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Recounting the Past: A Student Journal of Historical Studies at Illinois State University

Number 27 • Spring 2026

# RECOUNTING THE PAST

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At Illinois State University

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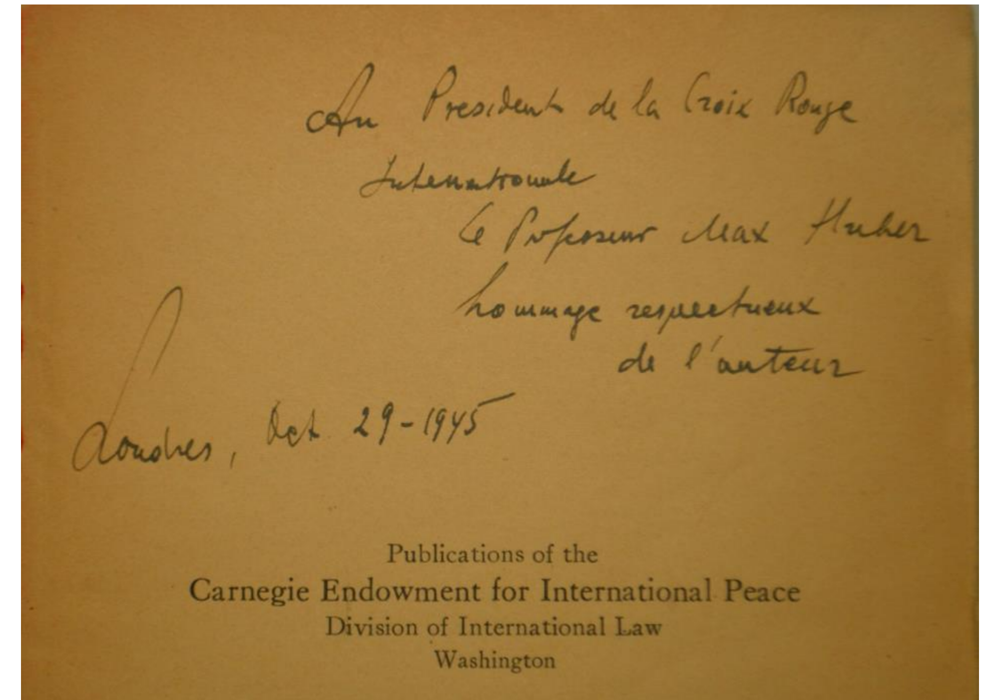
Au Président de la Croix Rouge
Internationale
Le Professeur Max Huber
hommage respectueux
de l'auteur
Londres, Oct. 29-1945

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Department of History

# *Recounting the Past*

A Student Journal of Historical Studies

At Illinois State University

Number 27 • Spring 2026

# *Recounting the Past*

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Acknowledgments:

Through its journal *Recounting the Past*, the History Department is honored to recognize the research excellence of its undergraduate and graduate students, and the dedicated mentorship of its faculty. Alongside these students and faculty, many thanks go out to individuals who invested their time and effort at various stages of the production process. These include the University Marketing and Communication team that guided the journal through the publication process, and Trish Gudeman, Administrative Aide in the History Department, who served as the liaison with Marketing and Communication and provided her organizational expertise to realize the project.

**Cover Image**

The picture is from a handwritten dedication by Raphael Lemkin in a copy of his 1944 book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* to the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Max Huber. For many, the book first defined the term *Genocide*. This edition is preserved in the ICRC Library (Call number 351/30) and is licensed under Creative Commons. (CC-BY-SA-4.0)

## Note from the Editor:

What does it mean to be named? What happens to a person, a community, or a practice when it is classified, categorized, and fixed in place by a label? The essays gathered in this volume of *Recounting the Past* highlight the varied ways people, places, and events were labeled and understood while also commenting on the role historians have in unpacking, reproducing, or critiquing those labels. From the caricatured Indian "types" of an illustrated Victorian magazine to the racialized language of a fifteenth-century Toledan statute, from court records that casually affix the word "Jew" as both identity marker and insult to government reports that reframe a preventable disaster as an act of nature, the essays collected here circle, from remarkably diverse angles, around a single animating concern: the power of labels to shape, constrain, distort, and sometimes destroy those they describe.

"Labeling," in recent historiography, is understood in its broadest sense as the act of assigning names, categories, and fixed roles to individuals and groups. Historians and social scientists deploy and describe labels as both cognitive necessities and political acts. For many, labels simplify complexity, rendering the social world legible to those actors and the subsequent historians who classify. Yet that simplification always exacts a cost. As the papers gathered in this volume show repeatedly, the label rarely fits the labeled. It is imposed from outside, constructed in service of the labeler's interests and anxieties, and it tends to obscure rather than illuminate. To write history about processes of labeling, then, is not simply to recover the facts of what happened. It is to interrogate the very categories through which history has been recorded, transmitted, and remembered — to ask who had the power to name, who bore the burden of being named, and what traces of resistance or survival can be recovered beneath and around the labels that have so often come down to us.

This volume of *Recounting the Past* brings together thirteen essays spanning nearly two millennia of history across four continents, and their

common thread is a sustained, searching engagement with the politics and consequences of classification. They are arranged alphabetically, so readers can move across epochs and geographies, discovering resonances and ironies that no single chronological or regional framework would reveal. Ancient Roman fountains and twentieth-century Chicago streets; fifteenth-century Toledo and nineteenth-century Bengal; the courtrooms of London and the disaster reports of a post-Katrina United States— all of these sites, the essays show, are scenes of labeling.

The volume opens with two essays from Dr. Taylor Soja's section of History 100, the new first-year seminar designed by the History Department's Curriculum Committee, directed by Dr. Amy Wood. History 100 was conceived to introduce students to history as a practice — a set of skills, methods, and ethical commitments rather than the mere accumulation of content knowledge — and the two primary source analyses presented here are remarkable demonstrations of what first-semester students can achieve. This section focused on globalization and migration in the nineteenth century, and on the figure of the traveling *ayah* — the South Asian woman employed as a nanny by British colonial families — whose treatment in both contemporary popular media and subsequent historical scholarship raises precisely the questions of labeling and representation that animate this entire collection.

Stellan Hammond's analysis of "Humorous Indian Types," an 1878 article from *The Graphic*, demonstrates how the label operates as an instrument of colonial power even when presented as entertainment. Hammond reads the article's caricatures of Indian workers with a sophisticated awareness of their ambivalences: the very comparisons between Indian and British "types" that the anonymous author deploys to reinforce hierarchies inadvertently reveal the fragility of those hierarchies. The label "type," Hammond argues, performs the imperial fantasy of legibility, reducing complex human beings to fixed, reproducible categories that can be laughed at precisely because they appear to be known. Yet as Hammond also shows, the knowing laughter conceals its

own contradictions. The essay is a model of what critical reading of a source can yield, and its central insight is that racist humor both enforces and exposes the anxieties of power.

Jakub Rapala's essay on Clara de Chatelain's *The Story of Henrietta and the Ayah* (1864) provides a remarkable counterpoint. Where Hammond reads a source that labels openly and cruelly, Rapala reads one that claims to offer a corrective, a children's story explicitly designed to combat the racist fear of *ayahs* by showing them in a positive light. Rapala's achievement is to demonstrate that a positive label can be as constraining as a negative one. The fictional *ayah's* endless loyalty, her instant forgiveness, her readiness to risk her life for white children: these are not humanizing traits but dehumanizing ones, because they deny the *ayah* any interiority, any capacity for ambivalence, refusal, or self-interest. To be labeled a "good servant" in this text, Rapala shows, is not to be freed from the logic of colonial classification but to be more perfectly enclosed within it. Read alongside the historian Olivia Robinson's scholarship on the agency that real historical *ayahs* did in fact exercise, the story's flattering label emerges as a mechanism for erasing that agency.

The remaining essays in this volume were nominated by faculty as exemplary work from upper-division and graduate-level history courses, and they extend the collection's preoccupation with labeling into a range of historical settings.

Brooke Cordray's essay, "God(s) Not Dead: Pagan Practices in Christianized Rome," examines the Fountain of Anna Perenna in Late Antique Rome to challenge one of the most consequential labels in Western religious history: the label "pagan." Official Christianization, Cordray demonstrates, did not produce a clean transition from one religious category to another. The material culture of the fountain testifies to a lived religious world that escaped the binary logic of official classification. The people who brought their curses and love potions to the fountain did not experience themselves as either fully Christian or fully pagan in the sense that ecclesiastical authorities wished. Cordray's essay

offers an early example of how the label applied from above, in this case by the bishops whose efforts to Christianize their cities, regularly fail to capture the complexity of how people actually organized their spiritual lives.

Danielle Gottlieb's "National Antisemitism and Its Reflection in the Old Bailey Court System" moves to eighteenth-century London and the years surrounding the contested Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753. Gottlieb conducts a reading of trial records from the Old Bailey Proceedings Online, attending with particular care to the instability of the label "Jew" in these documents. Sometimes it is an identity avowal; sometimes, a slur; sometimes, an inference drawn from a name. This instability, Gottlieb shows through primary source analysis, is itself historically significant, revealing not only that antisemitism was woven into the casual texture of everyday speech but also that the category of “Jewishness” was never as stable or self-evident as those who wished to weaponize it pretended. The comparison offers a careful, evidence-grounded exploration of how a change in the legal and political salience of a label could, haltingly and imperfectly, translate into changes in the lives of real people.

