patriots demonstrated a strong grasp on this interracial history, and many of them could trace their ideological roots—and, potentially, their genealogical roots as well—to the Unionists that resisted Confederate rule in many upland counties in the Civil War South" [emphasis added].<sup>48</sup>

This notion presented by the Patriots stands in stark contrast to the groups' infamous use of the Confederate flag as a symbol of white revolutionary potential, but it nonetheless paints an important picture of how they saw themselves.

The Patriots' connection to the Civil War South is further exemplified by their first publication of *The Patriot*, where a bright centerfold with the confederate flag as its background displays the headline: "One of Our Main Purposes is to Unify Our Brothers and Sisters in the North with Our Brothers and Sisters in the South."<sup>49</sup> The brief text, positioned within the flag, explains that the Young Patriots interpreted the Civil War as a battle fought not for enslaved peoples' freedom, but for Northern capitalist expansion into the feudal, slave-holding South. The Patriots acknowledged that the confederate flag was "waved in the interest of the robber-baron-plantation-owning ruling class," but they determined that the "spirit of rebellion" it represented was worth appropriating for the greater cause of anti-capitalist revolution by the white working class. "The people make the meaning of a flag," they declared, and "this time we mean to see that the spirit of rebellion finds and crushes the real enemy rather than our brothers and sisters in oppression."<sup>50</sup>

Along with the confederate flag and 'Free Huey' emblems

Preacherman displayed at the United Front Against Fascism Conference, the Young Patriots were often seen with pins bearing the phrase “Resurrect John Brown” alongside the 19th century abolitionist’s portrait, as well as patches displaying the Patriots’ name above an image of chained fists. Each of these symbols were carefully chosen so as to signal ties to both the white Southern culture of the Patriots and the revolutionary goals of the larger Rainbow Coalition in an attempt to start conversation during community outreach.<sup>51</sup>

As the Young Patriots sought to unite the white working class, they did so based heavily on the example set by the Black Panthers; but the Panthers’ pioneering model of revolutionary organizing, which also inspired the formation of numerous other groups such as the Young Lords, the Red Guards, and Los Siete de la Raza, was built largely around a combination of class and racial or ethnic oppression. In the Patriots’ endeavor to follow this example, they found themselves drawing on existing symbolism which, to them, marked poor white Southerners a distinctive ethnic group. The YPO sought to co-opt these stereotypical symbols of whiteness—from the confederate flag, to “white power” and “the South will rise again”—and combine them with a larger historical framework for anti-racist and anti-capitalist white rebellion, which they believed was embodied in both John Brown and Southern Unionists. However, the sheer fact that the Patriots felt compelled to use language and imagery deeply entangled with white supremacy and anti-blackness in order to build a class of poor white revolutionaries is illustrative of gaps in their historical analysis and ideology. By simply playing into confederate symbolism rather than confronting the underlying reasons for the Civil War nostalgia which continues to grip the South, the Young Patriots were in many ways able to skirt the historical realities of their community.

The Patriots’ declaration that ‘all power belongs to all the People’ was revolutionary in its demand for full self-determination, but it also drew heavily on the idea of ‘forgotten’ poor whites and suggested them as an equally oppressed minority. From Preacherman’s speech at UFAF to articles published in *The Patriot*, the YPO heavily emphasized unity and solidarity across racial groups to the point of dismissing racism as solely a tool of capitalist division, as well as denying the uniquely oppressive role of whiteness and the extent to which race intersects with class to create a compounding oppression for poor people of color. Though members of the YPO and white Appalachians suffered from lack of food, housing, and health care along with other minority groups, their position was markedly different, as exemplified by William K. Stevens’s assertion in the *New York Times* that white migrants were an “economic success story” in comparison to Black migrants and those of color.

In her introduction to Sonnie and Tracy’s *Hillbilly Nationalists*, indigenous-rights activist and author Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz sheds light on the unfronted reality of the Young Patriots and the larger historical role of ‘rednecks,’ ‘white trash,’ and ‘hillbillies.’ Poor whites, she explains, must be evaluated within their proper context as “descendants of the original landless or land poor settlers, the ones that kept moving westward with the United States, squatters sent to fight the native inhabitants...they were not in control of their destinies, although they committed many crimes.”<sup>52</sup> The Young Patriots acknowledged the role of the robber-baron-bourgeois in the enslavement of Black peoples and the theft of native land for capitalist expansion, and they also heavily emphasized their lack of control over their own destinies, but they failed to truly acknowledge the extent to which the white working class committed these crimes on the bourgeois’ behalf or even in an attempt to establish their own self-determination. Dunbar-Ortiz continues: “These descendants of the early settlers,

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The Patriots used Civil War nostalgia and references to white nationalism in an attempt to relate to Appalachian migrants, and yet they refused to acknowledge the dark history of these symbols even when confronted by the people who understood their real-world harm. Dunbar-Ortiz claims that she “asked if they were teaching their members about past white populist movements in which anti-government sentiments were merged with Jew hating and racism” but rather than facing this uncomfortable truth, “they argued that getting the poor white kids hooked up with Blacks and Puerto Ricans and Indians dissolved their racism.”<sup>55</sup> Though the YPO sought to meet the material needs of the people, their broader ideology fell significantly short in its analysis of the hierarchy of oppression in America, and their resulting dependency on other groups like the Black Panthers and Young Lords to ground their revolutionary struggle led to chaos and collapse in the face of intense state surveillance.

The Young Patriots Organization left a complicated legacy, strife with anti-capitalist sentiment, pro-Black organization, and white supremacist symbolism. In the wake of twenty-first century political divides and the rise of Trumpism, the Patriots have become even more difficult to interpret, though perhaps the dissemination of their history is more essential than ever. The white working class has been largely credited with Trump's election and the rise of racism and fascism in mainstream American politics, while the confederate flag has become synonymous with the alt-right movement and the “specter of the white worker and his politics [has] captivated the mainstream of political discourse.”<sup>56</sup> In the 21st century, poor, rural, white Americans increasingly aligned themselves along racial rather than class lines in the face of economic difficulty, seeking protection from the perceived threat of minority groups in the arms of wealthy businessmen and politicians. From Reagan's “War on Drugs” and the infamous “Stranger Danger” campaign of the 1980s, to the “Crime Bill”

those with little or no land or other property, have...been the point-men on the front lines, killing Indian farmers to take their land, only to be displaced by land companies.”<sup>53</sup>

Additionally, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz details her own interactions with the Young Patriots in the early 1970s as they worked alongside women's liberation activists and labor organizers. Upon meeting Preacherman and the Patriots at an event in New Orleans, she told them that she “objected to their use of ‘Patriot,’ explaining it was reactionary and supported a racist mythology dating back to Andrew Jackson and Indian killing... The very definition of patriotism was patriarchy.”<sup>54</sup>

**“ The political climate has changed drastically since the 1970s, and overt white supremacy looms heavy over the American political sphere, but just as material needs remain the same, so do the pathways of solidarity exhibited by the Young Patriots organizing efforts alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords, ready to be amended and fully realized for a new era of revolutionaries. ”**

to the current socio-political issues facing the American working class. The Patriots’ focus on material needs laid the foundation for their organizing and participation in the Rainbow Coalition, and the fight for these material needs—food, housing, health care—continues into the 21st century, only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The political climate has changed drastically since the 1970s, and overt white supremacy looms heavy over the American political sphere, but just as material needs remain the same, so do the pathways of solidarity exhibited by the Young Patriots organizing efforts alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords, ready to be amended and fully realized for a new era of revolutionaries.

of the 1990s and the influx of pro-police and anti-immigrant sentiment in the 21st century media, the history of the United States since the end of the Young Patriots in the 1970s has been marked by anti-community fearmongering, carefully coded fueling of racial tensions, and cycles of crime scares followed by increased criminalization. Decades of fear headlining the national news, often painting Black, Hispanic, and Muslim groups in particular as the origin of white middle and working class strife, has left the lower class of white America seeking protection with the wealthy rather than finding common ground among those who share their material conditions.

Though the Young Patriots were far from perfect, the example that they set for class-focused, race-conscious, material community organizing poses a potential solution

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## DOWNTOWN MOBILE, 1953

Brianna Carnley

The Bienville Square store windows  
were always fanciest in fall,  
best for pal-ing around with the girls  
that I never quite got along with.

Juanita's kitten heels pulverized  
the earthwax of sycamore leaves,  
while she craned her neck to see the man  
she thought was Rock Hudson.

I couldn't help but grin, her oak eyes  
reflecting the stone cross behind me,  
sprouting like a tree from the slab,  
rock roots spreading through the sidewalk cracks.

I leaned back onto the leaves, my index finger  
skimmed the cross's pimpled skin. A silent prayer  
for me, sixty-seven years later.

## ANTISEMITISM OMITTED: FAILINGS IN MEDIA FRAMING OF THE CROWN HEIGHTS RIOTS

Josef Brock

National and local news media outlets framed the Crown Heights Riots inaccurately as a racial conflict between Black locals and Lubavitch Jewish residents. Media reporting lacked the nuance of Jewish racial classification, misidentified the Lubavitchers as archetypical American whites, and failed to illustrate the overtones of Black antisemitic motivation during the riots.

On Monday evening, August 19, 1991, a police-led, three car motorcade escorted Rebbe Menachem Schneerson— Grand Rebbe of the Lubavitch Hasidic community. The second car carried the Rebbe while Yosef Lifsch and two friends, all three Lubavitchers, followed in the last car. At about 8:20 p.m. the first two cars drove through an intersection without incident. Lifsch, in what is believed to be an attempt to keep up, followed through the intersection, as the light turned red, and collided with a car driving perpendicularly. Lifsch's car veered out of control, jumped the sidewalk, and struck two young Black children— seven-year-old cousins Gavin and Angela Cato— resulting in the death of Gavin. Witness and expert accounts differ on Lifsch's driving speed. While a number of witnesses reported that Lifsch passed through a red light, Lifsch, and his two driving mates, maintain that the light was yellow. Immediately after striking the children, a crowd gathered at the scene. Lifsch attempted to help others free the children who were pinned beneath the car, but was attacked by the crowd. Four nights and three days of riots followed this fatal car accident. Immediately after the incident, a rumor began to spread that involved Hatzalah, a volunteer emergency medical service that serves Jewish communities. It was alleged that the Hatzalah arrived at the scene before city ambulances and treated Lifsch, but not the children he struck – this rumor is believed to be a catalyst for

the riots. The rumor was later dispelled, but not before rioters used it to justify claiming the life of an entirely uninvolved Lubavitch man, Yankel Rosenbaum, and violently attacking the Lubavitch community.<sup>1</sup>

After Lifsch struck Cato, a Jewish man present at the scene of the accident was advised by the police to urge other Jews present to leave because the police could not “guarantee the safety of the Jews in the area.”<sup>2</sup> The police were right in their assessment. For the next three days, groups of roving Black rioters harassed and assaulted members of the Jewish community.<sup>3</sup> The groups threw rocks through the windows of homes belonging to Jews, some of which were occupied with children.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, according to 911 recorded calls, a group of Black rioters beat a woman and attacked another woman with three children before attempting to enter her home.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, one panicked 911 caller reported that “all the Jews that come down the block” are being pulled from their cars and beat up by an “army of people.”<sup>6</sup> In another incident, a group of fifty Black rioters with bricks and stones attacked a father and his young son— hitting the father's head with a brick before attacking the son.<sup>7</sup> In separate incidents, a group of approximately fifteen Black males surrounded and kicked a Jewish man while chanting “Jews get out of here,” while another Jewish man was beaten and robbed.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, protesters burned a makeshift Israeli flag.<sup>9</sup> Black rioters also expressed violence verbally by chanting antisemitic epithets. For example, the day after Lifsch fatally struck Cato, a group of Black rioters marched through the neighborhood of Crown Heights shouting, “death to Jews.”<sup>10</sup> Later that day, Black youths in the area chanted “heil Hitler” and “kill the Jews.”<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the riots, local and national media outlets described the events as a “racially fueled emotional fire,”

“**The media misrepresented the overarching nature of the riots by not including that rioters were, to an extensive degree, motivated by antisemitism.**”

a “plague of racial hatred,” “racial melee,” “racial tension,” “racial anger,” “race strife,” and a “racial clash.”<sup>12</sup> Of the sixteen articles published in the *Times* over the five days following the fatal car accident, the word ‘antisemitic’ came up once, not as a description of the events, but as a quote from a Lubavitcher.<sup>13</sup> In news footage from the same period, antisemitism was only mentioned once, again, spoken by another Lubavitcher.<sup>14</sup> According to one expert on media affairs, “framing entails selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution.”<sup>15</sup> In her article, “Crown Heights: Politics and Press Coverage of the Race War That Wasn’t,” Carol B. Conaway states that when journalists use frames, they are suggesting to their audience “which elements of previously acquired knowledge are relevant to understanding the information that the journalist is imparting.”<sup>16</sup> Conaway argues that by framing the Crown Heights events as a race strife journalists invited audiences to recall the “familiar array of antagonists and issues that have characterized racial confrontations in this country.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, the schemas of whites acting against Black people through racism, prejudice and discrimination, Black people marching for civil rights, or, conversely, Black people committing crimes. However, these schemas failed to mirror the incidents in Crown Heights. Ari L. Goldman, who reported for the *Times*

directly from the riots in Crown Heights, writes that “over those three days” of the riots, he saw “journalism go terribly wrong.”<sup>18</sup> According to Goldman, “the city’s newspapers, so dedicated to telling both sides of the story in the name of objectivity and balance, often missed what was really going on.”<sup>19</sup> Goldman adds that “journalists initially framed the story as a ‘racial’ conflict and failed to see the anti-Semitism inherent in the riots.”<sup>20</sup> For example, the *Times* reported that after Lifsch struck Cato, hundreds of Black rioters shouting “Jew! Jew!” ran through the streets while some threw rocks at the homes of Jews.<sup>21</sup> Paradoxically, in the same article, the *Times* reported that Rosenbaum was stabbed amidst “racial melee.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Goldman disputes the notion of a clash, stating that, “in all my reporting during the riots I never saw — or heard of — any violence by Jews against blacks.”<sup>23</sup> “But” he concludes, “the *Times* was dedicated to this version of events: blacks and Jews clashing amid racial tensions.”<sup>24</sup> The media misrepresented the overarching nature of the riots by not including that rioters were, to an extensive degree, motivated by antisemitism.

The racial framing of the Crown Heights riots is called into question because it asserts that Jews, as a whole, fulfill the definition of a race. In his book, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, Eric L. Goldstein writes that late nineteenth century American scholars and scientists attempted to “make sense of the multiple and shifting definitions of ‘race’ and to restore the sense of certainty provided by a clear, hierarchical racial system based on color.”<sup>25</sup> Goldstein provides the example of William Z. Ripley, a Harvard professor whose book, *Races of Europe* (1899), was “the most influential American work on race during the early years of the century.”<sup>26</sup> Ripley struggled to racially classify Jews since they are not associated with one geographical region and have diverse physical attributes.<sup>27</sup> In a chapter titled “Jews and Semites,” Ripley details the outcome of



Artwork provided by Sam Griffin.

various tests conducted on the physical features of Jews from a range of geographical regions.<sup>28</sup> As a result of these tests, Ripley concludes that Jews have “unconsciously taken on to a large extent the physical traits of the people among whom their lot has been thrown” and while there are some physical traits common among many Jews, such as nose and hair color, “the Jews are not a race but a people after all.”<sup>29</sup> Historically, scientists had difficulty classifying Jews as a race based on physical attributes, but viewed sociologically, Jews found comfort in identifying as a race.

As a result of white Americans trying to fit Jews into the prevalent racial divide, Jews grappled with their racial self-definition. Goldstein argues that Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, who had “long been confined to the social margins of societies,” came to see “apartness” as one of the most important aspects of Jewish identity.<sup>30</sup> Consequently,

in the American context, Jews translated this apartness into identifying as a distinct race, a term that Goldstein writes “captured their strong emotional connection to Jewish peoplehood.”<sup>31</sup> However, Goldstein points out that “as Jews came under increasing scrutiny in American racial discourse . . . they were often torn between their commitment to Jewish racial identity and their desire to be seen as stable members of white society.”<sup>32</sup> While there is no consensus on this complex self-identification struggle, some practical minded Jews, hoping to gain civil rights protection, sued to be legally classified as a race.

The first significant time American Jews sued for racial recognition under American law came in 1987 after vandals defaced a synagogue in Maryland with swastikas.<sup>33</sup> The congregation sued for civil rights protection, but were denied in the lower courts on the grounds that Jews did not constitute a race and were therefore ineligible for laws that aimed to protect non-whites.<sup>34</sup> However, on appeal, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Jews since Congress considered Jews a race in the nineteenth century when they passed the particular civil rights law the congregation was suing for.<sup>35</sup> This reversal shows an inconsistency in Jewish relation to being legally recognized as a race. Goldstein states that “for the first time in their history, American Jews were not trying to prevent the government from categorizing them as a race, but were fighting to be recognized in the eyes of the government as a distinct group deserving protection from racial discrimination.”<sup>36</sup> Scientifically, sociologically, and legally, Jews have an inconsistent relationship with racial identification. This evidence does not clarify the media’s framing of the riots as a racial conflict, but it allows for further race-related examination.

If the media was using a narrow American-centric understanding of race, one that confines Jews to the

archetypal white, then measuring the Lubavitch community against multiple definitions of white is required. There are several viewpoints on the notion that Jews are white. First, physically speaking, as Ripley brought, Jewish people are varied in skin colors and physical features, therefore, they cannot be simply categorized as just white. The question of Jews as whites can also be understood beyond skin color and physical features. In his podcast, "Are Jews White?", Dr. Jeremy Shere argues that whiteness in America, goes beyond skin and includes "access to social, economic, educational, and other resources and opportunities that, until fairly recently, were available more or less exclusively to members of the white, Anglo-Saxon majority in America, and to which Ashkenazi American Jews, especially, have most fully laid claim."<sup>37</sup> Ashkenazi means Jews with ancestors in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Russia.<sup>38</sup> The Lubavitch branch of the Hasidic movement originated in eighteenth century Eastern Europe.<sup>39</sup> In the early twentieth century, Lubavitchers migrated in small waves to Crown Heights. In 1940, the sect's leader escaped from Nazi-occupied France and established headquarters in Crown Heights.<sup>40</sup> While this sect attracts a variety of racial backgrounds, the majority of its Brooklyn members are Ashkenazi.<sup>41</sup> Still, however, Lubavitchers, as all Hasidic groups, stand in contrast to the greater, and often assimilated or secular, Ashkenazi group for several reasons.

Some sociologists note that Lubavitchers differ from the greater, non-Hasidic Ashkenazi population in America because their appearance marks them in the larger public and prevents them from blending in with either whites or gentiles.<sup>42</sup> Hasidic appearance is dictated by religious law and custom.<sup>43</sup> Males are forbidden from ever shaving their facial hair.<sup>44</sup> Traditionally, all males from age thirteen onward wear a wide-brimmed black felt hat, a black or navy suit, a white button-down shirt, and black shoes. Additionally, long white fringes attached to a religious undergarment protrude visibly

from underneath their shirts.<sup>45</sup> Women's dress and behavior are also restricted to religious customs.<sup>46</sup> Lubavitchers strive to live a hallowed life. They accomplish this by following conduct dictated in the Torah which sanctifies many aspects of daily life.<sup>47</sup> This hallowed life includes religious dietary laws, restricting all food consumption, preparation, and use of food vessels to standards approved by rabbinical authority.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the community encourages its members to marry within the sect, but marrying orthodox Jews out-of-sect is allowed.<sup>49</sup> For boys, education from preschool through twelfth-grade is often conducted in English and Yiddish, but the content is limited to Hebrew and Aramaic religious texts.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, secular studies do not extend beyond rudimentary math and English, and there is no preparation for college.<sup>51</sup> As far as serving as public servants, Lubavitchers generally don't aim higher than local and state office.<sup>52</sup> With a limited social connection to the greater gentile world, a disinterest in higher education, and a limited attempt for higher office, these self-prescribed restrictions illustrate that the Lubavitch community of Crown Heights does not reflect the social access that Ashkenazi Jews generally lay claim to. Moreover, in terms of similarity to white gentiles, while Crown Heights Lubavitchers in 1991 had white skin, predominantly, their circumstances point to a severe dissimilarity to white Americans in matters of social access, majority power, and a history of notable anti-Black violence. This dissimilarity to whites does not negate the possibility that Lubavitchers held and behaved in racially discriminatory ways towards Black residents. However, evidence of racist, anti-Black discrimination does not emerge from the issues that are reported to have aroused the riots.