Riley Kilhoffer's "The Faith of Indigenous Resistance" examines the Church of the Speaking Cross, the syncretic Mayan religious movement that sustained the Caste War of Yucatán (1847-1915). Kilhoffer opens with a searching inquiry into the very label used by earlier historians to describe this faith: the word "cult," borrowed from mid-twentieth-century anthropological vocabulary, which Kilhoffer demonstrates carries connotations that distort rather than describe the movement's character and significance. By insisting on the term "Church" instead — following the usages of recent scholarship and, crucially, of the Cruzob people themselves — Kilhoffer models the kind of responsible terminological self-consciousness that is one of the hallmarks of the best contemporary historical practice. The essay then shows how Juan de la Cruz Puc and his successors drew on both ancient Mayan religious

structures and the syncretic Christianity introduced during Spanish colonization to create a form of collective identity powerful enough to resist Mexican military force for decades. The label the Cruzob gave themselves, "People of the Cross," was not imposed but claimed from within, and Kilhoffer traces the difference that claiming makes.

Dan Larsen's "Manufacturing Memory: Government, Media, and Racial Inequality after Hurricane Katrina" brings the collection into the twenty-first century by analyzing how the 2005 catastrophe was labeled, narrated, and officially remembered. Drawing on Michel-Rolph Trouillot's foundational work, *Silencing the Past* (1995) and Andy Horowitz's longue durée account of New Orleans's infrastructural history, *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*, Larsen traces the contest among competing labels, such as "natural disaster," "engineering failure," "breakdown at every level," each of which served to distribute or deflect responsibility. The most consequential label, Larsen argues, was the one that was attached to Black New Orleanians in media coverage and official reports alike: the label of passive victim or, worse, of threat and disorder. That this label was produced in real time, through selective camera angles and carefully worded congressional reports, is what makes Larsen's essay so important: it shows the process of labelling in the very act of its construction, and it shows how the stakes of that process can be measured in hundreds of lives.

Caleb King's "*The Leeds Intelligencer* on the American Stamp Act Crisis" turns to the eighteenth-century British press and the question of what it meant to label someone or some community across the Atlantic as British. King traces the evolution of the *Leeds Intelligencer*'s coverage of the Stamp Act crisis through close reading of every issue from March 1765 to March 1766, attending to changes in typography, layout, and editorial voice as well as content. What he discovers is a paper feeling its way toward a more explicit identification of the American colonists as fellow Britons whose rights deserved the same protection as those of any subject at home. The label "British," King shows, was not stable during

this period; it was contested, extended, retracted, and redrawn, and a provincial newspaper like the *Intelligencer* was one of the key sites at which that redrawing took place. The essay is a reminder that the labels we treat as “natural” — national, ethnic, political — are always the sedimented products of countless acts of naming and renaming.

Abby LeClere's "The Racialization of Jews in the *Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo* (1449): From Religious to Racial Prejudice in Late Medieval Castile" is a thought-provoking exploration of how a label changes and, in changing, transforms the lives of those it designates. LeClere traces the shift in Castilian anti-Judaism from a primarily religious framework — in which Jews could in principle convert and theoretically assimilate into Christian society — to a racial or biological one, in which Jewishness was defined by blood or lineage and no sacrament could wash it away. The *Sentencia* written by Pedro Sarmiento is read here as a pivotal document in the history of European racism, one that prefigures the logic of the *limpieza de sangre* statutes and, in the longer view, of modern racial ideologies. LeClere's careful attention to historiography demonstrates how the labels scholars apply to historical phenomena are themselves historically conditioned, and how the categories we inherit from earlier scholars can both illuminate and obscure what we are trying to understand.

Shannon Mahoney's "With Love and Fangs: The Radical Visual Activism of SisterSerpents in 1990s Chicago" offers a case study in a group that refused the labels others would have placed on them — and deliberately invented its own. The SisterSerpents, a militant feminist art collective founded in Chicago in 1989, used shock, humor, and what they called "psychological warfare" to contest the labels that mainstream culture attached to women's anger, to feminist activism, and to women's bodies themselves. Mahoney reads the collective's stickers, posters, and gallery installations as a sustained act of counter-labelling, one that exposed the misogynist assumptions embedded in the visual culture of everyday life. That SisterSerpents have been underrepresented in the

historiography of feminism is itself, Mahoney suggests, a consequence of the labelling logic she is analyzing: movements that refuse respectability, that embrace obscenity and confrontation, are more easily excluded from the category of "legitimate activism" that determines what and who gets remembered.

Amanda Malone's "Building a Broader Marxism: Feminist Thought from Alexandra Kollontai to Angela Davis" follows two thinkers who refused to let Marxism remain a theory built around the male industrial worker. Malone traces how Kollontai and Davis, writing decades apart and in vastly different political contexts, arrived at a shared conviction: that capitalism and patriarchy were not parallel systems but interlocking ones, and that any serious account of exploitation had to reckon with the unpaid, invisible labor that took place inside the home. Kollontai, writing in the revolutionary fervor of early Soviet Russia, expanded Marxist theory by insisting that domestic labor, childcare, and reproductive work were not private matters but structural features of a capitalism that depended on women's subordination. Davis pushed that analysis further still, demonstrating that race was not an addendum to class but constitutive of it, and that the experiences of Black women revealed the fault lines in both mainstream feminism and traditional Marxism alike. What unites the two, Malone argues, is not merely a shared framework but a shared method: both thinkers used the specific material conditions of their own historical moments to expose what Marxism had missed, and in doing so helped transform it into a broader and more durable theory of liberation. The paper's central contribution is to read Kollontai and Davis not in isolation but as figures in an evolving feminist Marxist tradition, one shaped as much by the lived realities of women as by the theoretical inheritance they received and revised.

Grace Zaleski's "Britishness After Empire: The Battle for British National Identity Between the Far Right and New Left in Postwar Britain" brings the undergraduate section of the volume to a close with an analysis that connects the mid-twentieth century to the present day. Zaleski

examines the contested label of "Britishness" in the decades following decolonization, tracing the struggle between Enoch Powell's racialized version of British identity and the multicultural alternative elaborated by Stuart Hall and the New Left. Like LeClere's essay on medieval Toledo, Zaleski's work shows how profoundly the content of a national label can change, and how much is at stake in those changes. The label "British" — which in Powell's usage meant white and indigenous, and in Hall's meant something far more expansive and historically honest — was not a neutral description but a site of political contestation whose outcomes shaped immigration policy, race relations, and the everyday lives of millions. That Zaleski traces this contestation all the way to the "Unite the Kingdom" rally of September 2025 gives the essay an urgency that needs no elaboration.

Kylie Black's "Lemkinian Gendercide: Gendered Violence in Genocide" and Alicia Rubio's "Marxism Among Latine-Americans: Invisible Actors in the Historiographical Record" both address, from very different angles, a problem of labelling that is primarily historiographic: the problem of which categories scholars use, and which they fail to use, when they construct their own accounts of the past. Black demonstrates that Raphael Lemkin, the father of genocide studies, was already sensitive to the gendered dimensions of genocidal violence in the 1940s and 1950s — decades before the field of genocide studies formally developed tools to discuss them. The scholarly label "gendercide," when applied retrospectively to Lemkin's case studies, reveals that his analyses of Armenia, German colonization in Africa, and the Mongol conquests were already attending to the ways in which perpetrators exploited gender roles and identities as instruments of destruction. That this dimension of his thought was not recognized earlier is itself a fact about the history of scholarship — about which questions were and were not considered legitimate to ask. Rubio makes a parallel argument in her historiographical essay on Latine Marxism in the United States. The near-invisibility of Latine radical and Marxist traditions in the historical record, she shows, was not simply a matter of limited sources. It was produced by the Cold

War pressures that made certain labels dangerous, by disciplinary boundaries that made certain questions seem illegitimate, and by the shifting intellectual fashions that caused scholars to prioritize culture and identity over class. The absence of a label, Rubio demonstrates, is as much a historical fact as its presence.

Taken together, these essays do not propose a single theory of labelling or a unified method for studying it. They are better understood as a collective demonstration of what critical historical thinking looks like when it is directed, across a wide range of periods and places. The youngest contributors to this collection are first-year undergraduates writing their first critical essay; the most advanced are upper-division and graduate students who have spent a semester or more in the archives and in dialogue with the best available scholarship on their subjects. All of them have produced work that rewards careful reading, and all of them have, in different ways, exemplified the skills and commitments that the History Department here at Illinois State University is designed to cultivate.

I am incredibly grateful to the faculty members who nominated the essays gathered here and helped their students through the tedious work of revisions. And I would, on behalf of the entire department, like to extend deepest congratulations to Stellan Hammond, Jakub Rapala, Brooke Cordray, Danielle Gottlieb, Riley Kilhoffer, Dan Larsen, Caleb King, Abby LeClere, Shannon Mahoney, Amanda Malone, Grace Zaleski, Kylie Black, and Alicia Rubio. Their work is the reason this journal exists. The essays that follow remind us that the past was always more complicated than the labels that have come down to us suggest, and that recovering that complexity, such as naming more carefully, or refusing to name where certainty is not warranted, is one of the most important things a historian can do.

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## New Curriculum Feature: History 100 Primary Source Analyses

Typically, this journal showcases our students' exemplary work toward the end of their time at ISU, but this year, we wanted to feature some of the amazing work from students just beginning their time with us. Starting in Fall 2025, the History Department implemented a new course for first-year students majoring in History and History Education. History 100 (designed by the Curriculum Committee, chaired by Dr. Amy Wood) is now a small seminar required of every new student that frames history as a set of skills and methods, rather than as the mastery of content-specific knowledge about a time or place in the past. Students spend the semester challenging themselves to think like historians – to critically analyze primary sources, to consider factors such as contingency and causality, and to puzzle over what it means to do history ethically and with empathy. They will return to these skills again in their content-based History classes, in the skills-based HIS 200 (historiography) and HIS 300 (research) sequences, and in their future careers or classrooms as teachers.

Dr. Taylor Soja nominated the following essays from her HIS 100 section, written by students in their first semester of college. In a series of scaffolded assignments, students practiced reading historical scholarship – both an academic book and an article – and then used the arguments from those sources to analyze and assess a related primary source. Why does a historical document matter, and what can we learn from it as historians? This type of analytical thinking and writing is the building block of what historians do. These two students excelled at the task.

Dr. Soja's section was themed around investigations of globalization and migration in the nineteenth century and before. The class closely read an academic journal article that argued that traveling ayahs (South Asian women who worked as nannies for British families in the context of empire) have been unfairly stereotyped as victims by historians,

just as they have been stereotyped by their employers.[1] Students were then tasked with writing a critical essay about a nineteenth-century primary source that historians have used to learn about ayahs and British attitudes towards this important workforce.

## Primary Source Analysis: "Humorous Indian Types"

*Stellan Hammond*

"Stellan Hammond considered an article in the popular illustrated magazine *The Graphic,* which caricatures various "types" of workers that a British colonist might encounter in India.[2] In both its written descriptions and accompanying illustrations, the article pokes fun at the stereotyped figures it describes. But Stellan convincingly argues that this racist humor has something to teach us, and that even sources with an obvious "bias" can be useful historical tools when we read them with a critical eye." – Note from Dr. Taylor Soja

Across the world, the 19th century was one of great change in many aspects of life. Many European countries were undergoing industrialization, which brought myriad benefits and drawbacks for common people. Much of their way of life was altered as they navigated their new industrialized landscape. One of the benefits was an improvement in overall literacy among the population, which came with a shift in the newspaper landscape. Papers in general grew in popularity, and new, more comedic issues started to emerge, one of which was *The Graphic*, which initially created a direct competitor of the *Illustrated London News*, since both had a distinct focus on their images.[3] *The Graphic* itself also leaned into humor and satire, which naturally found its audience in late 19th-century London. The paper supported empire-

[1] Olivia Robinson, "Travelling Ayahs of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Global Networks and Mobilization of Agency," *History Workshop Journal* 86 (Autumn 2018): 44–66.

[2] "Humorous Indian Types," *The Graphic,* Saturday 23 November 1878, p. 16-17.

[3] Andrea Korda, "The Graphic, 1869–1932," British Online Archives, September 19, 2023, https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/114/media/667/the-graphic-1869-1932.

building and called attention to social issues, both at home and abroad, while also frequently exoticizing other cultures and places around the world.[4] One very clear example of *The Graphic*'s worldview is the article "Humorous Indian Types," written anonymously in 1878. While short, the piece provides an insight into some of the British views of Indian people and the culture of the time. We as historians can use this article to ascertain British hierarchical structures in India, and how the British people viewed Indians as primitive and inferior enough to have to fit into their roles without variation. These qualities are demonstrated through humorous written and artistic depictions that highlight potentially satirical parts of their lives and jobs. Exposed by the article's humorous perspective is the intersection of comedic media and colonization, along with the laughable side of its racism.

It is plain to see how British people rank Indians within their racial hierarchy through the caricatures on the bottom page of the paper. Taking information from the column itself and combining it with the not-so-flattering depictions of people doing certain jobs gives the reader a glimpse into how the British viewed these people. Particularly, the fisherman and Dhobee, who is described as a "washerwoman (of the masculine gender)" are drawn in a terrible fashion, no doubt to highlight their supposed brutish qualities.[5] These jobs and their possessors are likely considered less desirable because of the lack of formality involved and the fact that they are done outside — physically in a body of water of some sort. The Dhobee is described as strong, potentially strong-willed, but is not as effective as the chemicals the British use to wash their clothes, which is very condescending, and acts itself similarly to many of the British views of Indian ways: admirable, yet inferior.[6] Sometimes they are comparable, however, like with the Noker, or servant, drawn drinking

[4]"The Graphic, 1869–1932," British Online Archives, accessed October 18, 2025, https://britishonlinearchives.com/collections/114/the-graphic-1869-1932.
[5] The Dhobee's description also highlights some gender role differences between India and Britain, since the British author must describe him as a "washer*woman*" because that is the standard he is exclusively familiar with, or the author just meant it as a humorous aside. "Humorous Indian Types," *The Graphic*, November 23, 1878, 535.
[6]"Humorous Indian Types," 535.

from a bottle, supposedly exactly like a British servant would do.[7] Assuming the author is a member of the upper class, just because they have the ability to have personal knowledge of Indian people and customs, they seem to have some animosity toward the lower-class servants at home, and potentially they view them as inferior as well. Embodying the interconnectedness of the British empire is the ayah, potentially the only female "type" depicted. Since she is drawn and described as never without her "young charges in her arms or toddling at her side," the reader understands that the idea of her value rests entirely on raising British children, she herself holds none.[8] Which part of her being, her race or her gender, has a greater impact on this distinction is up for interpretation, but both are undoubtedly important. It could also be the intersection of her race and gender that causes the condescension. A historian can thus use either aspect to learn about the nature of their respective discriminatory beliefs. The types of Indians who are depicted positively, whether as well-read, well-dressed, or otherwise, are very British in nature, for various reasons. The Munshi, or tutor, the Wuzeer, counsellor, and Jemadar, soldier, all look like they could just be British men wearing Indian clothes.[9]

The author likely views them in a positive light, because they are performing the role of spreading British tradition and culture to India for the British. Despite them facilitating British cultural and physical growth, like the ayahs, the men are undoubtedly granted more respect, because of the fact that they are men. The nature of the way that they are described makes it seem like Indian people are either one of these described types, or they don't exist, according to this British expert on everything Indian. They have to be one of these prescribed roles, because they are too primitive to be unique, so they need British organization in their lives. From the artistic and written depictions alone, a historian can examine the

[7]The fact that the author acknowledges the similarities between specific Indians and the British necessitates the question of why every role is not considered comparable. The answer exposes more of the hypocrisy of British racism. "Humorous Indian Types," 536.
[8] "Humorous Indian Types," 535-536.
[9] "Humorous Indian Types," 536.

hierarchical structure of jobs and roles in both India and Britain, as well as differences in gender roles between home and colony.

Undoubtedly, some of the article is unrealistic, or exaggerated beyond truth, for multiple purposes. During the period in which this article was published, newspapers were reaching a new audience due to increased literacy among the populace and the ease of their production. This made them a very ready form of entertainment, even more than information or news. The exact wording and illustrations, then, cannot exactly be taken at face value. They should rather be considered with the knowledge of who the original audience and what the original purpose was. Chances are the article was written for entertainment as much as for education. One of the first sentences explains that the author will provide extra explanation for those readers who "have not had the pleasure of being grilled under the sun of our Eastern Empire," which sets the sarcastic tone from the start.[10] This sarcasm is highlighted with the description of the Jemadar, or soldier, who is usually a good lad, except for in 1857, when "fanaticism drives him mad."[11] We can see a less-than-serious tone when describing a very serious rebellion that had a drastic impact on the nature of British colonization. Looking at the rest of the newspaper page, the "Ten Years Later" poem right after puts any doubts about the seriousness of this paper to rest, with all its talk of decapitating scores of dolls and putting tadpoles in bonnets and the awkwardness of loving somebody five years younger, among other silly examples.[12] "Humorous Indian Types" can be used to analyze not only how British people liked their entertainment, but also how they did not take Indian people very seriously, especially their way of life, which they did not get directly from Britain.

Not only is the substance of the article humorous, as the title would insinuate, but the racism that it is predicated on is supposed to be equally funny. Numerous times throughout the article, direct comparisons are made between Indian people and their British counterparts. Similar to the Noker, the Vakeel, or lawyer, is described "by no means unlike his British

[10] "Humorous Indian Types," 535.
[11] "Humorous Indian Types," 535.
[12] "Ten Years Later" *The Graphic*, November 23, 1878, 535.

counterpart," because the Indians are "very tenacious of their supposed rights, and are very fond of going to law."[13] The Garee-wallah, or carriage driver, is also described as similar to the British equivalent, if not superior, because he requires a stronger set of lungs to yell at the pedestrians on the road.[14] Why then, is the rest of the article written in a racist, condescending tone? The author understands the similarity of the two cultures in question, how there are benefits and drawbacks from both, yet they still portray the British one as undoubtedly on top. This racism could also just be interacting with the satirical nature of the article to amplify its potency. If so, the focus of a historian would have to shift from its substance to the time period that it comes from, as a part of the context of an analysis on British perspectives of the time, and how extreme they are compared to how they appear in writing, or something like that. A historian can also just explore, question, and look deeper into the hypocrisy and irony of British racism regarding India, using the images of these humorous Indians, and pick apart the animosity toward them.

"Humorous Indian Types" provides an interesting and amusing look into British perceptions of the people they colonized, mainly their apparent inferiority and primitivity, along with demonstrating the interaction between the racism of the late 19th century and the change in the newspaper and entertainment landscape, and simply holds a mirror to the hypocritical ideals of the time. Historians can use this article as a source for a wide range of analyses. They could use it to discern the hierarchical structure among the colonized people of the British Empire, to take various looks at the nature of media in late 19th-century Britain and how it played into colonization, and for an infinite number of other works. The article illuminates just one view on the people that the British colonized, which is no doubt different from how they viewed the Africans or the other Asians they interacted with, but based on the same racism.

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[13] "Humorous Indian Types," 535.
[14] "Humorous Indian Types," 535.