Six major neighborhood disputes between Black and Lubavitch residents of Crown Heights led up to and fueled the riots, namely: the creation of Community Board 9, housing, police accommodation of the Lubavitchers, police double standards, neighborhood anti-crime patrols, and the Hatzalah

rumor. After years of fighting over the distribution of city resources, during which the community board was dominated by Black residents, Lubavitchers created a congruent board where they voted as a bloc. This empowered Lubavitchers, who as a minority in a majority Black neighborhood, gained a scale-tipping advantage. The anger Black residents felt by this disproportionate power was compounded by the belief that the mayor, who helped form this congruent board and who happened to be Jewish, was repaying Lubavitchers for their political support. This caused an uptick in local Black antisemitism. Lubavitchers, in turn, argued that as a neighborhood minority they had to aggressively protect their rights to a fair share of city resources. Housing also caused tensions when Lubavitch and Black locals accused the other of receiving city-subsidized housing. Additionally, Lubavitchers, trying to accommodate their growing community, offered Black locals large sums for their homes. Black residents felt that Jews were attempting to inch them out of the neighborhood. Another source of tension was the police accommodation of the Lubavitch community by closing off streets on the Sabbath and holy days. Lubavitchers argued that closing off streets was necessary to protect the thousands of pedestrian worshippers, but Black residents, who were denied driving access to their homes, had the driving lift banned. What Black locals saw as Jews receiving preferential police treatment was exacerbated by the police motorcade allotted to the Rebbe, the head of the Lubavitch sect. The Lubavitchers argued that some threatened to kill the Rebbe and, as a worldwide religious figure similar to the Pope, he had to be protected. Moreover, some argue that Black locals felt that the police had a double standard, in which they were treated harshly while Lubavitchers were not. Furthermore, the Lubavitchers, who felt easily identifiable and susceptible to violence, created civilian anti-crime patrol. Black locals rejected the concept

of an all Jewish patrol in a predominantly Black area and contended that the patrol was anti-Black in nature. In turn, the Lubavitchers invited Black locals to join the patrol. Very few did, and this coalition lasted for less than several days. Finally, the Hatzalah rumor, emerging after Lifsch fatally struck Cato, was also a source of tension between the two communities.<sup>53</sup>

There are likely multiple causes for Black locals resenting Lubavitchers. From the Black perspective, sensing a double standard in police treatment may have evoked feelings of white discrimination. Black residents may have viewed Jews badgering them to sell their homes as a hostile attempt to usurp their territory. Similarly, when Lubavitchers closed streets for worshippers, Black residents may have felt that Jews were insensitive to their fundamental needs. Moreover, Black locals may have viewed the Lubavitcher-dominated community board, as unjust as they were thought to be wielding power disproportionate to their population size. Indeed, Lubavitchers may have provoked the legitimate ire of their Black neighbors, but given the magnitude of the Lubavitcher's Jewish-centric lifestyle and the rioters' anti-Jewish violence, it would be illogical to entirely dismiss that antisemitism played a role in what motivated the rioters. However, the mere possibility of antisemitic motivation does not alone confirm its presence. Nonetheless, an exploration of Black antisemitism in America will highlight the overtones of anti-Jewish vitriol in the riots.

The list of sources from which Black antisemitism disseminated during the twentieth century in America includes: The Nation of Islam, the Black Power movement, faculty in African American Studies departments, the Pan African movement, and prominent Black intellectuals.<sup>54</sup> The effects of this dissemination can be found in the high rates of antisemitic attitudes among African Americans from surveys conducted in 1964, 1981, and 1992.<sup>55</sup> This

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information suggests that rioters in Crown Heights did not act in a void of anti-Jewish influence. From the breadth of Black antisemitism, three notions stand out as relevant to understating what motivated the rioters: self-preservation, an envy of Jews, and a difficulty categorizing Jews.

Self-preservation is alluded in James Baldwin’s article, “The Harlem Ghetto: Winter 1948,” in which he states that “when the Negro hates the Jew as a Jew he does so partly because the nation does and in much the same painful fashion that he hates himself.” Baldwin explains that Black self-hatred results from the humiliation that white America forced on Black citizens. Moreover, Baldwin describes Black antisemitism as a process in which Black people “whittled down” their humiliation to a “manageable size,” transferring it to whatever most represents their own “emasculatation.”<sup>56</sup> Crown Heights Lubavitchers enclose themselves physically and socially to a ghetto-like environment, their otherness is visibly identifiable, and their political power is marginal to that of the dominant whites. As a result of these attributes, Lubavitchers gain a disfavored ranking in American social hierarchy. From Baldwin’s view, this pitiful social standing makes Lubavitchers the perfect receptacle for Black people to transfer their

humiliation.

Nonetheless, despite their religious practice, appearance, and self-imposed separatism, Lubavitchers managed to create and thrive within their self-imposed ghetto. This success may induce Black envy. Harvard professor Robert F. Reid-Pharr writes that there is a “sense of bewilderment, of hurt that one hears in the voices of black people, particularly young black people, when we ask ourselves, ‘If the Jews could do it then why can’t we?’”<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, this hurt produces an antisemitism that Cornell West describes as “underdog resentment and envy, directed at another underdog who has made it in American society.”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, some Jews rose through the ranks faster and with more ease than many Black people have. Moreover, African Americans began their march upward from a harrowing depth, while Jews began from a higher rung. As Baldwin states, “The Jewish travail occurred across the sea and America rescued him from the house of bondage. But America is the house of bondage for the Negro.”<sup>59</sup>

Beyond underdog resentment, there is a nuanced antisemitism in attitudes African Americans hold on Jewish ascension in American society. Baldwin states that “the Negro, facing a Jew, hates, at bottom, not his Jewishness but the color of his skin” and that “it is not the Jewish tradition by which he has been betrayed but the tradition of his native land.”<sup>60</sup> The notion that Jews used white skin as credentials to improve their status is indeed a source of Black resentment. But African Americans also resent their fellow white countrymen for allowing the despised Jew, of all people, to ascend, while Black people, who paid the highest price for citizenship, met with rejection.

Reid-Pharr writes that antisemitism stems not only from “the fear that Jews represent a nation within a nation,” but that it is also “impossible to pin-point exactly what

they represent.” “Into this void” of uncertainty, Reid-Pharr continues, “the antisemite deposits a conception of the Jew as devil or, at times, as saint, precisely to mitigate against Jewish inconclusivity” (sic).<sup>61</sup> Lubavitchers, who visibly signal religious piety, can evoke an aura of sanctity. However, their piety dictates a separatism that results in blatant disinterest in gentiles. Black residents of Crown Heights may have interpreted this disinterest as Lubavitchers devaluing the spiritual potential of their Black neighbors.<sup>62</sup> As a result, Black perception of Lubavitchers vacillated between sanctified people and sanctimonious organization. Moreover, Black locals’ uncertainty might have been exacerbated by perceiving Lubavitchers as wielders of disproportionate political favor despite small population size and low ranking in American social hierarchy. When Black Americans deposit hate into the void of uncertainty, Baldwin’s words from 1948 ring true: “just as a society must have a scapegoat, so hatred must have a symbol. Georgia has the Negro and Harlem has the Jew.”<sup>63</sup>

The media pigeonholed Jews to a racial classification, conflated Lubavitch Jews and archetypal American whites, and failed to relay that Black locals treated Jews with blatant antisemitism during the Crown Heights riots. When some journalists<sup>64</sup> and politicians<sup>65</sup> called the riots a pogrom, Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Elie Wiesel responded, saying, “I don’t think you can transfer language from one experience to another.”<sup>66</sup> Wiesel prefers to leave the

“ **Black rioters in Crown Heights expressed violence and hatred during the riots, and their targets were not people who just happen to be Jewish, their target, rather, was Jewish people.** ”

use of pogrom to events containing government and police sanctioned anti-Jewish violence which he did not see in the Crown Heights riots. Wiesel argues that the riots ought to be described in words that pertain specifically to their nature. Wiesel is right—correct description matters. Black rioters in Crown Heights expressed violence and hatred during the riots, and their targets were not people who just happen to be Jewish, their target, rather, was Jewish people. The riots may not have been a pogrom, but they were not a racial clash either. Hatred takes on many forms and goes by many names and when a particular hatred is called by the wrong name, it stands to be perpetuated.

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## AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSING AND THE URBAN CRISIS

Austin Dennis

There are immense challenges facing the urban centers in many cities across the United States. Dilapidated buildings, homelessness, unaffordable housing, overcrowding, pollution, high crime rates, poor public education, and financial problems are just a few of the issues that are commonly cited by individuals who live within these cities and those who live outside of them. Frequently overheard in casual conversation among individuals, regardless of their connection to a city, are opinions on what parts of the city should be avoided, which neighborhoods have been or need to be revitalized, and what can be done to attract visitors or residents. Some of these individuals discuss urban issues with hope for the future, with disapproval of the current state of cities, or with nostalgia for what used to be or could have been. However, what is rarely discussed are the origins of the issues that plague these cities and the individuals who suffer most from them. Throughout the twentieth century, African Americans in urban centers across the country were disproportionately impacted by a variety of issues, such as racial discrimination, availability and affordability of housing, redlining, lack of decent job opportunities, predatory tax and real estate practices, and much more. Collectively, these challenges, along with many others, came to be known as the “the urban crisis.”

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**White Americans saw black migration as a threat to their neighborhoods, safety, property values, culture, and more.**

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Before beginning an examination of the events and literature surrounding African American housing and the urban crisis through the twentieth century, it is worth analyzing the phrasing of “the urban crisis” itself, as this is a loaded term that has been used for a wide variety of purposes to invoke an equally varied number of feelings. From its earliest appearances in the 1950s to reassessments of its meaning in the early 2000s, “urban crisis” in a broad sense has been used to describe the problems facing inner cities, but what those problems are and who or what caused them has constantly been up for debate. In the 1950s, the urban crisis was often referred to as a series of structural issues such as suburbanization, poor housing conditions, and a lack of supportive city services, all of which could likely be solved by government action and intervention.<sup>1</sup> In many ways, this fell in line with New Deal-era thinking and approaches to fixing problems in the nation. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, perspectives began to change. During this period, the urban crisis was viewed to be a result of disruptive government action, which only the free market could resolve. In addition to the financial aspect of the problem, many individuals viewed the urban crisis in terms of morality and culture as well.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, the solution was not government, however, it was capitalism, lower rates of divorce, less drug use, becoming less dependent on welfare, and ending a hereditary “culture of poverty.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the use of the term “urban crisis” for seventy years, its meaning and theories to resolve it are still being debated today. For one portion of the country, cities are still in dire need of government assistance in order to fund projects that would rebuild, rehabilitate, and restructure urban cores. For another portion of the country, there is no urban crisis, as the growth of private businesses within cities

has fueled gentrification and revitalization that makes those cities an attractive place to work, live, and find entertainment. Clearly, the urban crisis is a highly complex topic with no single definition, cause, effect, actor, affected group, or timeline. As a result, further discussion of the urban crisis in this paper will focus on one central theme: the housing issues that African Americans faced in cities from the beginning of the Great Migration through the presidency of Richard Nixon.

Beginning in the 1910s, large waves of African Americans began leaving the southern United States and heading for urban areas in the Midwest and Northeast. The possibility of escaping from Jim Crow laws and lack of opportunity in rural environments ultimately drove around six million African Americans to leave states like Georgia, South Carolina, and Mississippi and relocate to cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh, where focus was placed on the development of industry and production. This was especially the case by the 1940s, as the United States sought to become an “arsenal of democracy” and rapidly ramp up production of war materials for the massive industrial efforts in World War II.<sup>4</sup> As African Americans entered this new urban environment, demographics of cities, such as Detroit, rapidly and dramatically changed. From the beginning of the Great Migration to 1950, Detroit’s African American population increased from 1.2% to 16.2%, causing a great deal of anxiety in much of the white population.<sup>5</sup> White Americans saw black migration as a threat to their neighborhoods, safety, property values, culture, and more. In order to prevent an “invasion” of African Americans in many neighborhoods, one of the earliest tactics heavily pursued by whites was the use of restrictive zoning laws.

As African Americans moved into cities in the 1910s and 1920s, city planners began to form active zoning commissions. These zoning commissions would evaluate and

control the types of buildings that could be built in various districts across the city. In response to African Americans moving into these environments, zoning commissions had two primary objectives. First, city planners would designate districts as areas strictly for single-family homes, due to the fact that many African American migrants could not afford single-family homes and relied on apartment buildings. This prevented the construction of multi-family units and largely preserved segregation. If this did not work, however, and African Americans did begin moving into a district, city planners would change the zoning from residential to industrial, allowing dangerous, toxic, or polluting industries, including toxic waste facilities and incinerators, to be built alongside African American housing, while white citizens moved away to more exclusive areas.<sup>6</sup>

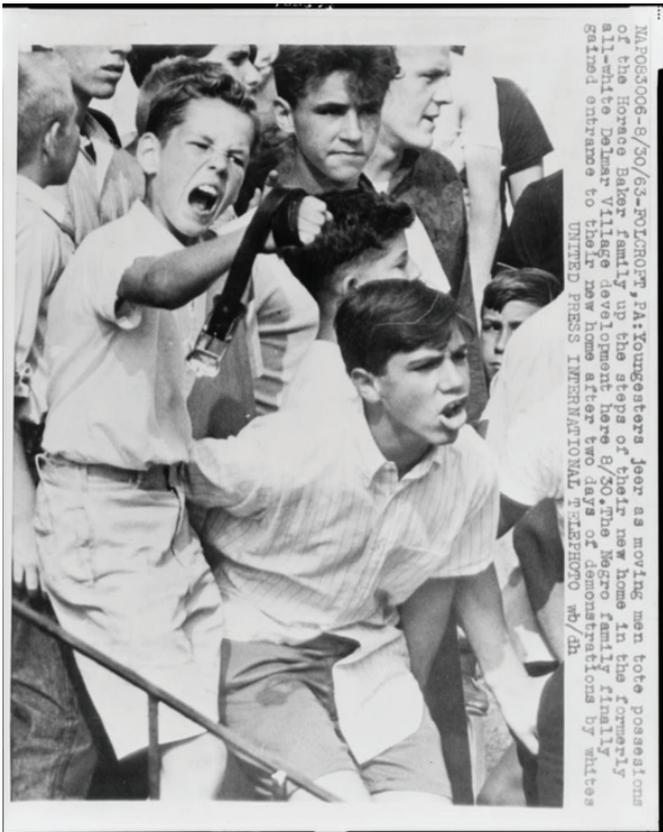
Issues related to zoning were not the only early challenges that African Americans faced as they entered cities. Much more common than living in a district that was rezoned as industrial was the difficulty of finding housing at all. With the massive influx of Americans into cities, due to opportunities for industrial work, came an extreme housing shortage. Racial discrimination, segregation in neighborhoods, lack of affordable housing, lack of construction, and working wage issues, caused African Americans to have an exceedingly difficult time finding a place to live within the city that would make it possible to commute. Because of this, the federal government began to develop public housing. While public housing construction began during World War I for defense workers, it was not until the New Deal that African Americans were accepted into the housing units.<sup>7</sup> This was a positive development for black migrants, but it was far from ideal. For many years, institutions such as the Public Works Administration and U.S. Housing Authority enforced segregation in public housing by following “neighborhood composition” rules, which stated that only residents that

match the previously established demographic of the area could live in the neighborhood's public housing.<sup>8</sup> Over time, public housing was forced to end future segregation and did begin to permit a few blacks and whites to live in integrated buildings, but it did not commit to undoing the segregated living situations that had been established before an integration compromise was reached. Increasing public pressure, along with court rulings that found the policies of segregation to be a violation of Fourteenth Amendment protections, forced project leaders to grudgingly build public housing without directly stating their intentions of restricting the buildings on the basis of race. Instead, segregation would attempt to be enforced by constructing new buildings in areas of a single predominant race.<sup>9</sup>

In order to convince city and local governments to construct additional units to meet the high need and demand for public housing, the federal government had to offer federal funding as a persuasive tool. This set off an intense debate over who would receive funding, how much funding they would receive, and where it would be used. At the center of this tension was an argument over funding for public housing versus subsidies and loans for the construction of private, single-family homes. Many whites at this time viewed public housing as disruptive, unsightly, dangerous, and financially threatening.<sup>10</sup> Viewing public housing as slums that were a threat to single-family homes and the residents within them, white Americans in cities like Detroit launched widespread campaigns against the construction of new public housing, especially if that housing was proposed to be located in a white neighborhood, and instead fought for the expansion of private homeownership.<sup>11</sup> Homeownership and the desire for it was not a new concept for white or black Americans. What was new, however, was the rise of the Homeowners' Movement and the extreme passion for it as a defense against public housing. Homeowners' Associations began to form with

the goals of independence, self-governance, improvement of communities, protection of home and family from social disorder, and homeowners' rights.<sup>12</sup> Members of these associations argued for the prevention of public housing and continuation of segregation in their neighborhoods by stating that it was a constitutional right for them to choose their associates. Furthermore, many white Americans thought that the constitutional rights that homeowners believed in trumped the civil rights of African Americans because, to them, black civil rights infringed upon the white homeowners' freedom to choose who they allowed in their neighborhoods.<sup>13</sup> Alongside arguments about personal housing rights, many individuals argued that public housing was a form of socialism or communism. They argued that allowing socialism/communism to seep into the private enterprises of building, selling, and owning homes would damage the free market. They also argued that owning your own home was patriotic and that communism could not be defeated in the United States if individuals were reliant on the government to house and shelter them.<sup>14</sup> This avenue of thinking was prevalent and powerful at the time, as McCarthyism and the fear and hatred of communism ran rampant across the country. Ultimately, this debate over private homeownership and public housing was highly damaging to perceptions of African Americans for decades to come. Forcing blacks into communities that were segregated, providing them with fewer resources, and increasing rhetoric about how blacks lived in "ghettos" reinforced stereotypes about African Americans, possibly strengthening resistance to integration that would lend itself to years of delaying progress.<sup>15</sup>

For many years, white opposition to public housing and integration into white neighborhoods was largely successful. Although this occurred in the 1940s-1960s, it is not an issue that has become irrelevant or a symbol of the past. For several decades, African Americans were locked into



Young boys harassing the Horace Baker family, the first African American family to  
 move into the all-white Delmar Village neighborhood of Folcroft, Pennsylvania, 1963.  
 Library of Congress.

segregated areas that had fewer opportunities, lower income, and little ability to save money. These factors, combined with impactful conditions that were yet to come, such as deindustrialization and lack of investment, created environments of high poverty that disproportionately impacted African Americans. Effects of this can still be seen today, as 29% of Project-Based Section 8 Housing, 41% of Public Housing, and 12% of Housing Vouchers occupied by African Americans are located in high-poverty neighborhoods (the vast majority having incomes under \$20,000/year), compared to 7%, 10%, and 4% of whites, respectively.<sup>16</sup> While these types of issues are extremely complex and

have decades of history, it is statistics like these that make understanding the history of a topic like public housing important and relevant, whether individuals have a connection to a city or not.

Another tactic that was widely used in cities to prevent African Americans from moving into white neighborhoods was the creation of restrictive covenants. These agreements, while occasionally used for purposes along the lines of ensuring houses are painted approved colors, were maliciously used to target African American ownership of private single-family homes in white neighborhoods.<sup>17</sup> Within these contracts, homeowners were often prohibited from reselling their homes to African Americans or allowing African Americans to use the home outside of acting as a servant. These restrictive contracts became increasingly popular in Midwestern and Northeastern cities. One suburb of New York City, for example, had an 85% rate of restrictive covenants in subdivisions with more than seventy-five houses.<sup>18</sup> In 1926 (the same year a decision upholding zoning laws that excluded African Americans passed), the United States Supreme Court upheld the use of restrictive covenants, deciding that the contracts were private contracts and did not involve state action.<sup>19</sup> In many cases, however, the Federal Housing Administration would not provide insurance to housing developers if the houses being built would not include racially restrictive covenants.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, in 1948, the United States Supreme Court overturned their decision and struck down the legality of racially restrictive covenants in *Shelley v. Kraemer*.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, the decision was made 6-0, as three justices recused themselves from the case due to the fact that they had purchased their homes with racially restrictive covenants in place.<sup>22</sup>

As segregated public housing, exclusionary zoning laws, and racially restrictive covenants came to an end, African

Americans were gradually making progress in gaining access to private, single-family homes. For better or worse, much of this progress was due to the fact that the real estate industry began to see African Americans as a new untapped market that was eager for homeownership, and could often be taken advantage of due to their desperation to escape poor, overcrowded living conditions in city centers where there was little opportunity for improvement.<sup>23</sup> Rather than dealing with African American property buyers and sellers in the same way they would with whites, the real estate industry saw blacks as a group that they could easily take advantage of to maximize their own profits. Whereas exclusion had previously ruled the real estate industry, what scholars refer to as “predatory inclusion” began to dominate the market.