## **Primary Source Analysis: *The Story of Henrietta and the Ayah, or, Do Not Trust to Appearances***

*Jakub Rapala*

"Jakub Rapala considered a very different primary source. He wrote about a children's story published in 1864, which offers young readers a heavy-handed lesson in not judging people before you get to know them.[15] Jakub teases out the complicated racial politics of this children's book – the main character is scared of her neighbor's ayah and eventually learns to "not trust appearances." However, Jakub argues, this lesson doesn't mean the text doesn't endorse racist assumptions about ayahs, and colonized people more generally." – Note from Dr. Taylor Soja

In 1864, prolific British writer and translator Clara de Chatelain published *The Story of Henrietta and the Ayah, or, Do Not Trust to Appearances.* This children's story is about the titular Henrietta, a six-year-old girl from an upper-class family, becoming fearful of an ayah who works for one of her neighbors. All the people around Henrietta repeatedly argue against her fear, and rebuke her when she makes awful comments about the ayah's appearance.[16] Eventually, she gets over her fear after the ayah saves her from a snake.[17] Despite preaching against the racist fear of ayahs, *The Story of Henrietta and the Ayah* still pushes stereotypes by reducing the ayah to a loyal helper of white people who has no agency of her own. More specifically, the story portrays her as always loyal, instantly forgiving of wrongdoing, and always ready to sacrifice herself for the children in her care.

One does not have to read very far to see the ayah's unwavering loyalty. Early on, Henrietta's mother decides to meet with the ayah to

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[15] Clara de Chatelain, *Story of Henrietta and the Ayah, or, Do Not Trust to Appearances; My Little Schoolfellow, or, One Good Turn Deserves Another* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1864), p. 7-66.

[16] Clara de Chatelain, *Story of Henrietta and the Ayah, or, Do Not Trust to Appearances; My Little Schoolfellow, or, One Good Turn Deserves Another* (London: James Hogg & Sons, 1864), 9-15, 26-29, 34, 43-46, 48-51, 55-57.

[17] Clara de Chatelain, *Story of Henrietta and the Ayah*, 61-66.

apologize for her daughter's antics. Upon seeing her, the ayah "now rose, walking with a stately pace towards the lady, bowed gracefully, as she stood before her waiting her commands."[18] As the story focuses on the positive side of ayahs to show how foolish it is to be scared of them, Chatelain's choice of words clearly shows that the ideal ayah was one who was immediately ready to help any white person who showed up near her. Olivia Robinson, writing about the perception of ayahs by Victorian Britons, stated that the best Indian servants were seen as those who completely accepted the authority of their white employers.[19] The ayahs' acceptance of that authority often extended to the white neighbors of their employers as well. "As a means of strengthening British rule," wrote Robinson, "an unspoken defence was being constructed between colonizer and colonized."[20] By presenting a clearer divide between colonizer and colonized, the British Empire put pressure on ayahs not just to follow their employers, but also the entire colonizer class. *The Story of Henrietta and the Ayah* gives the titular ayah no option to resist that pressure, as real ayahs did through cultural exchange and positive interaction with other ayahs in institutions such as the Ayahs' and Amahs' Home.[21] By showing no hesitation in any action towards a non-employer, the story removes agency from the ayah, making her a servant not just of those who hired her, but also of those who look like her employers.

The ayah also does not have agency in choosing whether or not to accept abuse. Following another instance of Henrietta's misbehavior, her mother rushes to apologize to the ayah, who instantly responds that she does not mind.[22] In this piece of fiction, she does not stand up for herself and instead follows real-life British ideals of an ayah at the time. However, there are recorded cases of real ayahs standing up for themselves in cases of bad treatment. In her article, Robinson cites court

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[18] Clara de Chatelain, *Story of Henrietta and the Ayah*, 17-19.
[19] Olivia Robinson, "Travelling Ayahs of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Global Networks and Mobilization of Agency," *History Workshop Journal* 86, no. 2 (2018): 47, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dby016
[20] Olivia Robinson, "Travelling Ayahs," 45.
[21] Olivia Robinson, "Travelling Ayahs," 61-62.
[22] Clara de Chatelain, *Story of Henrietta and the Ayah*, 27.

records, government files, newspaper reports, and letters to prove that ayahs did seek to protect themselves from stolen wages and violence, among other abuses.[23] While none of the cited cases were results of offense taken at ignorant little girls like Henrietta, they still prove that ayahs were ready and willing to defend themselves. The fictional ayah could have done so in the story. Instead, de Chatelain does not give her such an option, further spreading the misconception that ayahs were weak victims.

Lastly, the ayah is always ready to sacrifice herself for the children in her care, even if the situation could result in her death. Near the end of the story, Henrietta is trapped under a pile of boxes and is attacked by a snake, which is implied to be venomous. The ayah immediately rushes to her aid, comforts her, and prepares to cure her of the snake bite. While the snake is revealed to be harmless, the ayah did not know this, meaning she was fully prepared to risk her life to save Henrietta.[24] This reveals the British idealization of the ayah as someone who was ready to do anything, even gamble her own life, in order to care for a child. While many ayahs did wade through hardship to fulfill their duties in extraordinary circumstances, it is unreasonable to assume that all would do so when their lives were on the line.[25] By not acknowledging the fictional ayah's fear during such a situation, the story took agency away from real ayahs and put pressure on them to make choices that they did not actually want to make.

Overall, the story shows that ayahs still lacked agency in works that sought to counter a negative perception of them. In *Henrietta and the Ayah* specifically, the ayah is not a "forlorn little brown-cheeked object," as a newspaper advertisement from the era wrote,[26] but a loyal and hardworking servant. While this seems like an anti-racist message on the

[23] Olivia Robinson, "Travelling Ayahs," 59-60.
[24] Clara de Chatelain, *Henrietta and the Ayah*, 61-63.
[25] Olivia Robinson, "Travelling Ayahs," 57-59.
[26] 'Travellers' Joy', *Yorkshire Post*, 3 Sept. 1923, 10, cited in Olivia Robinson, "Travelling Ayahs," 50.

surface, the reality is that the ayah character acts exactly according to British ideals of a servant and has no choice in the matter. While this is an improvement over blatant infantilization, this framing does not actually end misconceptions about ayahs and their agency. Instead, the perception of the ayah shifts from a child who must be constantly supervised to a robot that serves the colonizer class. Either way, the misconception continues, and the story does not actually humanize the ayah, further perpetuating racism. As the story was written for children, this means that another generation learned to see ayahs as not human. This evidence shows that even children's media must feature fleshed-out characters who act differently in different situations, rather than always acting the same way. Flat characters advance misconceptions, even if that was not the author's intention. Humans are varied, and each person acts differently in different circumstances. Therefore, the best way to humanize marginalized groups is not to put them down or put them on a pedestal, but to show how they are like all of us.

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Papers

## God(s) Not Dead: Pagan Practices in Christianized Rome

*Brooke Cordray*

Late Antiquity was marked by significant changes in social and political institutions accompanying the decline of the Western Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity. It was, therefore, far more than a mere transitional period between classical antiquity and the Middle Ages. Rome, the capital of the Empire, was the heart of pagan practice and tradition. Paganism was evident in temples, monuments, shrines, and the everyday practices of the city's people. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the late fourth century, Rome became the center of Christian authority. Popes and bishops within the city gained significant power over the people. The city of Rome's religious presence and power, from being the heart of paganism to becoming a center of Christianity's rule, was a massive shift the Romans would have to grapple with.

As paganism was gradually outlawed in support of Christianity, the everyday lives of those Romans clinging to pagan practices were shaken. But the eradication of paganism did not occur overnight; Roman religion persisted well beyond the official Christianization of Rome, as evidenced by pagan inscriptions, the continued existence of pagan monuments, and the celebration of pagan festivals. The survival of these pagan observances have led historians to characterize this period of transition in terms of both change and continuity The Fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome illustrates this period very nicely, being a Late Antique site of pagan of worship and ritual, but existing within Christianity, even providing evidence of Christian participation of the pagan practice of using *defixiones*.[1] This *nymphaeum,* with archaeological evidence of Christians participating in pagan ritual at a pagan site, highlights a hybridization of change and

[1] Piranomonte, Marina, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," *Archeopress* (2016).

continuity that largely aims to shift everyday life, but leaves room for the continuation of traditional practices from earlier centuries throughout Late Antiquity.

Monumental fountains in Rome and Greece, called *nymphaea*, dedicated to the worship of nymphs and other pagan deities, are physical monuments that illustrate the complexities of this period. Not only can the architectural features of these fountains illustrate the period, but so can the artifacts that they house. Artifacts like coins, lamps, inscribed materials, and magical or ritualistic material culture at these sites provide insights into the periods when the fountains were in use, what people were using them for, and what they were used for. Across the Roman Empire, *nymphaea* present evidence of their continued functionality after the official Christianization of Rome, and some fountains, like the fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome, are testimonies of some pagan practices performed by Christians. The existence and evidence of *nymphaea* use in Rome during Late Antiquity suggest that some pagan practices not only endured during the religious shift of the Late Roman Empire but thrived. The coexistence of paganism and Christianity in Late Antique society is well documented across many contexts; the relationship between religious coexistence and *nymphaea*, however, is vastly understudied.

*Nymphaea*, as sites of pagan worship and tradition, hold particular significance in religious superstition, which can explain their continued magical use throughout the rise of Christianity and the religious synchronism attested by these sites. The understanding of the Greco-Roman nymph is a fascinating example of Late Antique changes accommodating long-held cultural traditions, leading to a hybridization of change and continuity in Roman understandings of traditional Roman culture. In classical pagan tradition, nymphs were understood as liminal creatures, existing on the boundary of various identities.[2] Nymphs are not fully gods, but also not humans, not yet women, but also not girls, and they're not distinctly good creatures, but also not necessarily malevolent. This characteristically paradoxical nature of nymphs continues into Late

[2] Ovid, "Fasti," in *Book III: March 15: Ides*, trans. A. S. Kline (n.d.).