One of the most aggressive methods that real estate agents used to move African Americans into previously exclusively white neighborhoods was blockbusting. Blockbusting real estate agents created housing opportunities for African Americans by causing panic among homeowners in white neighborhoods. These real estate agents would sell a home in a white neighborhood to a black family in order to create fear that African Americans were “taking over the neighborhood.” The goal was to get these white homeowners to then sell their homes at extremely low prices in order to quickly escape the neighborhood before their assumptions that black neighbors would cause their homes to become worthless could come true. The white homeowners would flee to different all-white neighborhoods, and speculators, who purchased the homes at a low cost, could then resell the home for massive profits to new black homeowners who were eager to move into private, single-family homes. In many cases, actually selling one of these homes to a black family was not even necessary. Blockbusting real estate agents would pay black women to walk strollers down the sidewalks in white neighborhoods, have black children play in a neighborhood, or otherwise

make it appear that African Americans were entering the area.<sup>24</sup> These tactics were highly effective and quickly began expanding the areas that African Americans lived in within cities. As black neighborhoods expanded out from cities’ cores, white neighborhoods receded further into the suburbs. Although blockbusting did allow many African Americans to become homeowners for the first time, the conditions that they were moving into were, in many cases, not significant improvements from how they had been living previously. Since these transitioning neighborhoods were often close to urban centers, the houses within them were often old and not in the same condition as newly constructed homes in the suburbs. Rat infestations, poor roofing and flooring, and a lack of general maintenance caused many of these homes to be not just unideal, but also physically dangerous.<sup>25</sup> For many white residents, it appeared that the slums were expanding further outwards from the urban centers. These conditions and appearances once again continued to reaffirm stereotypes about what black homeownership looked like, how black Americans lived, and what would happen to neighborhoods that became interracial. It is reasonable to assume that African Americans did not want to live in these conditions, but because of business practices from real estate agencies and banks, there were few other options.

Rehabilitating the houses that African Americans bought in previously white neighborhoods was financially impossible for many black people due to what has been deemed a “race tax.” The race tax occurred in situations where African Americans were refused mortgages from traditional lenders, and, because of this, they were forced to take offers that were openly exploitative. These exploitative offers, which had significantly higher interest rates and overall costs of owning a home (including down payments), were much higher than what a white homeowner would have been able to acquire.<sup>26</sup> The race tax extended further than just homeownership,



New York, New York. Demolition for slum clearance. Blocks of slum area are torn down for housing project, 1941. Photograph by Edwin Rosskam.

as well, with a 1968 study finding that 92% of stores in predominantly African American areas had installment payment plans on merchandise that were, on average, 50% higher than stores located in white regions.<sup>27</sup> Due to situations like these, African Americans were living at much higher rates of poverty than white Americans, while at the same time paying higher prices for groceries, merchandise, and substandard housing.<sup>28</sup> These factors meant that while individuals living in these newly black neighborhoods would have liked to improve the conditions of their homes or simply move to nicer areas, the exploitative financial situations surrounding their everyday lives made that nearly impossible.

Government assistance often did not do much to assist in these scenarios either. Programs from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, such as Project Rehab, sought to make improvements to 37,000 houses across the country in order to develop better living conditions and economic opportunities for African Americans within cities. Unfortunately, the project was largely a failure.

In some situations, new housing was built, or uninhabited homes were “improved” with subpar structural work that either created problems that would give homeowners trouble in the future or put band-aids on major construction errors that would come to haunt those who lived in the home. In other situations, housing developers used the funding that they had acquired from the federal government to work on housing that had residents living in it at the time, displacing them without providing a new place to live.<sup>29</sup>

Another way that the real estate industry took advantage of African Americans in the realm of housing was through the appraisal process. Much like how African Americans purchased homes from blockbusting real estate agents for exorbitant prices, appraisers also played a crucial role in the purchasing and selling of below-average housing. While there are certainly factors that qualify a house as being in good or bad condition, such as the condition of its structural materials, the state of the roof and ventilation systems, and the maintenance of the land that it is on, assessing the value of a house is largely subjective and based on perceptions about what the house looks like, where it is, what the neighborhood is like, who will live there, the condition of the house compared to others, and more. Appraisers in cities during the postwar period did not have sets of standards, rules, or licensing that ensured consistent and fair evaluations of properties. Additionally, appraising, at the time, was an entry-level position that individuals typically moved on from when the opportunity to work for a real estate agency or mortgage lender became available. This led appraisers to give little thought or care to the thoroughness and fairness of their appraisal as long as the job was completed on paper. Furthermore, appraisers worked for low wages based on the number of houses appraised, causing them to frequently take only around fifteen minutes to determine the value of a house, so they could move on to the next one, rather than

the recommended minimum of two hours' evaluation.<sup>30</sup> Combined, these scenarios surrounding the appraisal of homes that were being sold for or to African Americans rarely reflected the actual worth of the home. Appraisers often ignored issues that would dramatically lower home values in order to overvalue the house and build stronger relationships with realtors in the hope that they would either receive a cut of the sale or earn a job with the real estate agency. Since most of the African Americans that were purchasing homes in these types of neighborhoods were first-time homeowners, many did not realize that they were being taken advantage of. Without a mediator to protect these future homeowners, multiple parties were working against African Americans' interests and only seeking to further their own profits.<sup>31</sup>

The final issue related to African American housing that will be discussed here is the problem of "slum clearance." As the twentieth century went on, African American neighborhoods, whether ones at the urban core or ones that had transitioned from white neighborhoods, were often referred to as slums, with people using the conditions created and left behind for African Americans, in conjunction with stereotypes about blacks as families and homeowners, to disparage black neighborhoods and identify them as blighted areas. When the interstate system began construction, African American neighborhoods were largely the ones that were demolished to make way for highway construction. Similarly, popular urban renewal projects that would build offices, universities, hospitals, and middle-class white housing frequently targeted African American neighborhoods for "slum clearance" to begin construction. Before being ordered to assist the occupants of these homes and neighborhoods in finding new housing in 1965, federal officials rarely helped them in locating a new place to live. By that time, the majority of the interstate system had already been built over these previously lived-in communities.<sup>32</sup> Because of the seemingly positive

changes that these actions made for the general public, the state of some of the previously existing housing, and the physical destruction of the neighborhoods in question, slum clearance was and continues to be celebrated by large populations, despite the immense damage that it did to African American individuals and communities.

Conversations about the current state of our inner cities, what is wrong with them, and what can be done are frequent.

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**Remnants of actions surrounding this topic are around us at all times, whether it is using the highway to navigate to our jobs and everyday activities, witnessing the condition of dilapidated urban houses and buildings, coming into contact with individuals living in poverty or poverty-stricken areas, or looking for a potential new home or apartment located near a city.**

It is not surprising, however, to rarely hear or talk about how these urban conditions came to be and the groups that were primarily impacted. Issues of African American housing and the urban crisis are challenging to talk about not only

because of how hard it can be to discuss discrimination and segregation, but also because the topic is incredibly complex. Throughout this paper, a great number of topics surrounding African American housing and the urban crisis were discussed, but this still only scratches the surface. There is still much to be said about the Federal Housing Administration's role throughout urban history, the role that deindustrialization played in advancing the urban crisis, the growth of ideologies about the role of capitalism and private businesses in addressing issues in the inner cities, redlining practices, the Federal National Mortgage Association and the Government National Mortgage Association, and much more. Information on these topics are complexly intertwined and span decades of our history. It may not be considered "light reading," and can be difficult to unpack in a digestible

way, despite (and because of) this, the topic of African American housing and the urban crisis is incredibly important for Americans to study today, whether you live in an urban or rural environment. Remnants of actions surrounding this topic are around us at all times, whether it is using the highway to navigate to our jobs and everyday activities, witnessing the condition of dilapidated urban houses and buildings, coming into contact with individuals living in poverty or poverty-stricken areas, or looking for a potential new home or apartment located near a city. The history of African American housing in cities and the urban crisis is not just history that impacted one group of people in one period from our past. It is a lasting system of actions and consequences that are still lived and felt by millions of Americans today.

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## LIFTING AS WE CLIMB: BLACK WOMEN'S ROLE IN CONSTRUCTING AND SUSTAINING BLACK POWER, 18TH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

Alexis Cathcart

*Winner of the Virginia Van Der Veer Hamilton Award*

**B**lack women have demonstrated a lifelong commitment to radical change by embracing multiple roles in constructing and sustaining the concepts, ideologies, and practices of Black Power. Black Power, articulated in 1966 by Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) in Greenwood, Mississippi, signaled a new phase in the Black Freedom Struggle.<sup>1</sup> After the passage of civil rights legislation in the mid-1960s, Black Americans experienced the limitations of the Civil Rights Movement, the unrelenting violence of federal, state, and local law enforcement, and continued exclusion from political, social, and economic spaces. The radical politics of Black Power coalesced into a broad-based sociopolitical movement, embraced by people north and south, that saw benefit in complete revolution over mediocre reform. The principles of Black Power affirmed racial uplift and pride, self-definition, community, and political power—especially in areas where Black people held the majority. Frustrated with the racist, imperialist American system, countless Black Americans rallied around these concepts, including the right to armed self-defense against white violence. Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, define Black Power:

It is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society.<sup>2</sup>

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**Having suffered the unceasing effects of triple jeopardy<sup>5</sup>—racism, sexism, and class exploitation—Black women have collectively and persistently fought for the liberation of the Black diaspora through ideals and practices that strengthened concepts of Black Power in the late 20th century.**

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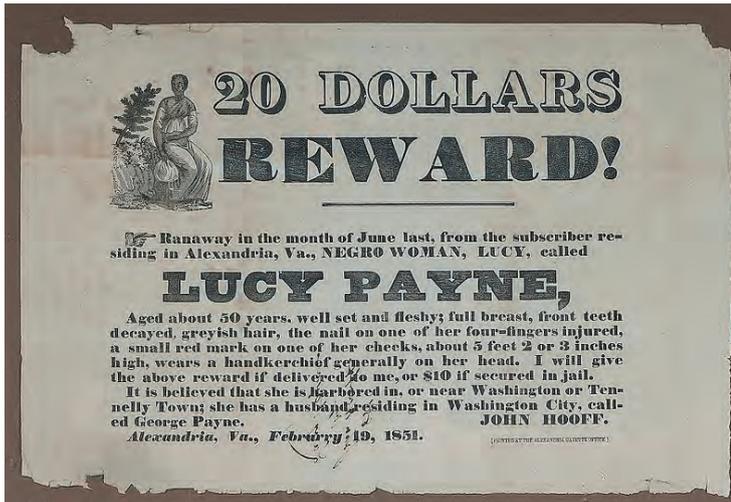
Furthermore, Ture and Hamilton conclude that Black Power is Afro-Americans’ “full participation in the decision-making process affecting the lives of black people, and recognition of the virtues in themselves as black people.”<sup>3</sup> Applying the far-reaching appeal and ambiguity of Black Power ideology to resistance and activism throughout history displays the epic lineage of Black Power in the protracted Black Freedom Struggle—which was developed, strengthened, and sustained by Black women. The fluidity of Black Power allow for its use among a wide variety of activists with different solutions to end racial oppression.

Stretching the concept of Black Power back to the Revolutionary Age and extending it to the present “expands

historical understanding of Black Power politics by exposing its precursors, influences, overlaps, and coexistence with other activist traditions.”<sup>4</sup> Since the 18th century, Black women have practiced tenets of Black Power through their escaping of bondage, writings, lectures, grassroots organizing, and leadership. Having suffered the unceasing effects of triple jeopardy<sup>5</sup>—racism, sexism, and class exploitation—Black women have collectively and persistently fought for the liberation of the Black diaspora through ideals and practices that strengthened concepts of Black Power in the late 20th century. To be sure, Black women are not a monolith. While they shared similarities in their efforts to free the diaspora, Black women have approached and thought about these issues in many ways. Nonetheless, Black Power can be found in the radical politics of Black Nationalist women *and* the conservative nature of 19th century Black Club Women. Their diverse experiences and ideas add to our understanding of direct action and intentional work. The acknowledgement of a common thread amongst Black women activists shows the continuity and evolution of ideas and depicts a long line of resistance, racial uplift, and racial pride that has been ubiquitous in the history of Black women in the United States. Demanding self-determination and defining freedom through their own unique experiences, Black women have led the way in developing theory, mobilizing, and organizing the struggle for full and equal citizenship in the US. An emphasis on Black women activists helps to shatter the pervasive and one-sided view of women on the margins of the Black Freedom Struggle. Operating as abolitionists, local organizers, courageous writers, international mobilizers, trailblazing mentors, and charismatic leaders, Black women have been and continue to be the critical mass in the liberation of all people.

Afro-American women have played an invaluable role in the foundation and construction of the United States. As such,

Black women were critical in the emancipation of enslaved Black Americans. Since the eve of the U.S. Revolutionary War, and prior, Black women have visualized a society where they and their families could escape the ubiquitous pressure and violence of slavery and white supremacy. They desired a life in which they were independent and free from restrictions. Despite the inherent risks and consequences, enslaved Black women possessed a revolutionary spirit that allowed them to chase freedom and advance their liberation.<sup>6</sup> Black women were not content with slavery and protested it every chance they got, especially through escaping. They yearned for a life without bondage and took theirs and their families’ liberation into their own hands. Fugitive enslaved women were determined to claim their independence and autonomy by any means necessary, thus commencing a strong foundation for Black Power. In *Running from Bondage*, historian Karen Cook Bell challenges the lack of representation of Black women in accounts of Revolutionary America and positions fugitive enslaved Black women in the center of the abolitionist movement during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Revolutionary War “created spaces for them to invoke the same philosophical arguments of liberty that white revolutionaries made in their own fierce struggle against oppression”<sup>7</sup>, but the war was not the beginning of their struggle for liberation, nor would it be the end. By emphasizing enslaved Black women’s resistance in this era, Bell highlights the agency of these women and their integral role in the emancipation of Afro-Americans. Fugitive enslaved Black women resisted an oppressive system. They demanded autonomy for their lives, movements, and bodies and created spaces for expressions of freedom. These courageous women “displayed a radical consciousness that challenged the prevailing belief that enslaved women could not gain their freedom through subversive action.”<sup>8</sup> Confronted with obstacles of political and social invisibility and the absence of



Fugitive Slave Advertisement, 1851. Printed at the Alexandria Gazette Office, Alexandria, VA. Wikimedia Commons

a significant movement with formal organizations and leaders to direct them, fugitive Black women, through their escaping, began constructing the ideology and framework that activists in the Black Power movement would study and learn from.

Violently surveilled and repressed, ostensibly free Black Americans in the 19th century faced new and continuing forms of restriction, confinement, and viciousness from white citizens. Black women of this period, experiencing antiblack racism, economic exploitation, and prejudice based on their sex, challenged their ascribed position and that of Black people collectively. The prevailing culture of oppression made it difficult for Black women to empower themselves or Black people in the community; however, that did not stop women like Maria Stewart, Harriet Wilson, and Harriet Jacobs from addressing issues that plagued Black women specifically and the Black community generally. These Black women challenged racist and sexist beliefs by tying the progress of Black women to the progress of the entire Black community. Abolitionist and women's rights activist Maria Stewart, delivering lectures to crowds of white and black men and women in 1832, spoke confidently about the ills of

slavery in the South and challenged racial oppression in the North. Emboldened by her personal experiences, Stewart powerfully advocated for the creation of strong, self-sufficient economic and educational institutions in African American communities and supported Black women's participation in all aspects of community building.<sup>9</sup> Similar to Stewart, Harriet Wilson, the author of *Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), used her voice as nominally free Black woman to place a critical eye upon white abolitionists of the North and northern racism. In her writings, Wilson asserted the importance of independence from the white community. Boldly, she challenged prevailing systems that endorsed prejudice against Black women particularly and Black people generally.<sup>10</sup> Harriet Jacobs, author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), utilized her life experiences as an enslaved woman and a domestic worker to build discourse around the "social, political, and economic consequences of Black womanhood" and actively involved herself with the abolition movement before the launch of the Civil War.<sup>11</sup> During the war, she used her celebrity to raise money for black refugees and subsequently worked to improve the living conditions of recently-freed enslaved people.<sup>12</sup> These women, along with many others, confronted racist and sexist ideologies as they worked towards racial uplift, independence, and self-determination for Black people. Through the dreams, intellect, and experiences of Black women and their subsequent lectures and writings, the cultural framework of Black Power was being shaped. Black women continued to add to the foundations, mobility, and success of Black Power that would gain popularity a century later.

The end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the proliferation of new and evolving forms of racialized exclusion and violent repression urged Black women forward as they continued to fight for human rights and the sociopolitical uplift of Black women, men, and children. Black women began developing



Arizona Federation of Colored Women's Clubs in 1909. Wikimedia Commons

the values and beliefs of the Black Freedom Movement, especially Black Power, through their understanding that the liberation of Black women meant the liberation of the entire Black diaspora. Their leadership and activism sought to “encompass the simultaneous realities of race, gender, and class, and eradicate all forms of oppression that accompany multi-axis identities.”<sup>13</sup> In addition to lectures and texts, late 19th-century Black women activists contributed to collective movements, including the Anti-lynching Movement, and birthed ones of their own, such as the Black Women’s Club Movement. Womanist scholar and activist Melina Abdullah, in her essay “The Emergence of a Black Feminist Leadership Model: African-American Women and Political Activism in the Nineteenth Century”, contends that Black women practice a unique form of leadership that allows them to “take on a radical approach—favoring fundamental transformation over limited reform.”<sup>14</sup> The anti-lynching movement, prompted by increased white violence and lynching following the end of Reconstruction, was led by Black women and men who challenged white mob violence. At the center of this movement was activist and journalist Ida B. Wells. Wells employed her journalistic capabilities as a means of advocating for the social and political empowerment of Black people and challenging and eliminating the myths of

the Black rapist.<sup>15</sup> She used the lynching of her friends, the burning down of her newspaper office, and threats of bodily harm to inspire her investigations into the frequency of racial terror, specifically lynching. In her newspaper, *The Free Speech*, Wells’ writings exposed southern white violence and sought to compel the public to stand up against lynching. Black women began to organize around Wells and her campaign—leading to the launch of the Black Women’s Club movement and their heavy participation in the anti-lynching crusade.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Wells encouraged Black Americans to arm themselves as a means of self-defense and supported economic boycotts of white businesses that discriminated against Afro-Americans.<sup>17</sup> Wells’ investigations, speeches, and written publications confronted racial terror and ensured that critical history would not be lost for future generations as they continued the fight for Black liberation.

In addition to contributing to larger movements, Black women created movements of their own. Abdullah argues that the Black Women’s Club movement was not an apolitical reiteration of clubs formed by their white contemporaries. On the contrary, it was a vehicle to center Black womanhood and intellect and enact social services meant to assess and meet the needs of Black women and the general community.<sup>18</sup> Organizations like the Colored Women’s League (1829) and the National Association of Colored Women’s Club (1896) – a combination of several clubs– battled to change public policy in a way that advanced the needs of Black women and the Black collective. They saw their organizations in terms of gender and race, viewing their women’s movement as a way to uplift Black women, men, and children. Facing sexism in race-based movements and racism in sex-based movements, Black club women served as the bridge connecting Black empowerment and women’s liberation. The leadership of the Black Women’s Club movement came primarily from the middle class—including women such as Josephine St. Pierre

Ruffin, suffragist, publisher, and the wife of a Massachusetts judge; and educator Fannie Barrier Williams, who emphasized the need for the most capable of the race in the Club movement. During their tenure, club women were often seen as elitist in their attitudes towards the masses; however, their familiarity with racism in the US linked them with working-class Black Americans.<sup>19</sup> Black women in the 19th century were essential in constructing the beginnings of Black Power through their efforts to create and sustain organizations and movements that centered solutions to the economic, social, and political oppression of the Black community. Utilizing the power of their voices to rally and organize Black people across the nation, the hard work and determination of these women continued to lay the groundwork for future Black liberation movements.

Twentieth-century Black women, encompassing the knowledge of their foremothers, continued to give voice to concerns dealing with race, gender, and class exploitation in the US and beyond. Historian Ashley Farmer in *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* demonstrates that “black women consistently positioned themselves on the organizational front lines of black nationalist projects and groups before and during the Black Power era.”<sup>20</sup> Early twentieth-century Black women mobilized and organized around concepts such as racial pride, self-determination, black nationhood, and internationalism—contributing to the foundations of Black Power that were more than a century in the making. Activist and journalist Amy Jacques Garvey, wife to the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) Marcus Garvey, was dedicated to racial uplift, self-reliance, and nationhood. She emphasized the unique role of Black women in the UNIA and the importance of Black Nationalist activism at home and abroad. Garvey published editorials urging Black women to participate in the Pan-African movement and addressed



Claudia Jones, likely during her time in the CPUSA. Wikimedia Commons

issues that affected the Black diaspora internationally.<sup>21</sup> In the 1925 issue of *The Negro World*, Garvey proudly declared the role of Black women in activism and leadership stating that “the wide-awake woman is forging ahead prepared for all emergencies, and ready to answer any call, even if it be to face the cannons on the battlefield.”<sup>22</sup> Comparable to Garvey, Claudia Jones, joining the Communist Party USA in 1936, consistently stood against race, class, and gender exploitation, linked struggles of Black Americans to struggles of Black people internationally, and advocated for the concept of Black nationhood. Jones encouraged the liberation of working class women through Black Nationalism and the rejection of prevailing false definitions of Black womanhood.<sup>23</sup>

In one of her most important essays, “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Women” (1949), Jones argues for the inclusion of gender along with race and class in the work for justice. As scholar and activist Angela Davis recounts, “Claudia Jones was very much a Communist—a dedicated Communist who believed that socialism held the only promise of liberation for Black women, Black people as a whole and indeed for the multi-racial working class”.<sup>24</sup> In the ivory tower of academia, Merze Tate, a professor at Howard University, dissented from leading international relations scholars and their efforts to maintain and expand white supremacy globally. Tate and the Howard School critiqued the “truths” of racial science and its role in sustaining imperialism.<sup>25</sup> Analyzing the relationship of American racism and imperialism, Tate argued that in order to understand U.S. power, one had to understand what power was and how it was exerted internationally.<sup>26</sup> Black women theorized and supported radical democratic politics that were conscious of and responsive to the interrelated effects of racism, capitalism, sexism, and imperialism. These women were part of a Black Left that laid a considerable amount of groundwork for the classic Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

The culture and politics of Black Power gained traction in the late twentieth century, but Black women have long been practitioners of what is now called Black Power. The latter half of the 1960s and the early 1970s saw mass support for a new movement meant to empower Black Americans and the Black diaspora globally. Black Power challenged institutional racism with vigor and pushed for Black self-determination in politics, economics, education, and culture, by and for Black communities not yet free from oppression despite civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965.<sup>27</sup> Acutely aware of the absence of support from the federal government, Afro-American women led grassroots efforts that centered Black Power in the struggle for self-determination. In Cambridge, Maryland,

Gloria Richardson—emerging from a family background of activism—demanded racial equality and the full attainment of civil and human rights for Black Americans. As the first Black woman to lead a prolonged grassroots movement outside of the Deep South, Richardson organized and led the Cambridge Movement on Maryland’s Eastern Shore.<sup>28</sup> Active in the early 1960s, Richardson headed demonstrations that centered issues such as jobs, healthcare access, and housing. She departed from the nonviolent activism of the Civil Rights Movement and boldly contended that self-defense could end further violence from white citizens towards Black Americans. An influence to rising Black Power activists like Jamil Al-Amin (H. Rap Brown) and Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), her work resulted in “The Treaty of Cambridge” marking federal intervention into local civil rights affairs.<sup>29</sup> In Central Alabama, leader and activist Lilian McGill served various, indispensable roles in the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO). The LCFO’s (later the Lowndes County Freedom Party) mission consisted of ending the violent disenfranchisement of Black citizens, forming an independent political party, and obtaining political control of rural and majority Black Lowndes County, Alabama.<sup>30</sup> Radicalized through her personal experiences, McGill became an invaluable asset to the movement as a fundraiser, spokesperson, and successful organizer. She operated in leadership circles and participated in executive decision-making. McGill spoke out against poverty and the lack of federal intervention in the violence propagated against Black Americans.<sup>31</sup> Richardson and McGill were leaders in their respective struggles for Black liberation and robustly advocated for self-determination and self-defense—major principles of Black Power as it hit the mainstream in the late 1960s.

During the Black Power era, Black women generated Black Power by organizing around bread and butter issues, marshaling against poverty, and advocating for education,

family, and neighborhood. While some women joined popular Black Power organizations like the Black Panther Party, many women, including public housing tenants, operated outside of these organizations. However, these women gave rise to, contributed to, and sustained elements of Black Power.<sup>32</sup> Public housing activists such as Goldie Baker, Marian Johnson, and Shirley Wise worked individually and with local community organizations to engender political power, economic security, self-respect, community control and self-determination in their urban neighborhoods. Historian Rhonda Y. Williams accurately writes,

Their [Black women] activist ethos in many ways echoed—and in some cases, preceded—the myriad ideologies and initiatives of the Black Power era. Yet because these grassroots black women, many of them low-income, neither jibed with the popular and simplistic media-cultivated images of armed black men, nor joined nationally known freedom organizations or black militant groups, their economic and political activism has remained relatively invisible in narratives of Black power.<sup>33</sup>

Black nuns of the mid-1960s also incorporated Black Power ideology in their advocating for political, economic, and social control of Black communities. Oblate Sister Judith, Sister Mary Paraclete Young, and Sister Mary Roger Thibodeaux, along with many others, opened orders, schools, and orphanages that served the Black community generally and its children specifically. They taught self-respect and self-identity and contended that Black Power, after its popular use in the late 1960s, aligned with their vision and gave a name to what they had been practicing for years.<sup>34</sup> Uniting around issues of poverty and women's welfare, organizations founded and led by Black women such as Mother Rescuers from Poverty led by Margaret McCarty and Black Women



Black Panther Party Women. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

Concerned about Urban Problems led by Salima Marriot, “viewed their daily struggles for material well-being, representation, autonomy, and respect as part of a quest for not only citizenship rights and self-determination, but also as a matter of human rights.”<sup>35</sup> Black women activists engendered, vocalized, and supported tenants of Black Power in order to liberate Black people and eradicate social injustices broadly.

Black women activists during this period used their multidimensional ideas of liberation and Black womanhood to “reshape popular perceptions of Black women’s role in political mobilization, masculinist ideas of Black liberation, and the meaning of Black Power.”<sup>36</sup> Farmer writes that women Black Power activists produced “competing models of Black womanhood...to advocate Black Power tenants and assert the primacy of women in political organizations.”<sup>37</sup> Black women activists in the second half of the twentieth century followed the lead of their Black founding mothers in articulating and advancing their approaches to liberate the Black masses. The success of the Black Power movement can be attributed to the contributions of Black women inside of prominent organizations. In the Black Panther Party (BPP), founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland,

CA in 1966, "Black women made up the majority of its membership, by 60 percent, and some powerfully steered the organization."<sup>38</sup> Female leaders including Kathleen Cleaver, the BPP communications chairperson; Elaine Brown, the only female chairperson to lead the party; and Ericka Huggins, who ran the party's Oakland Community School critically shaped the success of the BPP. Black women of the party also organized community survival programs such as free breakfast for schoolchildren and access to free medical care for poor and working class Black people.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, the culmination of success for the Black Power movement and its organizations meant a powerful countermovement by the state. Rising state-sanctioned violence from law enforcement, the criminalization of protest and subsequent incarceration of popular Black Power leaders, and federal repression through counterintelligence programs all lent a hand in discrediting Black Power organizations and its leaders. Despite attempts to silence Black Power activists, Black women such as Angela Davis and Assata Shakur continued to critique and challenge white authority from the courtroom and the confines of prison walls.

Often meant to be invisible to the public, but highly visible when it serves the agenda of the state, the courtroom and the prison were utilized by Black Power activists as a means to publicly challenge white supremacy and engender Black Power in the face of heightened state violence and repression.<sup>40</sup> Anti-prison activist and scholar, Angela Davis, charged with arming an escape by male prisoners, connected prison to chattel slavery. She argued, along with other activists, that all Black Americans were enslaved and confined by white supremacy whether inside prison walls or outside of them. Davis equated the attempted prison escape to a slave rebellion and used the courtroom as a means to spread the insurgent politics of Black Power, while simultaneously challenging the courtroom's authority as an instrument of

the white elite.<sup>41</sup> She emphasized the collective struggle of Black people to take attention away from individual crime and placed focus on the structural and historical violence in American society and its harmful effects on Black Americans. Davis's efforts demonstrate the significance of Black women to the Black Power movement. She continued to build upon the efforts of Black women activists before her to provoke tenants of Black Power as a means to liberate Black political prisoners and Black people internationally.

Assata Shakur, another high-profile Black woman defendant of the 1970s, was an influential activist and a member of the Black Liberation Army. Wrongfully convicted of killing a state trooper on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1970, Shakur employed written word from her imprisonment to revitalize Black Power and the struggle to liberate Black people globally. Scholar Lisa Corrigan in, *Prison Power: How Prison Influenced the Movement for Black Liberation*, emphasizes how imprisoned Black Power activists centered prison writings in regenerating Black Power in its new phase. After federal repression and the demise of Black Revolutionary leaders and groups, political prisoners invented a vernacular from their confinement that challenged attempts to silence them and other activists during this time. The use of "a black vernacular steeped in street talk, Third World populism, intersectional analyses of power, and gender performance that utilized irony, hyperbole, anecdote, and history" became a vehicle for political prisoners to critique and challenge the state, place themselves in a broader context of the historical confinement of Black Americans, and redefine and renew Black Power in its evolving era.<sup>42</sup> *Assata: An Autobiography* helped to fortify Black Power in a time of decline. Shakur employed Black history, cultural nationalism, self-defense, and Third World solidarity to criticize the state and reclaim dignity for herself, the Black Power movement, and Black people generally. As the Black Power movement was forced out of the view of

mainstream white America, Black women activists continued to mobilize and organize under the tenets of Black Power when responding to racial inequalities and imprisonment—underscoring the mobility of the movement after its prime.

Black women have historically served on the front-line in the fight for the liberation of the Black diaspora. Although their contributions are frequently overlooked, their power, resilience, and courage cannot be overstated. Black women have a unique position from which to understand the intersections of race, gender, and class and the women highlighted throughout this essay are connected by an intricate network of Black Power activism that spans several generations. Black women have been intellectual and organizational producers of the protracted struggle for freedom rights—the intersection of civil and human rights Black Americans have demanded since Emancipation and prior.<sup>43</sup> Black women resisted slavery. They spoke out against racism. They founded clubs to improve life for Black Americans. They worked in journalism, supported education, pushed for meaningful political power, organized against economic exploitation, and much, much more. They formed the foundation of modern Black freedom movements and today they create and lead global socio-political movements

such as Black Lives Matter (BLM). Black women today, including Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, founders of BLM, Congresswoman Cori Bush, activist Tamika Mallory, politician and voting rights activist Stacey Abrams, amongst a plethora of other Black women, all fight for an equitable and safe world for Black people in the United States and globally. They struggle for a world free from the brutality and violence of the criminal justice system, they fight against poverty, and they challenge the continued disenfranchisement of Black and other people of color. Black women activists continue traditions of global anti-imperialist solidarity, intersectionality, self-determination, and self-definition. The ethos of Black Power moves through these women and others who build upon a legacy of valiant women like Maria Stewart and Assata Shakur. Even as they are marginalized within both women's and racial justice movements, Black women continue to overcome the triple binds of racism, sexism, and classism. They persevere to provide rich, vibrant voices to the chorus of American freedom, justice, and independence based in reality as opposed to fantasy and myth. Black women lead the way in challenging America's racial and political landscape to embrace justice, equity, and equal opportunity for everyone.

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**IT IS ENTIRELY  
POSSIBLE FOR  
A BLACK GIRL  
TO BE LOVED**

Alan Atkins

## LINCOLN: THE GRADUAL EMANCIPATION PROJECT, A STORY OF GROWTH

Charlie Crepps

### Introduction

**F**reedom and confrontation are rarely mutually exclusive throughout the political history of any society. There is an excessive amount of rhetoric documented about the various freedoms achieved in history, and many times, historians reference the confrontation caused by said freedoms. In the context of this paper, confrontation refers to the difficulty of adjusting to the changes made within society after a seismic political shift. Abraham Lincoln was a man that would eventually become the face of a nation's societal progress, but he was placed in the trajectory of the most significant political confrontation experienced in The United States' brief history thus far. Lincoln's approach to this confrontation deserves investigation because of his mythical status in American history and because the issues of slavery needed a resolution, and many groups and individuals had opinions of how to achieve that societal freedom. Some even believed that a solution was unnecessary because of their financial connection to slavery or their moral view. But this essay is not about the chronological development of abolition in America; this essay is about growth. Growth can be represented in many areas during this period, however, this essay focuses on growth in three principal areas: Abraham Lincoln's opinion on the apparent confrontation with the end of slavery, a nation's philosophical development, and the employment of a political strategy that I consider one of the most significant political maneuvers by an American political leader. There tends to be an impression gathered about Lincoln's legacy that it is pure, stainless, and an "unproblematic trajectory toward a predetermined end," as described by Eric Foner.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the scale of his legacy, Abraham Lincoln's impact was developed throughout his legal, political, and societal

involvements. Many historians point to the inconsistencies of Lincoln's political speeches and decisions as evidence that Lincoln had selfish motivations behind his political platform on slavery. Though Lincoln's narrative on slavery appears to be turbulent, he maintained the fundamental moral opinion that slavery was a natural evil. Based on this understanding, Lincoln felt that the most effective way to eradicate slavery and prevent its further expansion was to sway public sentiment toward his moral stance. This approach to the problem of slavery shaped opinion regarding personal freedoms within the public and on Capitol Hill. Lincoln developed public sentiment throughout the nation by leading legal and political decisions that followed the framework of his philosophical determinations on slavery and personal freedom—which he communicated through speeches and debates. All of these calculated decisions are predicated upon the moral understanding and philosophy apparent in Lincoln's writings and correspondence. The political leader is, and was, a complicated character to understand. Historians can juxtapose their difficulty to determine Lincoln's intent with testaments from close friends to the former president, such as David Davis. Davis recalls Lincoln as "the most reticent, secretive man I ever saw or expected to see."<sup>2</sup> For historians to believe that the retrospective understanding of the Lincoln landscape has been investigated in its entirety is historical immaturity. In this paper, I take a magnifying glass into the morality of Lincoln and assess his most profound meditations on slavery while outlining the impact that his indelible mind had on a flowering nation's perception of personal freedoms. Lincoln experienced influences from political movements and groups, such as the abolition movement, and ultimately concluded that public sentiment was a more potent tool than



"Standing Lincoln" statue of martyred U.S. president Abraham Lincoln inside his tomb at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois. Photographer Carol M. Highsmith. Library of Congress.

legislative action. Lincoln grew into this understanding and should not be regarded as a consistent man. He tailored his speeches and writings, beginning in the infancy of his career, toward a more philosophical understanding of personal rights to persuade the American public against the expansion of slavery and its promulgation into national law. But this political maneuver, caused by progressive confrontation, would shape the country's zeitgeist regarding personal freedoms, which is an accomplishment that should not be understated.

### **Historiography**

To write that there is an overwhelming consensus about Abraham Lincoln's legacy by historians would be disingenuous. There are a limited number of nuanced views

on Abraham Lincoln's political role in eradicating slavery within the United States of America, but historians such as James Oakes, Foner, and David S. Reynolds all address Lincoln's legacy in their own personal way. A portion of the rhetoric, especially from professors such as Fred Kaplan of Queens College, details a version of a man with evil intentions, creating various disillusioned opinions of his character, or attempting to synonymize his political views with the actions carried out in his personal life. There is also a public belief that Lincoln was a political saint who could do no wrong. But, as James Oakes writes, "I propose to you, a third Lincoln."<sup>3</sup> The Lincoln that exists in this third space of historical recollection is the same Lincoln by which historians such as Eric Foner, James Oakes, and David S. Reynolds all detail. They tell a story of an imperfect, deeply meditative man who set out on a journey through the American political landscape with a vision of how a budding nation could provide a platform of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all its citizens. In analytical professions and areas of study, there is a belief that conclusions must exist within the form of finality, and the academic world of history has the potential to operate under the same assumptions. Eric Foner, along with Oakes and Reynolds, were able to take a step away from finality and view the legacy Lincoln left behind as a story of growth, imperfection, investigation, and deliberation. A way to understand the infallibility of many historians' views on Lincoln's legacy can be achieved by juxtaposing the legacy with the early interpretations of the American Constitution. In the time of Lincoln, there were two dominant perceptions of The Constitution that addressed the issue of slavery; more precisely, the intentions and philosophical motivations of the Founding Fathers when drafting the document. These first perceptions were pro-slavery and believed that the Constitution explicitly defined humans as property. The adverse opinion, which Abraham

Lincoln radicalized during wartime, was that of an antislavery perception.<sup>4</sup> Oakes goes on to detail that neither of these perceptions were born alongside the Constitution itself, but rather, were reactions to one another. He equates historians' views on Lincoln's legacy with the differing perceptions of the Constitution.<sup>5</sup> An arrangement of how historians would view Lincoln's legacy was not made before the statesman's assassination, nor was an arrangement made between historians before the conception of the Constitution. Nuance is a reality of history, and Oakes exemplifies the necessarily nuanced historical thinking when analyzing the life of a polarizing figure such as Lincoln. In his work, *The Fiery Trial*, Eric Foner details many of the same sentiments that Oakes puts forward, but approaches them in a separate way. He recognizes that the academic rhetoric is turbulent at best, and Lincoln's legacy is interpreted in an infinite number of ways.<sup>6</sup> This conclusion is consistent with Oakes' understanding of the issue. Foner has a story that he wants to tell, and that story is about Lincoln's relationship with the issue of slavery. He feels that if he were to engage in the same approach as Oakes, it would "result in a much longer, and extremely tedious, narrative."<sup>7</sup> So, Foner explains that Lincoln had his shortcomings, but he also fundamentally, economically, and morally repudiated the institution of slavery. Oakes' and Foner's conclusions intertwine in an exciting way in which they draw the same suppositions about the influences that led to Lincoln's philosophical view on slavery. Foner mentions abolitionists as integral influencers to the political field that Lincoln was forced to operate within,<sup>8</sup> and Oakes writes that antislavery constitutionalism fundamentally aligned with how abolitionists and Lincoln interpreted the Constitution, thus influencing their approaches to politics.<sup>9</sup> There are differences in how these historians approach Lincoln and how they interpret his legacy. Still, their interpretations have more similarities than differences, which is perfectly analogous to

how Oakes describes the relationship between Lincoln and antislavery radicals (abolitionists).<sup>10</sup> The academic narrative surrounding Lincoln has progressed from analyzing his character and political decisions to a nuanced view on the external forces that influenced his political thinking. Historian David S. Reynolds draws attention to this rhetorical shift in the preface of his biography on Lincoln titled *Abe*. Reynolds explicitly details this by writing,

This book explores the ways in which his absorption and transformation of roiling cultural currents made him into the Leader Leo Tolstoy hailed as 'the only real giant' among 'all the great national heroes and statesmen of history,' and whom Karl Marx called 'one of the rare men who succeed in becoming great, without ceasing to be good.'<sup>11</sup>

Despite their varying motivations and perspectives, Oakes, Foner, and Reynolds understand that Lincoln's antislavery stance was influenced by cultural movements such as antislavery constitutionalism and the abolitionist movement. This essay follows in the footsteps of these forward-thinking historians and takes a broad, nuanced view of Lincoln's political action. Additionally, given the understanding that external movements influenced Lincoln's perspective on slavery, this essay takes a direct investigation into how Lincoln interpreted these movements, understood their cultural impact, and implemented his antislavery initiatives through swaying public sentiment.