Antiquity. Christians of Late Antiquity didn't completely eradicate nymphs from superstition but transformed them into malevolent demons.[3] Evidence of invocations of "angels who dwell in the waters" at the Fountain of Lamps in Corinth suggests an understanding of nymphs as angels or at least angel-like creatures.[4] This completely incompatible interpretation of nymphs as both angels and demons furthers this complex understanding of nymphs and also highlights the complexity of how early Christians practiced the new religion. In the mid-4th century, the Canon of the Council of Laodicea regulated several behaviors within the church, including the condemnation of the worship of angels, which was equated with the worship of demons.[5] This official condemnation further emphasizes the Late Antique complexities of the understandings of nymphs, gods, angels, and demons, allowing space for continuity within change.

Nymphs themselves were complex creatures that existed within both classical paganism and early Christianity, and *nymphaea,* sites dedicated to nymphs, were associated with magical practice among pagans and Christians. In sites like the Fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome and the Fountain of Lamps in Corinth, magical practice in aquatic sites is prevalent across the Greco-Roman world. At both sites, lamps used in magical rituals have been thrown into the fountains, suggesting they have some significance in fostering magic.[6] Along with the understanding of nymphs as creatures existing on boundaries (whether between gods and humans or between demons and angels), *nymphaea* have been understood

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[3] Jennifer Larson, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 64-65; Marina Piranomonte and Francisco Marco Simón, "The Daemon and the Nymph: Abraxas and Anna Perenna," *Bollenttino Di Archeologia On Line*, no. 330 (2008), 11-13.
[4] Luke Lavan and Michael Mulryan, eds., *The Archaeology of Late Antique "Paganism,"* vol. 7 (Brill, 2011) 289-291.
[5] Lavan and Mulryan, *The Archaeology of Late Antique "Paganism,"* vol. 7, 290.
[6] Luke Lavan and Michael Mulryan, eds., *The Archaeology of Late Antique "Paganism,"* vol. 7 (Brill, 2011) 289-291; Marina Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," *Archaeopress*, The Wisdom of Thoth: Magical Texts in Ancient Mediterranean Civilisations, 2016.

as earthly sites with openings to the underworld.[7] In this way, *nymphaea* are also liminal sites, and it's unsurprising that sites dedicated to creatures associated with angels, demons, and the gods are places associated with the worlds of those deities. As *nymphaea* have connections to the worlds of various deities and seem to exist on the threshold between them, it would make sense that people understood the sites as openings to the underworld and, therefore, as functional spaces for magical practices. Furthermore, at sites like the Fountain of Anna Perenna, scholars researching their use, such as Attilo Mastrocinque, propose that instruments of magic, such as lamps and defixiones, were likely thrown into these aquatic sites to symbolically damn the soul of the intended victim.[8] Evidence of *nymphs* being invoked in ritual, the synchronic religious presence at sites dedicated to nymphs, as well as the likely symbolic nature of throwing magical tools into watery features, suggests that aquatic sites like *nymphaea* are significant to magical ritual for both pagans and Christians during Late Antiquity.

The prevalent research on religious and cultural identity during Late Antiquity, though, lays a firm foundation for the study of Late Antique uses of *nymphaea*. For example, Anna Sitz's study of the afterlives of inscriptions is a good example of the complicated understanding of religion during late antiquity. Sitz examines how classical inscriptions were perceived in Late Antiquity, addressing the endurance of classical identity in a world that was Christianizing, where inscriptions shaped how the pagan past was viewed.[9] Focusing on how the inscriptions were used after their original lives, she argues not that the inscriptions prove pagan perseverance, but that they provide evidence of the preservation of cultural identity and memory.[10] While the inscriptions

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[7] Attilio Mastrocinque, "Late Antique Lamps with Defixiones," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 47, no. 1 (2007): 91.
[8] Attilio Mastrocinque, "Late Antique Lamps with Defixiones," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 47, no. 1 (2007): 91.
[9] Anna M. Sitz, "Introduction: Afterlives of Inscriptions," in Pagan Inscriptions, Christian Viewers : The Afterlives of Temples and Their Texts in the Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean, (Oxford University Press, 2023), 4.
[10] Sitz, "Introduction: Afterlives of Inscriptions," 22.

do not prove the survival of pagan practices after the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the intentional preservation of these inscriptions speak to the complexities of the shift. While Sitz's work is largely on the inscriptions found in the forms of *defixiones,* she distinguishes these inscriptions from others. While pagan inscriptions on the architecture of the Fountain of Anna Perenna were preserved into Late Antiquity, the *defixiones* were actively deposited by Romans practicing magic at the site. Sitz argues that these two ways of interacting with pagan inscriptions are particular from each other as preservation is not as active of a process as purposefully crafting and depositing inscriptions. So, while the preserved inscriptions at the site suggest a preservation of cultural identity, the actively deposited material culture exhibits active participation of pagan traditions. The discovery of Christian inscriptions and objects at the Fountain of Anna Perenna reflects religious dissonance and suggests not only that the site was in use after the Christianization of Rome, but that some Christians were actively partaking in pagan practices at the *nymphaeum*.

The Christian presence at this fountain is significant not only because it was dedicated to a pagan deity, but also because the city of Rome, a growing center of Christianity, was home to numerous Christian churches, altars, and sites. The choice Christians made when going to the Fountain of Anna Perenna was significant because it was a deliberate decision to attend a pagan site rather than a Christian one. This becomes more significant when understood in light of the practices that these Christians participated in at the site. Most of the material culture uncovered at the Fountain of Anna Perenna has magical or ritualistic pagan significance, which is understandable given that it is a pagan fountain, but the rituals are overwhelmingly spells and curses intended to harm or punish people. The seemingly malicious intent of the material culture at the site, when understood alongside the deliberate Christian presence, may suggest that Christians would proactively participate in pagan practices to punish another person, offering insight into how Romans might have held intentional ideas about the purposes specific religions fulfilled in everyday life.

As previously mentioned, there is a lack of research on the lives of *nymphaea* during Rome's Christianization. But scholarship on broader cultural change helps us understand how the transitions of Late Antiquity affected the use of *nymphaea*. Historians of the period have argued for both change and continuity across cultural and religious history, archaeology, literature, and more. While the range of this research is wide, the study of the transformation of *nymphaea* and monumental fountains could add nuance to existing narratives. Dayna S. Kalleres investigates the relationship between Christianity and paganism in Late Antiquity.[11] She works through three case studies of individual Late Antique cities, exploring how bishops attempted to Christianize them through the demonization of pagan practices and the encouragement of both baptism and exorcism.[12] While she notes the endurance of paganism into the Late Antique period, she argues for its overall decline as a legitimate religion and for the consolidation of Christianity.[13] Similarly, Jennifer Larson discusses the survival, but extensive transformation of ancient nymphs through Christianity.[14] Unlike Kalleres, she takes a stance that suggests continuity but argues that, for that continuity to exist, a massive transformation of the pagan deities had to occur. Both analyses focus on the effects of Christian authority on paganism in the Mediterranean, though their arguments differ.

Paolo Squatriti discusses this notion of change through shifts in water use in everyday life, focusing on Late Antique Italy.[15] Taking less of a religious approach than Kalleres and Larson, he still adds to this discussion of late antiquity being a time of extensive change to everyday life. He argues that the decentralization of Roman water systems and the transition to localized practices affected Italian culture and societal

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[11] Kalleres, Dayna S., *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (University of California Press, 2015), 28.
[12] Kalleres, *City of Demons*, 59.
[13] Kalleres, *City of Demons*, 28, 62-67.
[14] Larson, Jennifer, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 62.
[15] Paolo, Squatriti, *Water and Society in Early Medieval Italy, AD 400-1000* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5.

structure. Imperial Roman water was public, but the collapse of the empire led public water systems to fall into private hands, often resulting in the Christianization of water systems, affecting the rights and uses of Romes once-public water infrastructure. This argument, while differing from Kalleres and Larson's arguments about change urged by religious authority, still highlights the role that religious values and institutions played in Italy's use and management of water.[16] While these three historical analyses take very different approaches, they show how widespread changes in post-classical Mediterranean everyday life were. Though they do not discuss changes to *nymphaea* directly, these studies of religion and culture provide a holistic understanding of the early medieval period, which is necessary to understand how people interacted with *nymphaea* during the Christianization of the Mediterranean.

In *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity*, Dayna S. Kalleres argues that the decline of paganism across the Mediterranean was due to the rising religious authority of bishops. In her analysis, she focuses on the roles of three bishops in Antioch, Jerusalem, and Milan, emphasizing how their authority led to the elimination of paganism in favor of Christianity in these cities. She discusses the relation between paganism, Christianity, and Judaism across the Mediterranean, and the growing Christian authority over other religions.[17] Through an effort to eliminate practices, traditions, and spaces of other religions, bishops, like the three studied, attempted to "diabolize" non-Christian religions and asserted Christian power over their respective cities. While effectively making this argument, she also discusses the pervasiveness of pagan structures and rituals well into the early Middle Ages. Because pagan architecture, statues, and shrines still existed, even if abandoned, Kalleres argues that their respective divinities remained in daily life.[18] She argues that this is a time of pagan decline, but not one of

[16] Paolo, Squatriti, *Water and Society in Early Medieval Italy, AD 400-1000* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 35.
[17] Kalleres, Dayna S., *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (University of California Press, 2015), 21.
[18] Kalleres, *City of Demons,* 36.

complete pagan elimination.[19] For example, Larson discusses curse tablets, pagan cults, and festivals in Antioch to illustrate Bishop John Chrysostom's authority over the city and his attempts to Christianize it.[20] While she makes good arguments about Christian leaders' attempts to convince Christians that demons are present in these pagan practices, it is important to note that their worry of the matter suggests that Christians were participating in them. This participation of Christians in pagan festivals, rituals, and cults suggests a fusion of religious beliefs and practices among the people of Antioch and, therefore, some sort of continuity, yet transformation, of classical paganism.