### **The Philosophy**

Slavery was an absolute moral evil to Lincoln, and he would stop at nothing to eliminate the perpetuation of this evil. Lincoln's philosophy on slavery evolved and gained influence from groups such as the "radical" abolitionist movement, but he maintained a consistent view on human rights throughout his career. There are intricacies within Lincoln's philosophy,

and examining those intricacies lay a foundation for how Lincoln went about implementing his gradual destruction of pro-slavery sentiment. An analysis of Lincoln's philosophy on natural rights, citizenship, and individual state rights is necessary to establish the trajectory of his political decisions and required to qualify his ideas on slavery. The theme of Lincoln's preponderance of existential thinking is not lost in this explanation, and he thought deeply about the Declaration of Independence and the application of its assertions. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were values that were unlimited to any race under Lincoln's interpretation of this revolutionary doctrine. He regarded slavery as an act of evil, an evil that thwarted life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for an entire race of people. James Oakes details three philosophical, legal, and applicable distinctions that outline Lincoln's thinking on slavery. The three distinctions are natural rights, citizenship rights, and finally, states' rights. These distinctions cooperate while also existing in a bottom-up hierarchical system. Lincoln began his thinking on slavery from the foundation of these distinctions, and he distinguished this foundation as natural rights. In 1854, he delivered a speech in Peoria, Illinois, where he addressed the Kansas-Nebraska Act to clarify his position on the expansion of slavery. Lincoln's position on natural rights is best represented by a passage within his speech where he states, "the doctrine of self-government is right--absolutely and eternally right..."<sup>12</sup> This is further evidence for Lincoln's belief that natural rights are a fundamental building block to the Declaration of Independence's freedoms afforded to United States citizens. He continues by saying, "But if the negro is a man, is it not to that extent, a total destruction of self-government, to say that he too shall govern himself?"<sup>13</sup> Abraham Lincoln uses this argument to say that a man is afforded the right to govern himself regardless of race. He later explains that despotism, in this context, is that of a man

that believes he is afforded the right to control himself, but does not afford another man that possibility. He concludes this thought by saying, "If the negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that 'all men are created equal;' and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another."<sup>14</sup> Lincoln certainly feels that slavery is a usurpation of the right of a man to self-govern and that race should not inhibit a man's pursuit of self-governing. Oakes explains that Lincoln created a distinction for his thoughts on this issue by adding an egalitarian element to his interpretation of the Declaration of Independence. His democratic counterparts did not concur.<sup>15</sup> Oakes's second distinction is the privileges and immunities that Lincoln believes citizenship affords a citizen. Before a man is a citizen of a state, he is a citizen of the nation, and the government distinguishes the privileges he can exercise. The Constitution says nothing on the issue of race, nor does it establish a variance because of ancestral heritage. Lincoln represented this viewpoint by strongly opposing the Dred Scot Decision while supporting the Fugitive Slave Clause, which granted any free black person their citizenship to the nation. Still, the sentiment remains, Lincoln did not believe that it was enshrined in the ethos of American doctrine that citizenship or self-governing capabilities should be withheld from any man. The only viable opinion for Lincoln to posture on slavery while possessing these values and principles is to oppose any inquisition of a citizen's right to what the Constitution affords them. Unfortunately, the following distinction is where some historians find inconsistencies within Lincoln's narrative on slavery, and they cite his neglect to uphold his narrative under scrutiny in varying political environments. He believed that he could not impede the laws set forth by individual states under the Constitution. The ponderous questions associated with race relations were asked in every state, and each state's conclusions differed, which made Lincoln's strategy

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**Lincoln navigated politics in a narrative-driven way, and he implemented his philosophy within his speeches, writings, and letters throughout his entire career. He burdened himself with the responsibility of implementing his ideas and establishing an anti-slavery spirit in the people of the nation.**

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Lincoln navigated politics in a narrative-driven way, and he implemented his philosophy within his speeches, writings, and letters throughout his entire career. He burdened himself with the responsibility of implementing his ideas and establishing an anti-slavery spirit in the people of the nation. Examining his work within the framing of Oakes' distinctions provides a road map to connect his rhetoric with his legal action. Establishing a fundamental understanding of Lincoln's opinion on natural rights can be achieved by reading an address given to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois. He specifically targeted the issue of slavery within this speech but began with celebrating the actions of the revolutionary patriots that fought for freedom in America. He says,

Theirs was the task (and nobly they performed it) to possess themselves, and through themselves, us, of this godly land; and to uprear upon its hills and its valleys, a political edifice of liberty and equal rights; 'tis ours only, to transmit these, the former, unprofaned by the foot of an invader; the latter, undecayed by the lapse of time, and untorn by usurpation.<sup>16</sup>

He does not take lightly the sacrifice that patriots made for the sake of perpetuating freedoms within America. He speaks specifically of equal rights under the law. He tells the crowd that it is the responsibility of successive Americans to carry the ideals from the revolution into the country's development. Since much of Lincoln's philosophy rested under the shadow of *American revolutionary* doctrine, Lincoln believed that perpetuating the ideals, values, and principles set forth by the individuals that founded the nation was a valid argument that could persuade the public that slavery did not align with those principles. The more impactful aspect of his rhetoric is the context in which it was given. Lincoln was a young twenty-

on the issue difficult. He was unable to avoid this politically complex issue. Suppose he provides an answer that supports the Constitution where each state is well within its legal rights to legislate on slavery within its borders. In that case, he is labeled a racist for supporting states where slavery is prevalent. Suppose he determines that his position is to usurp state rights and force his philosophy of natural rights on the states. In that case, he is violating the Constitution, contradicting the frame that the Declaration of Independence is lawfully applicable through, and denying his initial concept of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. So, in this challenging position, Lincoln must play the game of politics and defer to state rights. All of the intricacies and nuances of Lincoln's philosophy developed as time progressed, but the fundamental moral pillars of his thinking remained. He was determined to profess these political and philosophical ideas to a fractured nation, hoping that good men and women would believe in him.

eight-year-old entering the muddy waters of politics in 1838, and the above quote represents the early implementation of his philosophy. Whether this implementation of his philosophy was conscious or subconscious, it still carries an insurmountable weight as a testament to Lincoln's view of natural rights—rights which he believed to be vested to all Americans in the Declaration of Independence. In 1857, he wrote on the Dred Scott Supreme Court case and pondered the ramifications that a decision of this magnitude could manufacture. His focus was on the scope of the government and the consequences of an overreaching court, but toward the end of this short letter, he addresses citizenship rights indirectly. He writes, "It is this; that so soon as the Supreme court decides that Dred Scott is a slave, the whole community must decide that not only Dred Scott, but that all persons in like condition, are rightfully slaves."<sup>17</sup> He believed that the federal government does not have the authority to determine the citizenship designation of "slaves" over the scope of the entire country. This relates to his interpretation of the Constitution's detailing on citizenship by race, or lack thereof. In a speech on the decision, Lincoln outlines his positioning of the case as a representation of his opinion. Lincoln used the Declaration of Independence as a defense for his disposition on the matter and used it to refute the opposing side put forward by Judge Stephen Douglas. Lincoln states, "I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include all men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal in all respects." He further explains that the authors of the Declaration of Independence designated certain unalienable rights to all citizens regardless of color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity.<sup>18</sup> Lincoln also states that the intention for the phrase "all men are created equal" was not for the initial separation from Great Britain, but was meant for future use. The founders needed a process that eliminated the possibility of the government designating

particular groups of people as unequal to the rest of the population. Lincoln's rhetoric in this speech yields historians and readers alike a window into the ethos of his philosophy. Finally, Lincoln addressed state rights in an analogous way by which he approached the citizenship issue and even used much of the same rhetorical analysis that he used in the Dred Scott speech. Lincoln's opinion on the problem can be justly amalgamated by investigating his address delivered on October 16th, 1854, in Peoria, Illinois. He thoroughly denounced the idea that the expansion of slavery should be considered justified by law. The complexity and depth of Lincoln's words should be examined meticulously, beginning with a statement so poignant and profound that it represents the entire thesis of this paper. Lincoln says,

If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do, as to the existing institution. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves and send them to Liberia—to their own native land. But a moment's reflection would convince me, that whatever of high hope, (as I think there is) there may be in this, in the long run, its sudden execution is impossible.<sup>19</sup>

Much of this quote initially aligns with the views of the American Colonization Society, which is based on the freedom then displacement of enslaved people to their native lands. His restraint in this specific section is reticent, and officially announcing the transformation of one's ideas requires a level of confidence that is sparse within politics, especially in the modern era. Still, further within the quote, Lincoln provides an insight into his inner dialogue and decides that he has hope for a society where formerly enslaved people and white men can live in harmony with one another. He explains that immediate emancipation and integration would also be a viable option as the integration would not publicly be accepted and even admits that he is



Memorial to U.S. President Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Birthplace site in Hodgenville, Kentucky. Photographer Carol M. Highsmith. Library of Congress.

unsure of his feelings on the issue. He then concludes with a "gradual emancipation" plan to address the problem in the best conceivable way.<sup>20</sup> Lincoln's application of gradual emancipation within the context of this speech can be interpreted as his reluctance to provide an immediate answer to the issue or can be interpreted as another example of his restraint. He defends state rights and uses the Constitution as an authoritative framework for his executive inability to interfere with the state legislature, which is integral to Lincoln's reluctance to make an immediate legal decision and the social zeitgeist not fully accepting integration of the black race.<sup>21</sup> He knew that swaying public sentiment would be a mountain that required immense determination and patience, so Lincoln used the Constitution, the Declaration, and his values as motivation to continue his ominous effort.

Lincoln implemented his philosophy on slavery by espousing antislavery rhetoric. Much of Lincoln's philosophy has been discovered by historians while investigating the essence of the antislavery constitutionalist movement. His words at the address to the Young Men's Lyceum indicate that his opinion on natural rights under the law as a twenty-eight-year-old

aligned with the views of the abolitionists who also ascribed to antislavery constitutionalism. This interpretation was set forth and realized by the radical abolitionist movement, for which Lincoln maintained a cautious perception. In retrospect, many of Lincoln's political ideologies regarding race and slavery toward the end of his career align with the ideals espoused by the "radical" abolitionists. So, historians such as James Oakes tend to conclude that Lincoln progressed the cultural tide which was initiated by the radical abolitionists.<sup>22</sup> This is a small yet impactful part of the construction of Lincoln's philosophical solution to the existential confrontation facing America. The rise of the abolitionist movement began to pressure the legal system in America to find a solution to the moral transgression of slavery, and Lincoln knew that swift legal action would perpetuate conflict and potentially separate the nation for the near future—this was a risk that Lincoln could not take lightly. Due to his comprehension of the impact immediate integration could have, he leaned on his gradual emancipation policy, which would manifest itself as an inclination toward swaying public sentiment against the moral evil of slavery.

### **The Application**

To get a complete picture of Lincoln's legacy, it is necessary to define his understanding, his feelings, and how he ultimately implemented this policy. His debates with Stephen Douglas are the most extended forms of documented introspection that historians use to inquire about Lincoln's true thoughts and feelings on the matter of slavery. The first of these debates took place in Ottawa, Illinois, and it is widely considered Lincoln's worst performance in a public forum. The Democratic-leaning newspaper, the *Illinois State Register*, published an article that stated that Lincoln "stumbled, floundered, and, instead of the speech that he had prepared to make, bored his audience by using up a substantial portion

of his time reading from a speech of 1854, of his own. He did not 'face the music' upon the points made by Douglas." The Chicago Times declared, "He writhed and twisted, but he could not keep up under the infliction, and at last, long before the expiration of his time, he broke down."<sup>23</sup> This is a fair assessment of his performance in this first debate, but it is not the substance that is important; the substance comes from his detailing of public sentiment and the political advantage gained from harnessing it. Lincoln states, "In this and like communities, public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed."<sup>24</sup> There is no more explicit representation of Lincoln's position on the benefit of equipping public sentiment within his catalog of writings and speeches. Under this view, politicians that succeed at mobilizing public sentiment are the actual generators of law, and without said mobilization, they are merely acting on the surface of political opinion. Most of Lincoln's rhetoric in this speech is directed at Judge Douglas and Douglas's reluctance to grasp a nuanced position on the Dred Scott decision. Lincoln set his sights on proving that Douglas's immense influence could harm the nation and perpetuate the expansion of slavery, even cementing federal law that could prevent any state from outlawing slavery. On this, Lincoln says, "Then what is necessary for the nationalization of slavery? It is simply the next Dred Scott decision. It is merely for the Supreme Court to decide that no State under the Constitution can exclude it, just as they have already decided that under the Constitution neither Congress nor the Territorial Legislature can do it."<sup>25</sup> Lincoln despised the thought of an American political institution such as the Supreme Court, of which Douglas was an integral piece, making such monumental decisions that are not constrained

by checks and balances. He is warning that a man such as Douglas has so much political influence across the nation that if he supports the decision to limit other branches of government from making their own decisions on slavery, this sentiment will reverberate throughout the public.

Lincoln clearly felt that public sentiment was the hand that could lift the veil of racism. David Zarefsky analyzes Lincoln's "public sentiment is everything" proposition in his article titled, "Public Sentiment is Everything": Lincoln's View of Political Persuasion. Zarefsky details six assumptions and implications of Lincoln's assertion that provide an understanding of its application. As a preface, Zarefsky writes,

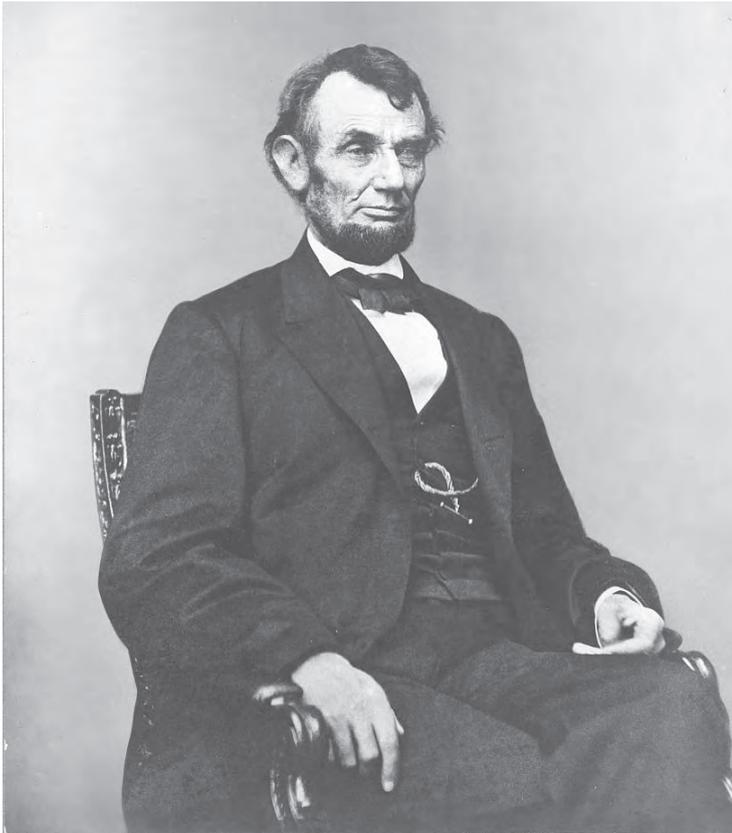
Lincoln's Ottawa proclamation that 'public sentiment is everything' did double duty for him. It enabled him to magnify the scope of Douglas's errors and to make believable the claim that the incumbent somehow was connected to a plot to nationalize slavery. And it enabled him to resolve what otherwise would have been a problematic tension in his position, between espousing an absolute value and supporting a limited political program.<sup>26</sup>

The first of underlying assumptions derived from the sentiment put forth by Lincoln in Ottawa is that he considered what he would refer to as the public as a singular collective. Zarefsky contends that Lincoln did not think of the public as a collection of individual sentiments, but rather a collective singular entity.<sup>27</sup> This assumption is critical to recognize because it acts as a basis for understanding Lincoln's entire approach to slavery. If he were able to sway public sentiment away from perpetuating the institution of slavery, this would mean the collective public opinion of the nation would stand incongruent, thus voting against slavery's expansion and, ultimately, its destruction. The third of these assumptions

that Zarefsky outlines are Lincoln's intentional wording of public sentiment. Zarefsky writes, "Public sentiment is more enduring than public opinion; it touches deeper roots in an individual's system of beliefs and values. And it is not purely cognitive and rational; it reflects emotional wellsprings, too."<sup>28</sup> Public sentiment has the ability to impact the public's approach to everyday decisions. Within this context, the public may approach their perceptions of race differently if they believe that the institution of slavery is fated for destruction. Lincoln thought that public sentiment had a tangible actuality and presence in society and culture, and this idea harkens back to his belief that sentiment exists as an entity. Lincoln argued that the Dred Scott Decision would have been impossible without the preface of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the election of 1856.<sup>29</sup> Though these are legal arguments, he is basing these legal arguments on his philosophy of slavery. The sixth assumption that Zarefsky pulls from Lincoln's public sentiment idea is that public sentiment allows citizens of a nation to act independently of the governing agency, and it gives individuals the ability to be active participants in social dialogue.<sup>30</sup> Though Lincoln would eventually see slavery outlawed, he believed he needed to afford citizens the freedom to draw their conclusions. These examples show how Lincoln believed that a long-term solution using public sentiment would liberate the public from top-down governmental control and give citizens of the United States the ability to exist on the same plane of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, regardless of race.

Lincoln's philosophy was never a purely analytical exercise. He was fully committed to taking political action to manifest his ideals. And while researching this topic, a lot of the substance, ideas, theories, and propositions much like the ones outlined and analyzed by Zarefsky, seemed intangible. This can make Abraham Lincoln's gradual emancipation approach seem wistful and inapplicable in a legal sense.

Still, in the winter of 1849, Lincoln took his philosophy to The District of Columbia and proposed an amendment that reflected his philosophy on slavery. An amendment such as this had been theorized upon but rarely even considered a valuable legal action that echoed the public sentiment of the district. After proposing an amendment to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, Lincoln admitted that he sampled fifteen citizens residing in the District, and zero of the fifteen supported the amendment.<sup>31</sup> Regardless of the result and acceptance of the amendment, this is not the correct conclusion to draw within the context of a gradual approach to slavery legislation. A useful conclusion within this context would be the gesture, the proposal itself, and the wording that Lincoln chooses to use in specific sections of the amendment. Section one of the amendment acts as a proxy thesis to the entire amendment specifying Lincoln's position on slavery in the District of Columbia and beyond the legal bounds of the District. He writes, "Be enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled; That no person not now within the District of Columbia, nor now owned by any person or persons now resident within it, nor hereafter born within it, shall be held in slavery within said District."<sup>32</sup> His rhetoric regarding enslaved individuals had rarely been expressed in such a forum, and the only parallel view at the time was that of prominent abolitionists, such as Frederick Douglass. Although the congruency of the two perspectives drifts apart as Lincoln details the subsequent sections, the sentiments are the same. Douglass' legal position supported outright abolition with immediate effect, primarily due to his experience as an enslaved person. In the summer of 1841, Douglass attended a self-proclaimed "grand antislavery" convention spearheaded by the abolitionist writer William Lloyd Garrison. While at the meeting, Douglass admired Garrison's speaking on the issue of slavery and was even



Five dollar bill portrait of Abraham Lincoln. Photographer Anthony Berger. Library of Congress

asked by Garrison to speak, but could barely recollect the statements he made.<sup>33</sup> But what Mr. Douglass did recollect was the villainy of slavery and his immense contempt for slaveholders, which he felt compelled to declare. He even believed that his liberty was in no way designated and that public sentiment at the time would have him rescinded into shackles once again.<sup>34</sup> Though Lincoln and Douglass' methods of emancipation differed, they shared a willingness to condemn the natural evil of slavery, a shared unpopular public sentiment; And though Douglass's writings preceded Lincoln's proposal by eight years, the overwhelming majority of public opinion had not changed.