Jennifer Larson argues more actively in favor of continued pagan beliefs, that the transformation of classical Greek nymphs into post-classical *Neraïda*.[21] Nymph cults remained present in Greece through the Roman Imperial period, but with the rise of Christian influence, they began to transform. Larson investigates the transformation of the Greek nymphs as complex deities to later *Neraïda,* which were demonic creatures of folklore, by focusing heavily on both the sexual nature of the creature as well as her morality. In contrast to generally benevolent nymph goddesses, *Neraïda* are depicted as malicious, often in alliance with the devil.[22] Larson contends that this behavioral transformation suggests a direct link between nymphs and *Neraïda* because of the developing notion of Nympholepsy in the Byzantine Period. During this period, there was a growing belief that contact with a nymph would make a person go mad, so, as the influence of Christianity grew, this phenomenon of nympholepsy persisted. Larson suggests that the ease with which the classical Greek nymph could be turned into a malicious demon in Christian reinterpretations of the deities made it easier to cast the nymphs as malicious demons. She argues that the reinterpretation of the nymph survived Christianity because it fit comfortably within it and its division of

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[19] Kalleres, *City of Demons*, 36.
[20] Kalleres, *City of Demons*, 45, 57, 62.
[21] Larson, Jennifer, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 61-62.
[22] Larson, Jennifer, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 62.

the world into good and evil.[23] Larson's research on classical and post-classical nymph-like creatures is not only important in bridging a knowledge gap but also in illustrating the transformations of pagan deities into ones that fit within a Christian context. This illustration fits well with Kalleres' discussion of continued pagan practices in Late Antiquity, as both show how Christianity affected these practices but did not immediately replace them.

Similarly, Late Antique religious transformations affected everyday life, as did functional transformations. In *Water and Society in Early Medieval Italy AD 400-1000*, Paolo Squatriti discusses the changes in water usage. Transformations in how water was collected, used, and managed occurred during this period, an adjustment that had to be made after Rome's fall.[24] Because water is embedded in everyday life, it is tangled up with cultural values, and therefore, they have an influence on each other. Throughout his research, he focuses on the influence of water management on social structures and religious views, reflecting the wider structures of Early Medieval Italy.[25] For example, Squatriti discusses how, after Rome's decline, water management was decentralized, with responsibility shifting to landowners and monasteries.[26] Because of this, local powers had authority over water technologies, creating a water-based societal dominance structure in which landowners and monasteries ruled, rather than the large Roman-funded aqueducts.[27] His argument, while contending that water use changed drastically in Early Medieval Italy, is not about the demise of water systems after Rome, but about changes that continued everyday practices.

While Paulo Squatriti's analysis of cultural and functional change in the Early Medieval Mediterranean world is vastly different than Larson's research on the changes of nymphs through Christianity or

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[23] Larson, *Greek Nymphs*, 64.

[24] Paolo, Squatriti, *Water and Society in Early Medieval Italy, AD 400-1000* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 164.

[25] Squatriti, *Water and Society,* 13-14.

[26] Squatriti, *Water and Society,* 13-14.

[27] Squatriti, *Water and Society,* 14.

Kalleres' discussion on Late Antique religious changes, the three sources still position themselves well in the historical discussion of Late Antique continuity and the everyday lives of Mediterraneans. While Kalleres argues against the continuity, her discussion seems to indicate the opposite: that it did exist and was fused into everyday life and religious beliefs, which was why bishops of various cities throughout the Mediterranean had to focus so heavily on demonology and the expulsion of Pagan practices. This discussion aligns with those of Larson and Squatriti, who argue that continuity occurred despite changes in things like religion and authority. In all three analyses of the period of rising Christian authority in the Mediterranean, a mixture of old practices and new practices is illustrated, whether those practices are religious, functional, or societal. The Early Middle Ages were a time of major societal shifts, and this is reflected in these analyses and their descriptions of continuity despite urged decline.

While these three analyses do not explicitly discuss the continuity or decline of *nymphaea* in the post-Roman world, their discussion regarding the continuity of pagan practices, nymphs in Christian folklore, and water usage suggests that *nymphaea* and other monumental fountains followed the same path. Across the Roman Empire, *nymphaea* were sites of pagan ritual and cults dedicated to the Greco-Roman deities, so if a combination of religious belief existed in Late Antiquity, a combination of religious practice at the fountains would likely exist as well. At the Fountain of Anna Perenna, this religious coexistence is suggested in the form of *defixiones* that indicate the presence of Christians at the fountain.[28] In *The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic*, Marina Piranomonte argues that the discovery of these Christian *defixiones* suggest that Christians actively participated in the Cult of Anna Perenna and would not be opposed to pagan curse rituals like curse tablets which had been demonized by the Christian church and delegitimized as "magic".[29] While she does not discuss this specific practice much further, it is still compelling evidence

[28] Piranomonte, Marina, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," *Archeopress* (2016): 76.
[29] Piranomonte, Marina, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna," 76.

of this religious blend, promoting the arguments of continuity of pagan tradition and use of fountains in Late Antique Italy.

Marking the New Year, the Festival of Anna Perenna was celebrated by the common people of Rome on the Ides of March through drinking, singing, dancing, and storytelling, observing the fertility of the Earth as spring approached.[30] Roman poets, Ovid and Vergil, portrayed Anna Perenna's character in different ways between their epics, sometimes presenting her[31] While these authors wrote about Anna Perenna centuries before, the narratives they wrote remained present in the lives of Romans into Late Antiquity, where evidence shows that festivals written about by Ovid continued and sites like the Fountain of Anna Perenna remained in use. In these myths, although they differ in how her origin is told, both authors present her as foundational to Roman mythology and tradition. Ovid's epic wrote about the celebration of the Ides of March during the Late Republic when the festival was already a well-established event, especially among the common people. Ovid described Anna Perenna in three ways: a nymph, an elderly mortal woman, and a trickster [32] While vastly different from each other, these three aspects of Anna Perenna informed the festivities of the Ides of March and the cult worship of Anna Perenna throughout Late Antiquity. Ovid portrayed Anna Perenna as a symbol of the continuity of old traditions. In the same way, the continued use of the cult site dedicated to the nymph goddess symbolizes religious continuity in Late Antique Rome, even after its conversion to Christianity.

In the first of the narratives, Anna, the sister of Dido, becomes a river nymph. This narrative connects the story of Anna Perenna to Vergil's *Aeneid*, making Anna Perenna a part of Rome's origin story.[33] Not only did the text connect Anna to the broader mythology of Rome's past, but it also associated Anna Perenna with nature and the annual cycle of seasons. When she was revived as a river nymph, she became a symbol of the new

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[30] Ovid, "Book III," in Fasti: March 15: Ides, trans. A.S. Kline, 2004, 93-94.
[31] Virgil, "Book IV" in The Aeneid, trans. A.S. Kline, 2015, 61.
[32] Ovid, "Book III" in *Fasti*.
[33] Virgil, "Book IV" in The Aeneid, Ovid, "Book III" in *Fasti*.

year and the eternal cycle of the calendar celebrated in honor of Earth's renewal after winter.[34] The second narrative by Ovid fits Anna Perenna into the lives of the common people. He portrayed her as an old mortal woman who gives baked goods to the people of Bovillae.[35] The plebeians in this story idolize Anna Perenna for her generosity, worshipping her as a goddess, and founding the Festival of Anna Perenna. This narrative highlighted the common people in the celebration of the new year and promoted community. Lastly, emphasizing the lightheartedness and even raciness of the festival, Ovid detailed a third Anna Perenna, one who played a trick on Mars. Anna Perenna tricked Mars into almost kissing her, humiliating the god, but ensuing great joy among the others, namely Venus.[36] This story, both comical and symbolic, not only contributes to the joyous, lighthearted events at the festival but also to its openness to the common people. The story of Anna Perenna tricking a well-regarded god symbolically flips the social order of the gods, and the entertainment Venus derives from the trick indicates good-humored gods and goddesses who can enjoy a racy joke. These three stories told in Ovid's *Fasti*, while illustrating three very different versions of Anna Perenna, all work together to build the Festival of Anna Perenna and promote the behavior of the common people at the event, where drinking excessive amounts of wine, telling lewd jokes and stories, singing, and dancing are all part of the celebration of the New Year.

By the Late Republic, when Ovid wrote about the Ides of March, the new year was already officially celebrated on January 1st, so it is notable that Ovid discusses the Festival of Anna Perenna as a New Year celebration. The Festival of Anna Perenna highlighted the participation of the common people in its celebration, so Ovid writing this event as an important celebration of the New Year and the endurance of the Earth through winter is notable. He did, still, write *Fasti* chronologically, beginning with the official New Year's celebration, indicating that he viewed both events as important calendar celebrations for both the common people and the elites of Rome. Highlighting both the common

[34] Ovid, *Fasti*, 98.
[35] Ovid, *Fasti,* 98.
[36] Ovid, *Fasti*, 99.

celebration and the official celebration, Ovid offered insight into an important theme that existed in the Late Republic and into Late Antiquity: tension and coexistence between continued tradition and new tradition.