The year 1849 was just the beginning of this ideological

and cultural revolution from within which Lincoln started to persuade public opinion against slavery and its expansion within the Union. His integrity and dedication to the cause did not slow down on his road to the White House. Ten years later, in 1859, Lincoln delivered a speech in Chicago, Illinois, a battleground of public sentiment that carried a disproportionate amount of weight for Lincoln, compared to other states. Much of the rhetoric he espoused in earlier speeches were passive and theoretical. Still, as time passed, his approach slowly began to turn assertive and he positioned himself on the offensive. Lincoln told the crowd,

Stand together, ready, with match in hand. Allow nothing to turn you to the right or left. Remember how long you have been in setting out on the true course; how long have you been in getting your neighbors to understand and believe as you now do. Stand by your principles; stand by your guns; and victory complete and permanent is sure at last.<sup>35</sup>

In a time when the public dialogue surrounding slavery was becoming nationalized, this call to action was a critical step forward for Lincoln's plan, and it reflected the urgency that Lincoln felt. The urgency heavily weighed on his conscience, so much so that he spoke about the issue of urgency in this very speech. Afraid that individuals would lose faith, he consistently tried to notify the audience that he was aware of the difficulties that patience toward the issue imposed. But he relied on his consistency and countered the impatience, emphasizing the ethos of his argument against slavery: a moral, political, and social wrong.<sup>36</sup> Leading to the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln monitored the public temperature and delivered a speech at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, addressing his understanding of the public's sentiment on slavery. He invoked the "patriotism, wisdom and devotion to principle" spoken at the hall as a

muse and told of sentiments that shaped the feeling, he was able to draw upon. Lincoln begins this speech with a humble opening that provides an insight into his gratitude for ideas outside of his own.<sup>37</sup> The written form of this speech is important because it outlines how the audience responded to things that Lincoln stated. This is an isolated yet impactful example of the sentiment changing in specific areas. Crowds willing to visually and auditorily declare their position on slavery were becoming a regular occurrence. The crowd cheered after Lincoln proclaimed this about the Declaration of Independence, "It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men and that all should have an equal chance. (Cheers.)"<sup>38</sup> The crowd then applauded as Lincoln said,

Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help save it. If it can't be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But, if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle- I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it. (Applause.)<sup>39</sup>

Disregarding Lincoln's uncanny premonition of his death, the audience took to these ideas unanimously, and the reception is symbolic of the change in public sentiment. Though Philadelphia is not a representation of the entire nation's sentiment toward the abolition of slavery, it is still a historical marker that provides an insight into how crowds of people that attended political speeches in the original capital of the United States displayed their reception to Lincoln's ideas. This speech was delivered in the same year as his First Inaugural Address. He explicitly laid out the two opposing moral sides of the slavery debate, the only substantial debate.<sup>40</sup> This was the final piece of Lincoln's gradual emancipation; this was

the culmination, the crescendo to his philosophy. He cried for unity; he called for the nation's people to take responsibility for the institutions that belong to them and make a difference with their voices and votes. He influenced the zeitgeist, but he knew that everything was out of his control and that he could lead a horse to water, but he could not force that horse to drink, metaphorically speaking. The Emancipation Proclamation was the legal reflection of Lincoln's belief that the nation had transcended beyond rudimentary ideas on slavery. He believed that the country had now accepted that, under The Declaration and The Constitution, all persons should be liberated from slavery.

### **The Conclusion**

Lincoln has achieved mythological status in the American historical imagination. But Lincoln was no myth. He was a human being with the capacity to misspeak; he possessed the power to love; he experienced the lows and the highs; he doubted his faith and he questioned his self-worth in ways that would be familiar to any human being in any era. His fallibility is what has stamped his name into the fabric of American lore and placed his face on Mount Rushmore. Lincoln once said, "This task of gratitude to our fathers, justice to ourselves, duty to prosperity, and love for our species in general, all imperatively require us to perform." As Americans, we must perform. We must perpetuate the sentiment espoused by Mr. Lincoln for the sake of our species. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution began the freedom conversation within the newly liberated United States of America. Few men understood these documents to represent the ideals needed to be held by a nation of people, and Abraham Lincoln was one of those men. Interpretations of these documents varied by group, thus spawning differing perceptions of freedom and eventually calling slavery into question—the confrontation that

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Lincoln believed was destined by fate. Abolitionists supported an antislavery understanding of The Constitution, and pro-slavery groups ordained The Constitution to be of the pro-slavery designation. Lincoln understood and distinguished levels of rights, and he was unavailable to compromise at the base level, which was natural rights. He always believed that removing an individual's ability to achieve life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness was a moral evil, and slavery was an institution that perpetrated this moral evil. He knew the issue of slavery to be a moral, philosophical, and ethical battlefield that must be won by persuading public sentiment because war and conflict could potentially break a flowering yet fragile nation. Lincoln set out on a patient journey to persuade public sentiment through speeches, rhetoric, and legal decisions. A gradual approach to emancipation was the only way Lincoln could achieve unity among the nation's public and perpetuate

that unity long after his death. He needed to develop a philosophy based on legal precedent that could withstand the scrutiny of aggressors like Stephen Douglas and Roger B. Taney; He also needed to critically analyze his philosophy for intellectual failure in all aspects of its argument. This meant discerning levels of rights and the application of his philosophy within these levels. Natural rights, citizenship rights, and state rights were all designations where his philosophy needed to be applicable. Lincoln answered all the questions from his counterparts in politics, and he applied his philosophy by never faltering in his position and leading by example. The Dred Scott decision and the Kansas-Nebraska Act provided him with the opportunity to make his philosophy applicable to legal decisions.

Tangible political results shaped the public attitude toward Lincoln as an influential statesman and his road to the White House. On that road, he spoke words of unity and liberty for all that began as provocative ideas but eventually became the framework for the zeitgeist of a nation. The most significant intellectual, political maneuver by an American Statesman culminated in 1863 with the Emancipation Proclamation. He delivered that proclamation with integrity and in congruence with the gradual emancipation philosophy that he dreamt of in 1838 as a young man. He did not name the gradual approach until 1854, but the foundation of his moral position lay in the lines of the Declaration of Independence and the sections of The Constitution. Because of the weight that the confrontation of slavery carried, Lincoln was hyperaware of the societal pulse regarding slavery. Lincoln believed that slavery was a natural evil and that it usurped personal rights that the Constitution afforded to all citizens of the United States regardless of race. This was the public sentiment that all Americans had to perpetuate.

## ENDNOTES

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- 5 Oakes, *The Crooked Path to Abolition*, xxiii
- 6 Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, xvii
- 7 Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, xvii
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- 16 Abraham Lincoln, *Speeches and Writings. Speeches, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings, The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, 28.
- 17 Ibid, 389.
- 18 Ibid, 398.
- 19 Ibid, 316.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid. This specific footnote references where Lincoln openly admits that if enslaved people were freed and integrated into society, there would be a lack of a uniform congruence from the white citizens of America. Lincoln even admits that he doesn't know if he would accept it.
- 22 James Oakes, *The Crooked Path to Abolition*, xxvii.
- 23 *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), Aug. 24, 1858; *Chicago Times*, Aug. 22, 1858.
- 24 Abraham Lincoln, *Speeches and Writings. Speeches, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings, The Lincoln-Douglas Debates*, 524.
- 25 Ibid, 524.
- 26 David Zarefsky, "'Public Sentiment Is Everything': Lincoln's View of Political Persuasion," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 15, no. 2 (1994): pp. 23-40, [https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0015.204/~public-sentiment-is-everything-lincolns-view-of-political?rgn=main;view=fulltext#no%20te\\_6](https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0015.204/~public-sentiment-is-everything-lincolns-view-of-political?rgn=main;view=fulltext#no%20te_6).
- 27 Ibid.
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- 29 Ibid.
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## ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVISM AND ADVANCES: A HISTORIOGRAPHY

Haley Wells

### Introduction

On November 1, 2021, the United States Supreme Court began hearing oral arguments about the Texas near-total abortion ban.<sup>1</sup> On December 10, 2021, the court returned with a ruling stating that challenges to the ban could continue in the lower courts. However, by refusing to state whether the ban was unconstitutional, the court effectively the ban on abortions to continue.<sup>2</sup> In December, the Court also reviewed a Mississippi abortion law that banned abortions after fifteen weeks, “about two months earlier than Roe and later decisions allow.”<sup>3</sup> As of March 2022, the Supreme Court has yet to return with a ruling on the Mississippi abortion ban, and it is unclear when this ruling will occur. This Mississippi law was enacted in 2018— one year before Alabama governor Kay Ivey signed the Human Life Protection Act, which banned all abortions “unless a woman’s life is threatened or there is a lethal fetal anomaly” and made performing an abortion a felony carrying up to ninety-nine years of jail time.<sup>4</sup> Although the Human Life Protection Act is currently blocked, it could be reinstated if the Supreme Court rules in favor of the Mississippi abortion ban. Georgia—which signed a heartbeat bill banning almost all abortions after six weeks of pregnancy in May 2019—Kentucky, Ohio, South Carolina, and Tennessee all passed similar restrictions in early 2019.<sup>5</sup>

These laws are all part of a nationwide movement that has been ongoing since before the 1973 Supreme Court ruling *Roe v. Wade* (which made abortion legal in many circumstances): the anti-abortion movement. Since the inception of anti-abortion activism, scholars have written about the ideologies, actions, legislation, and historical impact of the movement—scholarship which reflects as much diversity as the movement itself. While this scholarship has

always been critical to understanding the implications and trajectory of anti-abortion activism in the United States, in light of recent and ongoing legislative developments, examining the work that has been done so far and charting what remains to be done becomes particularly relevant.

### Anti-Abortion Activism Before *Roe v. Wade*

Anti-abortion activism predates *Roe v. Wade*. In her book *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community* (published 1989), Faye D. Ginsburg charts some of the earliest known instances of American anti-abortion activism, which took place in the nineteenth-century. She writes, “Abortion was a relatively common as well as accepted practice during much of the nineteenth century.”<sup>6</sup> However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, male physicians who were “competing with midwives, local healers, homeopaths, and, increasingly, abortionists”<sup>7</sup> attempted to criminalize abortion to take control of the practice of medicine. The professionalization of medicine began with the founding of the American Medical Association (AMA) in 1847; then, ten years later, “Horatio B. Storer, a Harvard-trained doctor specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, launched a national drive within the AMA to lobby state legislatures to criminalize all induced abortions.”<sup>8</sup> The role of the AMA in working to criminalize abortions reflects both similarities and differences between the first phase of anti-abortion activism and anti-abortion activism after *Roe v. Wade*. A 2010 article notes how the AMA supported the ban on “partial birth” abortions that passed in 2003 after the Republican Party (which spearheaded the ban) agreed to provide “stronger safeguards for doctors facing criminal penalties.”<sup>9</sup> However, other medical organizations, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) spoke out

against the ban, arguing that the procedure is “necessary and proper in certain cases.”<sup>10</sup> These two sources show that male-dominated medical organizations, such as the AMA, have a long history of prioritizing their own professional development and interests over the health of American women, while organizations that support women’s health and bodily autonomy often face disapproval from other medical organizations.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Growth of Anti-Abortion Activism after Roe v. Wade**

In the years following Roe v. Wade, anti-abortion activism exploded. Whereas the first generation of anti-abortion activists had predominantly been physicians attempting to criminalize abortions to professionalize their practices, anti-abortion activists after the ruling were typically ordinary people attempting to enact change at the legislative level. In an article published in 2006, Richard L. Hughes argues that anti-abortion activists in the years immediately following the ruling drew heavily from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> He traces this Civil Rights-inspired activism to Chuck Fager, an activist from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the National Youth Pro-life Coalition (NYPC), which espoused nonviolent civil disobedience to fight abortion.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, he discusses the contributions of Black civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson who compared arguments about abortion being a private choice to pro-slavery arguments, stating, “That [privacy] was the premise of slavery. You could not protest the existence or treatment of slaves on the plantation because that was private and therefore outside your right to be concerned.”<sup>14</sup> In her recent publication, *Tiny You: A Western History of the Anti-Abortion Movement* (2020), Jennifer L. Holland also notes that the anti-abortion movement used the rhetoric of anti-slavery abolitionist to argue against the legalization of abortion: “Activists fashioned themselves as morally upstanding

abolitionists, not Confederates subject to the whims of an oppressive North.”<sup>15</sup> Referencing anti-abortion activists John and Barbara Wilkes, authors of the Handbook on Abortion, Holland writes, “The Wilkes argued that both cases [Roe v. Wade and the Dred Scott decision] made some groups ‘less than human’ and both practices—slavery and abortion—degraded life.”<sup>16</sup> Whereas Hughes focuses on politically progressive activists who saw anti-abortion activism as an extension of their previous social justice activism, Holland argues that, “Through such rhetorical work, activists created a moral whiteness, where conservative Americans assumed the role of freedom fighters and justice warriors.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Holland suggests that “Anti-abortion activists continued to develop a new type of white identity—one based on their claims to common sense and morality. They claimed white conservatives were the true inheritors of the black civil rights movement.”<sup>18</sup>

Although both Holland and Hughes identify liberal civil rights rhetoric utilized by the anti-abortion movement, they differ when identifying the motives and political backgrounds of those who used this rhetoric. Hughes points to a small but vocal minority who genuinely saw legalized abortion as a new way of oppressing people of color, while Holland argues that the majority of anti-abortion activists were white conservatives who co-opted progressive narratives while simultaneously excluding people of color. For example, Holland shows how white Catholic anti-abortion activists frequently excluded Catholics of color from the movement. Though they were “demographically speaking, ripe for pro-life politicization” because they “generally had ‘traditional’ families and opposed abortion personally,” they were never incorporated into the anti-abortion movement en masse because they preferred to focus on a variety of social reforms, while abortion became the “single issue” for white Catholics.<sup>19</sup> Because white Catholics “missed the ways that ethnic



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Mexicans encouraged social justice campaigns, campaigns from which the church's anti-abortion crusade often distracted," and "tried to shoehorn Mexican Catholics into the mold of European Catholicism," they kept their movement predominantly white and conservative.

Holland also notes the anti-abortion movement's use of Holocaust rhetoric. She writes, "Comparisons to the Holocaust became the common refrain of pro-life Mormons, Protestants, and Catholics alike; by the 1970s, the Holocaust had become a central moral reference point for Americans."<sup>20</sup> In observing how Holocaust rhetoric was also incorporated into the movement, Holland charts the rapid evolution of anti-abortion rhetoric and ideologies. Karissa Haugeberg has also observed the usage of Holocaust imagery, writing, "The Holocaust analogy permitted antiabortion activists to criticize the entire apparatus that allowed abortions to continue, including abortion providers and clinic staff, as well as the police officers, judges, lawyers, and prison guards who enforced the law."<sup>21</sup> Haugeberg takes her analysis of Holocaust rhetoric farther than Holland does, explaining why this particular rhetoric was so effective and how it affected extremist anti-abortion activism. She states, "By highlighting

how dozens of categories of professionals and bureaucrats conspired in the effort to make abortion permissible" —which is similar to what happened during the Holocaust, when Jewish genocide was state-sponsored and organized— "pro-life activists justified their use of aggressive tactics as part of a larger battle to dismantle a corrupt system."<sup>22</sup> While Hughes does not examine how the shift in rhetoric endorsed the shift from more peaceful activism to violent actions, he does briefly note how the rhetoric of civil rights became less popular: "[Randal] Terry [the founder of the anti-abortion organization Operation Rescue] also dropped the civil rights term 'sit-in' in favor of 'rescue,' which was more acceptable among a conservative movement less comfortable with overt references to sixties activism."<sup>23</sup> Hugh's article supports Holland's thesis, as he notes how conservatives co-opted civil rights rhetoric. He traces the trajectory of Randal Terry, noting how Terry moved from progressive feminism to conservatism, eventually espousing civil disobedience within Operation Rescue to "bring an end to the biological holocaust."<sup>24</sup> Whereas Hughes recounts Terry's holocaust rhetoric without drawing attention to or analyzing it, Holland draws attention to it and notes its racial undertones. Thus, Holland's intervention focuses more explicitly on the racialized components of the movement than any other source examined.

### Origins of Post-1973 Anti-Abortion Activism

Among examined sources, Holland uniquely points to the origins of the post-1973 anti-abortion movement in previous sexual moralist movements. She writes, "It was the anti-porn and anti-birth control movements where they [pro-life activists] formed the intellectual frameworks that would later translate into anti-abortion politics."<sup>25</sup> Holland concludes, "Ultimately the story of the anti-abortion movement is not one of activists who lost their liberalism, but rather one of sexual moralists who found their party."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, although Holland's argument does concur with Hughes' and Ginsburg's

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**In tracing the roots of the post-Roe v. Wade anti-abortion movement back to the anti-birth control and anti-porn movements, Holland, like Ginsburg, places the movement within a larger historical context and frames the pro-life movement as the logical next step in a series of sexually moralistic movements.**

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Holland, however, Haugeberg does not identify the role of sexual moralism and social conservatism in each of these movements. Holland agrees with Ginsburg on party politics, stating, “These nascent social conservatives did not have a single partisan home; some were Democrats...while others were avowed Republicans.”<sup>29</sup> But she identifies a concern over sexual morality rather than an interest in the right to life as the basis of the movement. In tracing the roots of the post-Roe v. Wade anti-abortion movement back to the anti-birth control and anti-porn movements, Holland, like Ginsburg, places the movement within a larger historical context and frames the pro-life movement as the logical next step in a series of sexually moralistic movements.

Holland takes her analysis beyond a discussion of long-standing moralistic (and patriarchal) movements; she also grounds her examination of these movements in an examination of racial politics. She explains how concerns about errant sexuality became racially charged in the years leading up to Roe v. Wade:

Beginning in the 1960s, social critics no longer pointed to errant white men or poor migrants, but rather to black people—and black women in particular—as primary culprits...In the comments on the 1965 birth control bill, conservative white Coloradoans renewed the link between women and irresponsible public assistance. While conservatives named the sex of the ‘undeserving poor’ in their comments, many surely had race in mind as well.<sup>30</sup>

She connects the racism implicit in the anti-birth control movement to the racism found in the pro-life movement, writing, “It was moralists—those white Middle Americans—who would protect society from both white elites and black deviants.”<sup>31</sup> Her book adds to the history of the anti-abortion movement by showing how the movement foregrounded race

to a degree (all three note the initial utilization of civil rights rhetoric, though they differ in their interpretations of that utilization), it also differs from them by pointing to the origins of the post-Roe v. Wade movement. Whereas Hughes argues that some of the earliest pro-life activism was spearheaded by former civil rights activists, and Ginsburg argues that the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) was (initially, at least) composed of “a diverse constituency from right to left united around the single issue of the ‘right-to-life,’”<sup>27</sup> Holland argues that the movement was predominately composed of social conservatives from its inception. Karissa Haugeberg briefly references how many anti-abortion activists opposed birth control before turning their attention to fighting abortion, but she focuses on how these anti-birth control activists turned anti-abortion activists “questioned the legitimacy of organized medicine itself”<sup>28</sup> as a way of arguing that both birth control and abortions endangered women’s lives. Unlike

far more than scholars had previously supposed.

### Religion in the Post-1973 Anti-Abortion Movement

The sexual moralism Holland describes often found its home in religious circles. Over the years, many scholars have noted the centrality of religion to the anti-abortion movement. Ginsburg writes, “Although much of the movement originated or ultimately developed independently of the Catholic Church, that institution was and continues to be crucial as a support system.”<sup>32</sup> She argues that this support system “helped mobilize the movement in its early stages into a national presence.”<sup>33</sup> Haugeberg concurs with Ginsburg’s assessment of the Catholic Church’s involvement, adding that the Church was involved in the anti-abortion movement even before *Roe v. Wade*: “In the late 1960s, when state legislators debated whether to reform criminal abortion statutes, the Catholic Church began an impassioned campaign to stem the movement for legalization.”<sup>34</sup> But Haugeberg complicates the picture by examining the collaboration between Catholic women and Protestant men in the movement. She argues, “Catholic women...developed the aggressive strategies that later came to be associated with evangelical Protestant men in the grassroots pro-life movement.”<sup>35</sup> She also demonstrates that some of the most prominent leaders in organizations such as the National Right to Life Committee were not Catholic, portraying the movement as more religiously diverse than scholars once believed. Jennifer Holland further complicates our picture of the role of religion in the movement by examining the roles of Catholicism, Mormonism, and western American Protestantism. She argues that Mormons and Protestants assimilated into a movement that was initially dominated by Catholics. She writes, “Utahns borrowed heavily from Catholic pro-life culture, and thus argued their moral superiority was akin to that of other socially conservative white Americans.”<sup>36</sup>



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Therefore, Holland identifies a religiously diverse movement whose unity and action belied the different belief systems encompassed within it. She further notes that traditionally marginalized religions, such as Mormonism, took advantage of this homogeneity to incorporate into mainstream American culture. She writes, “For Mormons, those religious and political maneuvers were a part a racial assimilation process, whereby they gave up (a little of) their distinctiveness for something that unified them with other socially conservative white Americans.”<sup>37</sup> With this observation, Holland complicates the picture of anti-abortion activism beyond simply identifying those religions that participated in the movement; she also shines light on how the movement became about more than fighting to “save lives”—it also became about assimilation for certain groups, reconstituting a racial and national identity, reconstructing whiteness, or fighting for a religiously-inspired sexual morality.

Holland also notes religious divisions among pro-life organizations, writing, “Right to Life groups tended to be dominated by Catholics, while groups like Operation Rescue tended to be dominated by evangelicals.”<sup>38</sup> She argues that these religious divisions occurred “not simply because people preferred their own, but because activists disagreed on

whether proselytizing should be a central part of their work.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, she shows how anti-abortion organizations became centers of religious disputes. Ultimately, she notes how activists downplayed religious differences to further the main goal: ending abortions. She states, “They [religious coalitions] accentuated the claim that this was not a Catholic movement; they helped support the argument that theirs was a moral movement representing all Middle (white) Americans; and it helped build real political power that could sway elections.”<sup>40</sup> This observation hearkens to Ginsburg’s assertion that, although the movement was technically independent of the Catholic Church, the Church acted as a crucial support system for activists and organizations. By arguing that religious coalitions were necessary for pro-life activists’ public image, Holland questions the unity of the movement and the relative influence of each religious sect.

### Operation Rescue

During the 1980s and 1990s, Operation Rescue was one of the most prominent and aggressive anti-abortion groups in America. Due to its prominence in the movement, many scholars, including Karissa Haugeberg, Caroline Hymel, and Jennifer Holland, have researched and written about this organization. Haugeberg argues that, “Scholars have overlooked the Catholic women who conspired to terrorize abortion providers beginning in the 1970s and have instead emphasized the role of evangelical men who rose to prominence in the 1980s.”<sup>41</sup> Hence, Haugeberg adds to the discourse about the rescue movement in two key ways: she notes the instrumental actions of women within the rescue movement, and she traces their contributions to a time before Operation Rescue became known for its vocal male leaders. These interventions place her work in league with works like Hughes’, which examines the anti-abortion movement in the 1970s.



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Furthermore, Haugeberg notes how law enforcement obscured women’s role in the movement by assuming that “violence was the pursuit of male renegades who operated alone” and refusing to investigate whether the violent attacks that occurred between 1977 and 1993 were propagated by a group.<sup>42</sup> She writes, “Indeed, in 1984, FBI director William Webster explained that the federal government did not classify antiabortion violence as terrorism because the crimes were not committed by a ‘definable group or activity.’”<sup>43</sup> Her intervention not only contradicts several decades of the dominant opinion from law enforcement, but it also contradicts the argument Faye Ginsburg puts forward when writing about violent activism within the pro-life movement. Ginsburg states, “The histories of those activists apprehended thus far for bombing and arson of clinics

since 1983 suggest that the destructive violence at clinics is being carried out by fanatic individuals peripheral to the mainstream, both locally and nationally."<sup>44</sup> Her observations on extremist pro-life activism lack the big-picture perspective that books with greater distance from the events allow. Whereas Haugeberg's book works in hindsight, Ginsburg's book emerges from the period of extreme conflict, where she tries to make sense of the activism without full possession of the facts.

However, Ginsburg makes a crucial observation about these violent activists by noting that "the shift to violence is part of a consistent pattern in American history."<sup>45</sup> This argument builds on what her book does particularly well: placing current (as of the time she published) anti-abortion activism within a broader historical context and identifying violent activism not as some sort of anomaly, but as the logical next step in an escalating series of actions intended to end abortions in America. Although her observations fall short of identifying violent activism as a cohesive movement, she does lay the groundwork for these later observations by framing violence as part of a repeated pattern in American activism.

Holland's discussion of Operation Rescue focuses on the group's politicization of children. Holland writes, "In 1991, during Operation Rescue's blockades of abortion provider George Tiller's clinic in Wichita, children took center stage—and young children at that. During those months of protest, child radicals stood out from the rest."<sup>46</sup> Holland argues that utilizing children did not endear Operation Rescue to the public, as, "The young people in the story came across as either fanatical, brainwashed, hysterical or coerced."<sup>47</sup> Her observation about public perceptions of children in the rescue movement parallels Haugeberg's observations about how the public viewed women like Shannon. Haugeberg writes,

Shelley Shannon's family and friends did not believe

she could have committed the crime spree without help...Even though she had spent the past several years cultivating a place for herself in the extremist abortion movement, Shelley Shannon's family's responses to the shooting indicate that they could not conceive of her as a person who was capable of violence.<sup>48</sup>

Both Haugeberg and Holland note how many people viewed women and children involved in extremist activism as pawns of radical pro-life men. They believed male activists had coerced women and children into violent action. Both Haugeberg and Holland disprove these notions. Holland writes, "What observers missed was that many young people willfully joined this movement and found meaning in it."<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Haugeberg notes how radical rescuers like Shannon found "personal fulfillment and a sense of community in the extremist wing of the antiabortion movement."<sup>50</sup> Their interventions hearken back to the work of Faye Ginsburg, who notes how the pro-life women she interviewed used their activism "for interpretation of the self in relation to cultural understandings."<sup>51</sup> She argues that in "a historical moment when there is no clear hegemonic model for the shape of the female life course in America," being involved in activism gave women on both sides of the aisle a purpose and a way to create a sense of self.<sup>52</sup>

### **Crisis Pregnancy Centers**

On the less physically violent side of the anti-abortion spectrum, we find crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs). In her book, Ginsburg explores Fargo's version of CPCs: "problem pregnancy centers," which were orchestrated through groups like Birthright (a national group that runs CPCs across America) and offered support to pregnant women seeking an alternative to abortion. Ginsburg notes, "Each group [in the problem pregnancy industry] has a different understanding

of the ‘problem’ and the ‘solution.’”<sup>53</sup> This quote highlights the tensions that emerged in the CPC movement as a whole: who or what should be cast as the problem—the unwanted pregnancy or the sexual “deviancy” of the mother?—and what was the appropriate solution to that problem—increased sexual education, better birth control, abstinence only sexual education, or resources for already-pregnant women? Ginsburg also comments on how many pro-life organizers argued that the pro-choice position was “due to ignorance of fetal life.”<sup>54</sup>

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**Forcing women to hold ephemera that cast fetuses as living, breathing babies was intended to discourage abortion.**

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Haugeberg and Holland also touch on the presumed ignorance about the “truth” of fetal life in their discussions of CPCs. Haugeberg argues that many CPCs believed that women would not have abortions if they knew their fetuses were “alive.” She writes, “The women who worked at CPCs commonly asked women to hold replicas of fetuses at various stages of development while they asked them about the circumstances influencing their decision about whether to carry their pregnancies to term.”<sup>55</sup> Forcing women to hold ephemera that cast fetuses as living, breathing babies was intended to discourage abortion. Holland also discusses pro-life ephemera, stating, “Anti-abortion activists would continue to use fetal bodies to tell biological stories...A discussion of heartbeats and brainwaves confirmed the humanity of the fetuses pictured and the fetal bodies authenticated the biological similarities people could not otherwise see.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, this ephemera reinforced fetal life as a biological

fact and framed abortion as murder. According to Arizona pro-life activist John Jakubczyk, “Women deep down know that it’s a baby.”<sup>57</sup> Holland concludes, “In CPCs, it was white pro-life women’s job to reconnect ‘lost’ women to this biological truth.”<sup>58</sup> This assertion parallels Ginsburg’s observation that pro-life advocates in Fargo believed women would not have abortions if they knew the “truth” of fetal life. All three books, then, chart how CPCs had a vested interest in convincing pregnant women their fetuses were alive. Haugeberg also notes that CPCs tried to convince women not to abort by framing abortion as serious health risk: “Staff warned women that abortion placed them at risk for infections, uterine and bowel perforation, endometriosis, breast cancer, and sterility.”<sup>59</sup> If CPCs could not convince women that their fetuses were babies, then, they also had the fear of bodily harm to hold over pregnant women’s heads.

Furthermore, both Haugeberg and Holland highlight the deceptive and exploitative nature of CPCs. Haugeberg writes, “CPC staff placed misleading advertisements in the yellow pages and classifieds, hoping to deceive women seeking abortions into calling or visiting their pro-life clinics.”<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Holland states, “They [CPCs] depended on vague advertisements, refused to refer women to abortion providers, and offered few, if any, medical services.”<sup>61</sup> This deception was intended to lure pregnant women into the CPCs, where workers would guilt, shame, and lecture them into not having abortions. However, despite their exploitative tactics, the CPCs painted themselves as a caring resource. Holland writes, “In CPCs, activists tried to play the role of mothers or friends to women seeking abortions.”<sup>62</sup> By forming “a personal relationship with an anti-abortion activist,”<sup>63</sup> who supposedly had their best interests in mind, pregnant women were less likely to have abortions. However, neither Haugeberg nor Holland fully explore the duality of this identity: CPC employees masqueraded as both legitimate

medical providers and caring friends, meaning that they had to balance professional sterility with friendly warmth. Haugeberg does note that volunteers at CPCs were “often clad in medical attire,”<sup>64</sup> and Holland writes, “Even though crisis pregnancy center volunteers rejected the gendered alienation that came with being ‘professionals,’ they employed the authority of medicine to make their appeals.”<sup>65</sup> Yet, neither further explores the contradictions and tensions bound up in playing both medical professional and surrogate mother figure, which leaves a gap for future scholarship about the ideologies and identities of pro-life activists. A further exploration of the racialized component of CPCs would also be instructive. While both Haugeberg and Holland note that CPCs were a woman-only domain “because pro-lifers believed no man could speak from the well of his ‘womanhood experience,’”<sup>66</sup> only Holland discusses the racial implications of CPCs.

### **The Recent Anti-Abortion Movement**

In more recent years, the contours of the anti-abortion movement have evolved. In writing on the battle over abortion in Louisiana (and examining events there through a nationwide lens), Caroline Hymel argues that “since the legalization of abortion in 1973, [Louisiana’s abortion wars] have passed through three phases that correspond to the shifting tactics of the anti-abortion movement, with each shift reflecting a changing legal environment at the national level.”<sup>67</sup> Unlike past works, Hymel’s examines the post-1973 movement broadly and creates a methodology for fitting seminal moments into a series of stages. The first phase covers all anti-abortion activism before the 1980s. She marks the second phase of anti-abortion activism as occurring “from the early 1980s to 1994”<sup>68</sup> and involving “the use of direct-action

protest tactics and violence aimed at clinics, doctors, and women seeking abortions.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, Hymel states that the third, current phase of anti-abortion activism began in 1994. She writes, “In this final phase, anti-abortion forces returned to the legislative and judicial realms, where the abortion wars persist today, and where, at least until recently, they have scored several decisive victories.”<sup>70</sup> At this moment in history, scholarship on this third phase of anti-abortion activism is needed more than scholarship on any other phase of the anti-abortion movement. Hymel’s observations about the third phase of activism broadly trace the contours of this historical moment, but lack the depth that comes from a wide body of scholarship. Furthermore, I argue that more research should be done on the usefulness of dividing the movement into phases, as all violent activism did not end in 1994. As Haugeberg discusses in her epilogue, the murder of Dr. George Tiller occurred in 2009, “when popular political commentators routinely vilified the physician.”<sup>71</sup> Haugeberg proves that such acts of violence were accepted tactics of a cohesive, extremist movement. How, then, do we conceptualize violent activism that occurred after phase two of anti-abortion activism supposedly ended? Do we reconsider the divisions between each phase and how we draw those lines? Do we characterize each phase based on the dominant type of activism that occurred during that period and characterize other types as anomalous? Such categorization is by no means straightforward, denoting how further research and examination is necessary for us to understand how the movement has evolved in present times, is still evolving, and where it may shift in the future.

One recent debate in phase three of anti-abortion activism has revolved around “partial birth” abortions. Hannah Armitage states, “The debate over partial birth

abortion has become an effective surrogate for the larger issue of the legal standing of abortion itself.”<sup>72</sup> She contends that an argument of postabortion syndrome (regret/grief over having an abortion) was one reason given for why partial birth abortions should be banned. She writes, “This reasoning ignores the fact that many women do not come to regret their abortion decisions and for others, different factors are more pressing.”<sup>73</sup> Her observations parallel Haugeberg’s and Holland’s, both of whom discuss postabortion syndrome and how it was used to support banning abortions: to “protect” women from resulting grief and regret. In her narrative, Armitage charts how this rhetoric of protecting women from themselves was adopted by those arguing against partial birth abortions: “The argument was that the needs of the mother and child are linked, not adversarial.”<sup>74</sup> She asserts that this rhetoric “allowed anti-abortion groups to recast themselves as protectors of women,”<sup>75</sup> but Haugeberg and Holland suggest that anti-abortion activists had always considered themselves protectors of women. Holland shows that anti-abortion activists tried to avoid demonizing women seeking abortions, as demonizing vulnerable women would not help their long-term goals. Instead, they left pregnant women out of their rhetoric completely—for example, “The early anti-abortion group in Colorado rarely discussed pregnant women in its literature”<sup>76</sup>—or attempted to convince pregnant women that keeping their babies was in their own best interest.

## **Conclusion**

As long as abortion remains a contested issue in American society, scholarship on the pro-choice and pro-life movements will continue to be relevant and necessary. While potential topics of study are too numerous to list, scholars should focus on the racial dimensions of the anti-abortion movement and the most recent phase of the movement. For

example, before Shelley Shannon attempted to assassinate Dr. Tiller, she “became friendly with local militiamen and white supremacists,”<sup>77</sup> including the Aryan Nation. Is there a more concrete link between the extremist wings of the anti-abortion movement and American white power paramilitary groups, beyond the personal connections of one activist? Both white supremacists and anti-abortion extremists organized themselves through cells and participated in terrorist activities to erode the status quo in America. It is possible, if not probable, that some concrete connection between the two movements exists, but only further research can answer this question. Further research should also address how recent developments in anti-abortion activism (such as the Texas and Mississippi abortion bans) fit into the larger historical context of anti-abortion activism and how this broader historical framework informs our understanding of contemporary activism. This is not an abstract field of scholarship; women’s bodies are at stake, and knowledge is just one way to combat current developments. The immediacy of current anti-abortion activism makes further scholarship particularly critical. Knowing why the world is the way it is constitutes the first step in combatting any societal problem—just like the first step in fixing a machine is understanding how it works and what has gone wrong. Until we take steps to expand on that knowledge, we cannot fight for women’s rights and inspire permanent change.

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## JOHN F. KENNEDY'S ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS: AN ORIGIN STORY

Michael Davis

John F. Kennedy won the 1960 presidential election on the strength of his photogenic beat down of Vice President Richard Nixon in their televised debate, but it was also on the back of his biting criticism of the Eisenhower administration's Cold War foreign policy. As a junior senator from Massachusetts in the late 1950s, Kennedy developed relationships with social scientists and scholars like Walt Whitman Rostow. Rostow's economic theories and social scientific perspective on foreign policy generated a movement that shifted hemispheric policy away from non-intervention and free-trade promotion towards a development-led policy to address root causes of stagnant modernization in Latin America. This shift in policy objectives would culminate in the Alliance for Progress— a multilateral proposal for regional cooperation in security, democracy promotion, and aid-assisted development policies to propel Latin American economies into later stages of modernization.

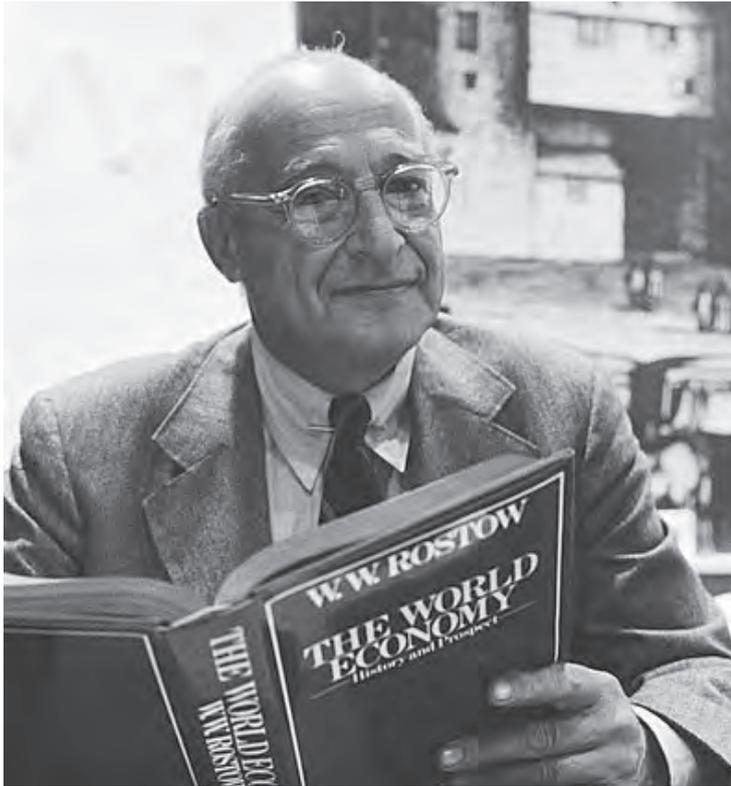
In his book *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid*, Kimber Charles Pearce gives a detailed account of the social scientific revolution in United States foreign policy circles in the 1950s and early 1960s. Pearce traces the origins of Kennedy's Alliance back to Rostow's co-founding of the Center for International Studies at MIT in 1951 with fellow social scientific revolutionary Max Milliken. Rostow and Milliken set out to counter Marxist theories of economic development and establish an intellectual defense for social and economic development policies dictated by state action, but also defined by democratic and liberal economic philosophies. In his book *The Most Dangerous Area in the World*, Stephen Rabe places the Alliance for Progress in the context of social scientific shifts in policymaking and the needed response to Castro's revolution, which precipitated

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**The origins of Kennedy's Alliance for Progress inform not only the historical context of United States/Latin American relations during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, but also our understanding of power relationships and policy creation in Western Hemispheric geopolitics.**

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the incoming Kennedy administration's move towards a more comprehensive development strategy in Latin America. Like Pearce, Rabe works from the conventional historiographical perspective that places the United States as the hegemonic authority in an asymmetric power relationship with the rest of the Americas. In contrast, Christopher Darnton reexamines the origins of the Alliance from the perspective of the Latin American nations, several of which, he argues, had a more significant impact on both the creation of the Alliance as well as influence over wider regional policy creation. In an extensive article in the *Journal of Cold War Studies* (2012), Darnton questions the conventional narrative and makes a compelling argument for a Latin American origin story for the Alliance for Progress. Darnton's revision of the dominant narrative also speaks to the need to reimagine how sub-hegemonic powers in the region influence policy and promote



Professor WW Rostow (US) gives press conference about his book *The World Economy*. 1978. Wikimedia Commons.

their own interests in the face of a seemingly overwhelming hegemonic authority. The origins of Kennedy's Alliance for Progress inform not only the historical context of United States/Latin American relations during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, but also our understanding of power relationships and policy creation in Western Hemispheric geopolitics.