This tension suggested in Ovid's description of the calendar between the old and the new is present in religious practices and beliefs as well. By the end of the fourth century, Rome was officially Christianized, but, like the celebration of holidays, the institution of a new religion didn't outright erase old practices. This continuation of religious practices is suggested at the Fountain of Anna Perenna through its material culture dating from the 4th century BCE until as late as the 4th to 6th century CE. Since pagan practices and festivals are known to continue well into Late Antiquity, it wouldn't be unlikely for Romans to have continued celebrating the Ides of March, or the Festival of Anna Perenna, during the period. Therefore, it would make sense for plebians to continue worshiping the nymph goddess at the fountain dedicated to her. The Fountain of Anna Perenna, with excavations directed by Marina Piranomonte beginning in 1999, is a Roman *nymphaeum* abundant with material culture related to the cult of Anna Perenna. At this site, several ritualistic materials have been excavated. Inscriptions in the site's architecture dedicate the *nymphaeum* to Anna Perenna and over five hundred coins were found in the fountain. [37] This coin deposit suggests offerings to the nymph goddess, but also gives insight as to when this site was in use. The Fountain of Anna Perenna held coins from the reign of Augustus in the early first century to Theodosius in the late fourth century. This is not only evidence of long-term use of the site, but also of its continued use years after Theodosius' Edict of Thessalonica, which established Nicene Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. Conditions at the site preserved some organic material, which was likely used for magical purposes, along with other materials related to the

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[37] Marina Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," Archaeopress, The Wisdom of Thoth: Magical Texts in Ancient Mediterranean Civilisations, 2016, 75.

practice of magic.[38] These archaeological finds reflect the presence of pagan magical practices well into the Christianization of Rome, but, interestingly, they also indicate Christian participation in the practice, highlighting a medley of religious practices in Late Antique Rome.

The inscriptions at the fountain identify that the location is dedicated to Anna Perenna, and give a date for the altars, April 5th, 156 CE.[39] The dedication of the altars to the goddess of the Ides of March suggests that the festival was still taking place well into the second century, over a century after the Roman New Year was officially being celebrated in January. This late dedication to the goddess of the festival proves continuity of tradition among people in Rome, but it is still too early to show the effects of Christianity on how the site was used. Along with the inscriptions, several organic materials were found at the site, including pinecones, eggshells, fruits, nuts, and residue of milk, sugars, herbs, and wax.[40] These organic materials, while not primarily showing diet, instead indicate the symbolic nature of foods and their ritual use at the Fountain of Anna Perenna. Here, finds like eggshells and pinecones symbolize rebirth and fertility, much like Ovid's narrations of Anna Perenna and the Ides of March.[41] Pinecones, not native to the location of the site, must have been brought specifically for ritual purposes at the site. Likely, according to Piranomonte's report, they were related to the Greek goddess of motherhood, Rhea Silvia, and the tradition of throwing pine cones for good luck.[42] Similarly, the eggs symbolize fertility.[43] These

[38] Marina Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," Archaeopress, The Wisdom of Thoth: Magical Texts in Ancient Mediterranean Civilisations, 2016, 75-76.
[39] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 75.
[40] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 75, 81.
[41] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 75. Ovid, *Fasti, 98*.
[42] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 75.
[43] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 75

symbols of fertility make sense at a *nymphaeum* dedicated to Anna Perenna, a goddess symbolizing the New Year and the revival of nature after winter, and do not necessarily indicate pagan continuity in Late Antiquity, but do, along with the inscriptions, show that Anna Perenna's festival still, in some ways, remained.

A deposit of 524 coins in the basin of the fountain exhibits the tradition of people throwing money into the fountain as offerings to Anna Perenna and her nymphs, whom the fountain is dedicated to.[44] Coins, being dateable objects, are major archaeological finds, as they can heavily inform when the site was in use. These coins, dating from the Augustan Period through the late fourth century, with the latest coinciding with Theodosius' reign and the official conversion of the Empire to Christianity. While tossing a coin into a fountain in honor of its deity is a seemingly small ritualistic tradition, the evidence at this site shows how influential in barring pagan practices Theodosius' edicts were. This trend of a lack of evidence of pagan traditions continuing throughout Late Antiquity does not continue, though, and the coins may, with the addition of other evidence, suggest a shift in religious practices, rather than an erasure of them.

A host of magical materials were also found at the Fountain of Anna Perenna. These materials show the life of pagan ritual at the site, what practices were being performed, and who was performing them. Among the materials relating to magic, excavations have uncovered a *caccabus*, which is a pot for cooking, 74 oil lamps, including lamps decorated with Christian symbolism, 24 containers, seven of which held figurines, and 26 *defixiones*, or curse tablets.[45] Curse tablets are Greco-

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[44] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 75;  Marina Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna," in Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept. – 1st Oct. 2005, ed. Fransisco Marco Simón and Richard Gordon, vol. 168, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World (Brill, 2010), 203.

[45] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 75-81.

Roman spells and curses inscribed on a sheet typically made of lead. These curses often invoke gods and deities to cause harm or punishments for wrongdoings. Not only do these curse tablets provide insight into the superstitions in Rome but also describe the grievances people were experiencing and how they reacted to them. As a deeply pagan practice, the presence of curse tablets at a Late Antique fountain are evidence of paganism existing through the Christianization of Rome. This, in itself, is historically important, but this site's significant Christian symbolism in these tablets as well as the oil lamps not only emphasizes the coexistence of religions but how intertwined the experiences of these religions were during the early Christianization of Western Europe. These materials, given their texts, uses and authors, suggest ritualistic use of the Fountain of Anna Perenna well into Late Antiquity. This continued practice of paganism in Christianized Rome indicates a prevalence of both paganism and Christianity among the city's commoners.

The collection of lamps at the Fountain of Anna Perenna is notable, as a significant portion were embellished with a Christogram.[46] Being decorated with Christian markings not only provides evidence that this site was still being used for magical purposes after the Christianization of Rome, but also affirms Christian presence at the fountain. Some of the lamps at the site were found to have been lit, others were new, and some were discovered to be vessels for magical rituals, like love spells and *defixiones*.[47] Six of the lamps found at the fountain held curse tablets, which proves that, at least sometimes, these lamps were used not just to light the fountain in the dark, but had specific purposes in magic ritual. While it was not noted if any of these Christian lamps held *defixiones* or not, the presence of Christian lamps, both lit and unlit, in the collection of lamps known to have been used for pagan magic, is peculiar,

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[46] Marina Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," *Archaeopress*, The Wisdom of Thoth: Magical Texts in Ancient Mediterranean Civilisations, 2016, 77, this report doesn't state the exact number of Christian lamps, but describes it as a "remarkable amount."

[47] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic."

likely attesting to Christian participation in pagan rituals in Late Antique Rome.

The site's *defixiones* are heavily studied material culture from the Fountain of Anna Perenna, as they include written texts, often revealing what the ritual is for, who it is intended for, if a specific god is mentioned, and who wrote the curse. Six of these *defixiones* were found inside oil lamps; others were found in the containers at the site, or the *defixiones* were the containers themselves. These *defixiones,* both in their form and in their texts, are notable in revealing the large presence of curse ritual at the *nymphaeum*. While many of the tablets are illegible or largely illegible, several of them are in good enough condition to decipher. The majority of the tablets are written solely in Latin, but two of the curses were written in a combination of Latin and Greek.[48] Seven of the tablets include figures, often illustrating the intended victim of the curse. For example, one tablet reads the name *Antonius* with a drawn figure of a human, likely *Antonius*.[49] Interestingly, on the opposite side of the tablet, the name is written a second time, but the letters are not in the correct order. This is theorized to either indicate the curser's illiteracy, having accidentally spelled the name wrong and restarted the curse on the other side of the tablet, or as an intentional message, possibly symbolizing the dismemberment of the victim's body.[50] If the name was misspelled accidentally, it could indicate that the person writing the curse was not a professional. Professional magicians existed throughout the pagan Roman world, but less so after its Christianization, so non-magicians might have written these curses for themselves, even if largely illiterate. While with

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[48] Jürgen Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae," in Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept. – 1st Oct. 2005, ed. Fransisco Marco Simón and Richard Gordon, vol. 168, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 216.

[49] Jürgen Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae," in Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept. – 1st Oct. 2005, ed. Fransisco Marco Simón and Richard Gordon, vol. 168, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 217.

[50] Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae"; Celia Sánchez Natalías, Sylloge of Defixiones from the Roman West: A Comprehensive Collection of Curse Tablets from the Fourth Century BCE to the Fifth Century CE, vol. 1, BAR International Series 3077 (BAR Publishing, 2022), 216.

insufficient information to determine the chronology of the *defixiones* from the site, the exact year of this tablet cannot be deduced, the unskilled writing and lack of any detail suggest that this is not the work done by a professional and might indicate that this curse was produced after Rome became a Christian city, emphasizing the continuation of pagan practices even after Christianity.

Another tablet, while featuring a figure, is designed completely differently from the one directed at *Antonius*. This tablet involves a highly detailed drawing with a human-shaped figure in the center, enclosed within a diamond shape, four snakes, and several designs.[51] While it is unclear who this image represents, it's hypothesized to either be a representation of Anna Perenna and her nymphs or some sort of demon.[52] This tablet includes considerable text, in small, skilled cursive, likely done by a professional. While it is mainly written in classical Latin, minor changes in the language indicate that it is a late Latin text. Its message is a call to the nymphs of the *nymphaeum* to curse the eyes of the victim. Interestingly, it is one of only a few tablets at the site to mention the nymphs of the site. However, the mention of the nymphs confirms that Anna Perenna and her nymphs were still being worshipped at the fountain. Both the late Latin in the tablet with the snakes and the unskilled writing of the curse addressed to *Antonius* appear to be from later in the fountain's life, possibly after the Christianization of Rome. With this implication, it is possible that the Fountain of Anna Perenna was a location of Late Antique pagan ritual and tradition, meaning that pagan practices persisted, even when demonized and delegitimized as "magic" by Roman Officials, and the cult of Anna Perenna also persisted through this time.