Walt Whitman Rostow received a PhD in economics from Yale, served with distinction during WWII in the OSS and the British Air Ministry, and made a significant contribution to the recovery effort and administration of the Marshall Plan for rebuilding Europe. He took this experience into a post-war career in academia and politics where his economic development theories would impact policy and provide a

foundation for the ideology of modernization. The 1950s saw a social scientific revolution bubbling in U.S. foreign policy circles responding both to the challenge of rebuilding Europe after WWII and the subsequent rash of decolonization that created dozens of new nations, most of which were equally devastated by war or revolution.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of a binary geopolitical situation with the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. as dueling superpowers established the framework within which all foreign policy for the next forty years would be defined. The academics and policymakers in the U.S. saw foreign aid as a primary battlefield on which to wage the emerging Cold War. Foreign aid policies coming out of Moscow in the 1950s worried the Eisenhower administration, and they turned to men like Rostow and Milliken to formulate the U.S. response. Rostow's theories of development, which would be termed "modernization theory," focused on the root causes of stagnant development and promoted direct foreign aid to promote liberal reforms and push the Third World into the later stages of economic modernization.<sup>2</sup> Rostow and Milliken's Center for International Studies (CENIS) was only one of many think tanks that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s to influence and lobby government policy. CENIS seems to have distinguished itself from other similar organizations through its extended period of influence and the attention it attracted from a junior senator from Massachusetts and soon-to-be president of the United States, John F. Kennedy.<sup>3</sup>

American foreign policy in the 1950s was focused on the emerging Cold War. George Kennan's "Long Telegram" had become doctrine, and containment of expanding Soviet influence had become the central issue for the State Department and administration policymakers. Foreign aid and development assistance was an important aspect of Soviet foreign policy in the postwar world. Communist victory in China was followed by long-term development plans where Soviet officials focused on trade, technological innovations,

and assistance loans to drag developing nations into the modern industrial economy.<sup>4</sup> Rostow lobbied hard for a U.S. response to what many saw as Soviet economic imperialism threatening to spread communist influence throughout the Third World. Eisenhower administration policy consisted of mostly short-term, case-by-case aid packages and military assistance to counter Soviet economic and military aggression. Looking to establish himself as a new force in the Democratic Party, Kennedy seized on the perception of Eisenhower's failed policy as a possible political weakness, and he sent his policy staff to MIT to consult with Rostow about development policies in Asia and Western Europe. The myriad inchoate nations emerging from a post-war world and rampant decolonization provided the battleground between democratic liberal capitalism and Soviet-style communism. For Rostow and his new political beacon of light, JFK, the new long-term Soviet aid programs would spread communist soft power to Third World nations desperate for development assistance and pliable to ideological persuasion. Richard Nixon's cursed trip to South America in 1958, during which the vice president was pelted with criticism, abuse, and even some projectiles by student protestors in Peru and Venezuela, provided a political opportunity for Kennedy to poke at Eisenhower's failed Cold War policies and served to turn the attentions of policymakers to the growing instability in the Latin American region.<sup>5</sup>

Rostow's ideas emerged during the final months of the Eisenhower administration in response to two important events. First, Castro's successful revolution in Cuba in 1959 sent shockwaves through the State Department and foreign policy circles. Fear of dominos falling in the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America pushed hemispheric policy to the forefront and motivated a reassessment of U.S. policy in the region. Second, then Senator John F. Kennedy pointed to Nixon's violent reception in South America as

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evidence of the existential threat posed by revolutionary movements in Latin America. Kennedy used Rostow's rhetoric to criticize the Eisenhower administration for ignoring the “economic gap” and avoiding the real social issues at the heart of the modernization process. Kennedy began to lay the foundation for promoting “peaceful revolution” through capitalist development based on classical liberal economics.<sup>6</sup> Eisenhower took his own goodwill tour of South America early in 1960 to allay fears of the growing hemispheric instability and combat criticism of his Latin American policy, which still hinged on military alliances and regional trade pacts. The senator made Latin American policy a centerpiece of his campaign for the Democratic nomination for president. Rostow's ideas of development aid and classical liberal economic policy would inform Kennedy's announcement of his plan for Latin America. In a callback to Franklin D. Roosevelt's “Good Neighbor” policy, Kennedy announced the Alliance for Progress as a comprehensive plan to promote development through assistance, liberal land reform, cooperation with the Organization of American States (OAS) and regional organizations to promote goodwill, and a

reorganization of the State Department to enlist diplomats who were well versed in Latin America and more qualified to administer the new change in policy.<sup>7</sup> According to Pearce, Rostow's economic stages of development and the social scientific approach to modernization provided Kennedy with a "rhetorical framework that addressed the two issues [of anti-communism and economic progress] simultaneously by wedding an anti-Marxist philosophy and a comprehensive vision of the process of social development."<sup>8</sup> Rostow's "fervent anti-communism" provided cover for his left-leaning ideas about social development and his insistence that the state play a prominent role in actively promoting development policy in emerging modernizing nations.<sup>9</sup> For Pearce, the origin story of the Alliance for Progress is one of progressive academic ideas permeating policymaking circles and catching the ear of a political genius during a seminal moment in the history of U.S. policy in Latin America.

Like Pearce, Stephen G. Rabe analyzes the origins and the fate of the Alliance for Progress from the asymmetrical U.S. hegemonic perspective. Rabe analyzes many aspects of Kennedy's Latin American foreign policy from military aid and engagement to covert operations and counterinsurgency policies. That said, Rabe feels strongly enough about the significance of the Alliance to devote a large portion of his monograph to the development aid policy. Rabe asks a few questions in his introduction to his study. First, is the Alliance evidence of a real shift in U.S. foreign policy, or "just another Cold War weapon of the United States?"<sup>10</sup> Next, what similarities or differences are evident between Kennedy's Alliance and the progressive interventions in the early years of the 20th century? In Rabe's words, "was the Alliance part of the customary United States search for hegemony in the Western Hemisphere?"<sup>11</sup> And finally, what were the different factors that contributed to the ultimate failure of the regional development policy?<sup>12</sup> Rabe analyzes archival research from

presidential libraries, published and unpublished government records and manuscripts, and an exhaustive selection of media reports and secondary academic sources to tell the story of Kennedy's multi-leveled approach to Latin American foreign policy. Rabe characterizes the failure of the Alliance as second only to the political and foreign policy debacle in Southeast Asia.<sup>13</sup> The primary goal of the Alliance was to increase growth in Latin American nations that had seen stagnant rates of growth around the 1% level for much of the previous decade. Isolated examples, like Panama and Nicaragua where growth rates did exceed the 2.5% target rate, are overwhelmed by the majority of evidence that demonstrates Alliance policies were mostly unsuccessful in stimulating Latin American economies.<sup>14</sup> Despite Rabe's extensive analysis of Kennedy's Latin American policy, the origins of the Alliance are once again attributed to the charismatic president's progressive shift in response to Cuban revolution and the social scientists who informed policymakers and influenced State Department policy.

Pearce and Rabe represent the majority of scholars, who begin their analysis of Kennedy's Alliance with the revolution in Cuba and Washington's rush to establish a regional policy to prevent the spread of communism to other parts of Latin America. Within this conventional narrative, Latin American nations are secondary actors responding to U.S. hegemonic power and only participating as relatively powerless pawns in a U.S.-dominated regional policy initiative. In contrast, Christopher Darnton argues that reevaluating the origins of the Alliance provides deeper historical context to analyses of U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America, engages in historiographical disagreements to "delineate... competing perspectives,"<sup>15</sup> informs the realities behind the hegemonic narrative that rarely considers the impact of policies coming from Latin America, and shows the impact of the current regional situation that continues to look back to the Alliance

for Progress “as a model for U.S. foreign policy in the Americas.”<sup>16</sup> Darnton challenges the conventional analysis of the Alliance for Progress as a U.S.-designed, U.S.-led initiative with Latin American nations merely along for the ride. The idea of the Alliance and of development policies to address the root causes of the perceived threats to democracy, economic liberalism, and regional security were generated from both U.S. and Latin American sources.

Darnton explores Latin American sources, in addition to the conventional documents, to trace the Alliance’s origins back to Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek’s proposal for an Operation Pan-America (OPA), which predates Castro’s Cuban revolution and called for many of the progressive development strategies that would come to define the Alliance for Progress.<sup>17</sup>

According to Darnton, the “proposed partnership was less asymmetrical” than popularly imagined.<sup>18</sup> Kubitschek’s OPA kept the ideas of development and reform alive through the 1950s, when U.S. policy was trending more towards free trade, neoliberal economic theory, and protecting U.S. investment. When Castro took over in Cuba, the menu of possible U.S. responses was heavily weighted towards a multilateral approach that would certainly include many of the tenets of the OPA and Walt Rostow’s social development theories.<sup>19</sup> Cuba’s revolution and Kennedy’s election facilitated the shift in U.S. Latin American policy, but the menu of options was already developed, informed by both U.S. social scientists and Latin American voices for progressive development policies. Once the decision was made by the new Kennedy administration, it was easy to misrepresent the multilateral nature of such regional agreements as unilateral U.S. policy. The hegemon is disproportionately credited with initiatives that could not have happened without regional voices and contributions from countries like Brazil, Venezuela,



National Security Advisor Walt W. Rostow showing President Lyndon B. Johnson a model of the Khe Sanh area. February 1968. By manhhai is marked with CC BY 2.0.

and Columbia, countries that Darnton calls “middle powers.”<sup>20</sup> He makes an important move to reassess the nature of multilateral relations and policy creation and incorporates influence from non-hegemonic sources into his analysis of the origins of the Alliance for Progress.

Darnton argues that the Alliance “is a story of access points and agenda setting, in which power disparities have little effect on policy outcomes.”<sup>21</sup> These “access points” include diplomatic access through individual connections, regional access through multilateral associations, and access through the outside pressure of political violence and terrorism that gives voice to those outside more conventional elements of regional policymaking.<sup>22</sup> Considering these points of access by middle powers and marginalized groups highlights the real influence imparted by Latin American voices on regional and U.S. policy, and it confuses the narrative of asymmetry and unilateralism that defines much of the scholarship of U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America. Darnton’s work contrasts against the conventional historiography of coincidence that describes the origins of the Alliance as a shift in Eisenhower-era policy to Kennedy’s development ideas

(based on Rostow's modernization theories) following the crisis in Cuba. Instead, he suggests a revision that privileges Kubitschek's OPA and the Latin American foundation for regional cooperation and consensus evidenced by the Act of Bogota—a call for a permanent OPA signed in September of 1960 months before Kennedy's Alliance speech.<sup>23</sup> By demonstrating the Latin American origins for Alliance-era development policy, Darnton not only challenges conventional wisdom, but he also suggests a new understanding of how relatively weaker powers in a region dominated by hegemonic power nevertheless have significant influence on policymaking.

Kennedy's assassination in 1963 destroyed any hope for the Alliance for Progress. The new Johnson administration immediately went to work rolling back the policy's goals of development aid and progressive reforms in favor of a return to neoliberal policies. Rabe points to Johnson's appointment of Thomas C. Mann to the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America as the death knell for the Alliance for Progress. What would become known as the "Mann doctrine" outlined U.S. policy in Latin America in terms of a focus on economic growth, a promotion and protection of U.S. investment interests, a return to non-intervention policy, and a rhetorical emphasis on anti-communism.<sup>24</sup> Others argue that the Alliance never died, and new iterations of regional agreements and shifts in U.S. policy initiatives suggest that the essential elements of the Alliance continue to influence U.S./Latin American relations. Or, as Pearce notes, the Alliance was damaged significantly by the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. The covert action was, to many in Latin America, a betrayal of the stated assurances for Latin American sovereignty and self-determination.<sup>25</sup> In response, the OAS called a special meeting in August of 1961 in Punta Del Este, Uruguay. The Cuban contingent, led by Che Guevara, denounced the Alliance as a veil of progressivism

hiding the true intentions of the U.S. to solidify hegemonic authority, secure unilateral interests, and maintain economic hierarchies in the region.<sup>26</sup> For Pearce, the real issues with the Alliance were the unattainable goals set by Rostow and others for Latin American growth rates, unrealistic standards for loans, and dubious review processes that set significant barriers to achieving development aims.<sup>27</sup> Putting aside contemporary analysis of the Alliance's success and failures, its continuing legacy, or its untimely demise, a more complete understanding of the origins of the Alliance from a non-hegemonic perspective not only fills out the historiography of U.S./Latin American relations during the Cold War, but it also informs our current understanding of multilateral relationships in which power disparities often cloud agency and underestimate the influence of Latin America in US and Latin American relations.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Kimber Charles Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 3.
- 2 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 5.
- 3 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 12.
- 4 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 15.
- 5 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 18.
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- 7 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 25.
- 8 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 26.
- 9 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 26.
- 10 Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 7.
- 11 Rabe, *Most Dangerous*, 7.
- 12 Rabe, *Most Dangerous*, 7.
- 13 Rabe, *Most Dangerous*, 148.

- 14 Rabe, *Most Dangerous*, 149.
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- 16 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 61.
- 17 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 57-8.
- 18 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 62.
- 11
- 19 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 62.
- 20 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 63.
- 21 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 63.
- 22 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 66.
- 23 Darnton, "Asymmetry and Agenda-Setting," 85.
- 24 Rabe, *Most Dangerous*, 177.
- 25 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 105.
- 26 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 105.
- 27 Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy*, 105-6.

## A PHOTO OF MY GRANDPARENTS, 1954

Brianna Carnley

Her hair molten, curled for the pew,  
rippling down oak through the bible's estranged spine.

She couldn't prophesize his pulpit,  
his pride the splintering planks.

Her shoulder carves into his chest,  
his thumbnail gouging a pencil eraser.

Her checks peach with rouge,  
blouse buttoned to her throat, her first commandment.

Her lips condensed to a flat smile,  
her alto reply, 'thy strength indeed is small.'

Her fist buried with his in prayer,  
'he shall go out by himself.'

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND EDITORS



**Alexis Cathcart** completed her B.S. in Criminal Justice and her M.A. in History—both at UAB. Her areas of interests include 20th century U.S. history with a focus on Afro-American history, the history and implications of Black Power, cultural and political histories of resistance and activism, and the dynamics of race, gender, and class after 1945. She presently serves as the head editor for the 26th edition of the *Vulcan Historical Review*, and recently worked as a graduate intern/consultant at the Ballard House Project— a nonprofit in Birmingham that serves the community through the preservation of Black voices, culture, and history. Currently, she works in multiple roles to challenge and eradicate the capitalist, imperialist, racist, and sexist patriarchy that saturates the United States. She hopes to assist other scholars and activists in unifying communities and rectifying the injustices committed by the American system and its institutions through complete revolution, education, reparations and other means of liberation.



**Austin Dennis** is an M.A. candidate in the secondary education program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He received his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Alabama in 2018 and is currently pursuing a career as a secondary social studies teacher. His areas of interest include the history of the American presidency, the American Civil War, the Reconstruction era, authoritarianism, and public policy. Austin has a passion for not only sharing the countless remarkable stories of the past, but also working with students to build a brighter future in which the general public is well-informed, engages in and promotes civil discourse, and works together to better the lives of all people.



**Brianna Carnley** is currently finishing her last semester of her undergraduate education and plans to take a few years break before pursuing graduate school. She is an English major with a concentration of Creative Writing and a minor in Philosophy. She is currently writing her senior thesis, which will be a collection of poetry about femininity. Brianna's career goal is to be an editor at a publishing house so that she can help fellow writers craft and publish their stories.



**Charlie Crepps** began his academic career with insecurity and lack of motivation, but the more he accomplished and learned, his passion for history became self-evident. He has never had an inclination for staying within the parameters set for him by others so he has always struggled with academics, but writing has always been the medium that has allowed him to explore topics that stretch the boundaries and stretch his intellectual understanding. Early American intellectual history has always interested him, and inevitably his writings covered many of the political thinkers that were involved with building the American national spirit. He currently works in the real estate sector, but chooses to study and write about history in his free time. History will always be a love of his, whether it be professionally, or merely recreational. As a twenty four year old graduating in April of 2022, he finds himself continuing to learn applicable lessons from these incredible thinkers that he can implement in his life to perpetuate the very American spirit that has kept us a tethered representative democracy for hundreds of years. He is thankful for the opportunity afforded to him by the *VHR* selection committee and he hopes that everyone can resonate with the incredible story of Abraham Lincoln's legacy.



**Chris Bertolini** is a graduate student of history. His historical interests include social movements, urbanization and suburbanization, and the environment. He is too indecisive to speak about his future, but he hopes he can be a lifelong student of history and still afford rent. He is afraid he is getting old because he is only two years younger than Giannis Antetokounmpo.



**Colton Segars** is a second-year master's student in the history department at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He previously graduated with his bachelor's degree in history from UAB in Spring 2020 and plans to continue his education by attending a PhD program sometime in the future. Colton's main historical interests focus on the Progressive Era and World War I, but he is also curious about the Early American Republic and Age of Jackson. Colton hopes to someday teach at the Secondary or Collegiate levels.



**Donnae' Hampton** was born and raised in a city right outside of Birmingham called Irondale. In the spring of 2021, she graduated from the University of Alabama-Birmingham with her bachelor's degree in history. She is currently in UAB's history master's program, with plans to graduate in the spring of 2023. Her main interests include the United States' social history of the Reconstruction era and beyond. Her family is from Alabama, so she is especially interested in African American history in Alabama, along with African American history in general. Outside of her academic interests, she enjoys reading, watching sports and documentaries, and baking. Within her academic career, she has done multiple research projects on local history in Jefferson County, especially in Birmingham, AL and has analyzed numerous archival documents. She has career aspirations of getting a doctorate in history and becoming a professor and/or working as an archivist because she really enjoys working with primary sources. Additionally, she aspires to work on her own historical project of her historically Black neighborhood in the near future.



**Emma Herr** is a senior at UAB majoring in history and English (concentration Professional Writing). Throughout her studies, she has been especially drawn to Soviet/Russian culture and local Southern history. Emma greatly enjoys her work as an undergraduate tutor at UAB's writing center and is honored to have been selected as the English Department's 2022 Outstanding Professional Writing Student. Most recently, she has worked with the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center on a yearlong project collecting and analyzing Holocaust-related news articles from WWII-era Birmingham papers. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in museum education or archival work.



**Esteban Arnold** is a second year graduate student in history at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His research interests are in European intellectual history and the history of psychology. He is currently working on a thesis regarding the politicization of the psychology of Alfred Adler and its use in the Nazi period. In the future, he hopes to go to Europe, read more books, and drink more coffee.



**Haley Wells** is a sophomore double-major in English (concentration literature) and history. She is in UAB's accelerated Bachelors-to-Masters program, and she is currently finishing her first year of graduate classes. When she completes her Masters in history, she hopes to complete a Masters in English and then go on to a PhD in literature. Her research interests for history include American colonial and Revolutionary War history, American Civil War history, the history of social justice movements in America, and women's history. In her research, she works to focus on the diverse experiences of women throughout different periods in history, with particular attention to the history of women's education, female sexuality and sexual expression throughout history, women in American religion, and the history of women's rights movements. Her research interests for English are focused in Medieval Studies, where she has written on Beowulf, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Icelandic sagas, Old English elegies, and the works of Marie de France. She also loves reading, researching, and writing about Oscar Wilde, John Keats, Jane Austen, and Toni Morrison. She enjoys using literature to understand historical mindsets, as well as using historical context to foreground literary analysis.



**Josef Brock** is a junior at UAB majoring in Secondary Education Social Science. For the last several years, he has been teaching pre-k. Josef was born in the Brooklyn, NY neighborhood of Crown Heights and lived there during the Crown Heights riots. Josef's interests are advocating for and helping students who struggle in education systems. In addition to his work as a social studies educator, Josef hopes to enhance Jewish and Zionist pride among Birmingham's Jewish community. After graduating, he intends to pursue a master's degree in education.



**Kamau Bamidele** is a senior English major with a double minor in History and Black Studies, set to graduate in the Fall of 2022. Throughout his time at UAB, KB has participated as a performer in several spoken word competitions, done a presentation for Organized Radical Collegiate Activism (ORCA), and was the Education Coordinator for the Social Justice Advocacy Council (SJAC) during his sophomore year. KB is a communist and Pan-Africanist and is doing political education work around Revolutionary Pan-Africanism. He aims to participate in the organized struggle to forge a liberated and unified Afrika under the principles of scientific socialism, as a first step in toppling western capitalist-imperialist hegemony and liberating all Afrikans from bondage in this system.



**Michael Davis** is currently a candidate for a master's degree in History at UAB with a focus on early American History. In his spare time, he is a professional disc golfer and contributor to a disc golf podcast. After graduation, he will be teaching as an adjunct in the UAB history department and thinking about, maybe, possibly pursuing a Ph.D.

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