More assuredly a product of Late Antiquity is the fifth text discussed by Blänsdorf. The text is made up of the Late Antique uncial alphabet, but the fragmentation of the text leaves it incomplete and largely undeciphered. While not confidently translated, the text is seemingly a prayer written by a husband about his wife.[53] This text is another text to

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[51] Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae." 221-227.
[52] Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae." 226.
[53] Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the Fons Annae Perennae," 220.

refer directly to the nymphs of the fountain, invoking them twice in comparable language to that of the inscriptions on the altar of the fountain. The clear Late Antique writing system in this text gives a strong indication of the use of the fountain and pagan practices during Late Antiquity. Similarly, the references to nymphs of the fountain (likely including Anna Perenna) demonstrate that Roman deities were still being worshipped into the Early Middle Ages.

The most clearly Christian-influenced material culture at the site is a *defixio* on a copper tablet found inside a lamp. Like previously discussed, the large number of lamps found at the site, in general, is interesting, as many are considered Christian lamps, decorated with Christograms.[54] Six of these lamps contained *defixiones*, which signify their magical purposes. Since these lamps are Christian and their uses are pagan, this indicates coexistence between the religions in Late Antique Rome. This coexistence is further supported by the text from this copper *defixio*. One of the few *defixiones* to call specifically to Anna Perenna and her nymphs, this tablet is also inscribed with "*Christum Nostrum*," an invocation of Jesus Christ. To the Romans, Christ was considered to be a powerful magician, as he was able to perform miracles, so, unsurprisingly, he is often listed with magical deities in rituals.[55] However, the mention of him as a magician is curious, given that the lamp housing the *defixio* is adorned with the Cristogram. While the text itself does not discuss Jesus in a manner holding his divinity higher than any other Roman deity, the tablet was likely written by a professional magician, not the Christian aggressor. Because of this, the Christian lamp itself is more notable in suggesting the religious beliefs of the person directing the curse. So, whether Jesus' name is used religiously or magically as a call to Christ, the fact that several people were bringing Christian lamps to the site for the specific use of cursing someone is significant in understanding who was orchestrating these curses in Late Antiquity.

[54] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 76

[55] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 76.

Much of the material culture excavated at the Fountain of Anna Perenna held these *defixiones*, and some of this material was, itself, a *defixio*, like many of the containers found at the site. Housing themselves within each other, like nesting dolls, many of these containers were inscribed with curses, and a few held figurines. In one of these containers, another invocation of Christ is found, making Jesus' role in these magic rituals evident.[56] These containers, while sometimes being curses, were also sometimes potions, often love potions. As Anna Perenna symbolizes rebirth and fertility, it's not surprising that people would use this site as a place to perform both curses and love potions, in hopes of either getting rid of something or ushering something in to start fresh in love or with a blank slate.

Like Ovid's description of the Festival of Anna Perenna being an event celebrated largely by commoners, many of the materials at the site indicate that those who participated in the cult of Anna Perenna were also commoners. For example, the potential illiteracy of the *Antonius* curse suggests that the curse could have been written by a commoner. Many of the people directing curses would have had to hire a magician to write the curse, indicating that they were illiterate and did not know how to write a curse. Also, Christian lamps, like many of those found at the site, were cheap lamps, not ones that would have been used by elites.[57] The cheap lamps also suggest the presence of commoners at the site. While elites may have had some religious fusion in their beliefs during the early stages of official Christianity, it is much more likely for the commoners to have held onto traditional beliefs and practices, much like the commoners who continued the traditions of the Ides of March, well after the New Year celebration was officially changed. The invocations of Christ and the presence of Christianity in these ritualistic materials reveal that Christians in Late Antiquity were not necessarily opposed to pagan rituals and

[56] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 81.
[57] Piranomonte, "The Discovery of the Fountain of Anna Perenna and Its Influence on the Study of Ancient Magic," 76.

practices, suggesting that early medieval Rome was a place of religious synthesis among its people.

The Fountain of Anna Perenna is central to the understanding of culture and belief of people in Rome after its official Christianization. While scholars have built a solid understanding of Late Antique cultural transitions according to various infrastructure, continuation of festivals, and the roles of Christian elites, *nymphaea* support the argument that paganism was not immediately erased by Christianity but bring significant insight about certain pagan practices that persisted through Late Antiquity. Not only does the study of the use of *nymphaea* support pagan continuity, but the Fountain of Anna Perenna offers invaluable evidence of Christians participating in pagan practices. The collection of artifacts, including Christian oil lamps and *defixiones* invoking Jesus Christ, is a primary testimony of the complex relationship between the rise of Christianity and the demise of paganism during Late Antiquity. Because Late Antiquity was a period of massive change in politics, institutions, culture, and religion, it is no surprise that these transitions did not occur immediately, so classical and post-classical social structures could exist simultaneously in many ways. Christian artifacts were found alongside pagan artifacts in a pagan site, displaying the conjunction of religions after Rome was made Cristian.

While it's important to Late Antique studies to understand that these religions were able to exist at the same time, the suggestion based on the artifacts that these religions did not just exist at the same time but were also being practiced in an integrated manner is crucial to understanding how religion existed in the everyday lives of Romans. While Rome was officially Christian, there is significant evidence that religion was much more complicated for everyday people. The Fountain of Anna Perenna in Rome, dedicated to the nymph goddess of the plebeians, provides significant evidence of the hybridization of religious practice in Rome during the Late Antique period. It centers on Rome's common people, the rituals they practiced, and the traditions and religions that were part of their everyday lives, rather than simply the religion of the official law. The *nymphaeum* challenges models of top-down religious change, which lack

focus on the lived experiences of Romans. While Rome was officially Christian, the Fountain of Anna Perenna displays a vast range of religions and practices. The beliefs and practices that were integrated into the lives of Romans from centuries of pagan traditions were held onto long after the rise of Christianity and the demonization of paganism by the Christian elites, suggesting that the religious change that took place across the empire was much more complex than implied by Roman officials and elites.

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**National Antisemitism and its Reflection in the Old Bailey Court System**

*Danielle Gottlieb*

On the summer day of July 11th, 1750, David Toris, a Jewish merchant, was tried for theft at the Old Bailey court in London. It was alleged that Mr. Toris had stolen three pairs of grey stockings from a shop owned by Mr. Hopley and sold them at a lesser price than was thought possible. Mr. Toris was called suspicious for his behavior that he had exhibited to Mr. Hopley before, specifically, using the phrase "God Bless you," which Hopley believed to be strange, since Toris was a Jewish man. In Toris' defense, many men from his community had come forward to speak of his good character and testify that Toris would never do the things of which he was accused. David Toris was found not guilty and acquitted of the crime. But the question arises, why did Mr. Hopley feel it necessary to point out that Toris was a Jewish man?[1]

During the time of the trial of David Toris, there was a much broader issue concerning Jewish people in Britain. In 1753, the Jewish Naturalization Act, or the "Jew bill," was passed by British Parliament, sparking rampant antisemitic sentiments in the nation. The feelings towards Jewish people living in London during this time were so aggressive that the act was then repealed in 1754, only a year after its passage. Because of the antisemitic views at this time, the question of whether or not it affected the court and the outcomes of trials concerning Jewish people arises. Was there a change in the verdicts of Jewish people who were tried for similar crimes between 1750 and 1760? Did this law have an on-the-ground effect that is visible in the day-to-day lives of Londoners in the 1750s? I have read every case from the *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* containing the keyword "Jew," that actually

[1] Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) July 1750. Trial of David Toris
(t17500711-32). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17500711-32?text=jew (Accessed: 18th
February 2025).

concerned a Jewish person committing a crime,[2] from the Proceedings of the Old Bailey from 1750 to 1760, and will examine whether or not the passage and repeal of the Jewish Naturalization Act had an effect on the trials and outcomes of Jewish people at this time.

Many proceedings from the Old Bailey contain the keyword "Jew," but the crime was not committed by a Jewish person, stolen items were often sold to Jews, and many people used the term Jew as an insult. Throughout this paper, several people are identified as Jewish, but there is no straightforward way to do this unless they self-identified as Jewish or were identified by a witness, using names is something historians sometimes resort to. Several people are identified as Jewish based solely on their names, which is not always an accurate measure of identity. Identification becomes more complicated when considering the term "Jew" to be a common insult among English culture. Dana Rabin argues that protestant English men felt Jewish men would rob them of their masculinity, they were also seen as "lawless and violent," with fears Jewish men would attempt to overthrow British rule.[3] Jewish men were often seen as thieves and criminals and usually depicted as very ugly. Which led to being called a Jew or something of the like to be a large insult against British men at this time.[4] Because of this, many Old Bailey cases were dismissed because of the use of "Jew" as an insult as opposed to a true representation of Jewish identity.

There has been a very long history of Antisemitism in England before the passage and repeal of the Jewish Naturalization Act. Antisemitism at this time took on many different meanings in different contexts. While the Jew bill specifically aimed at ending religious antisemitism, which is classified by the belief that Jews are satanic because of their unwillingness to accept Jesus Christ, the Old Bailey trials dealt more with cultural, economic, and gender antisemitism. These terms

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[2] Karen Macfarlane, "The Jewish Police Men in Eighteenth Century London," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 10, no.2 (2011): 225-226, https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2011.580981

[3] Dana Rabin, "The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation," *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 39, No 2, (2006): 159-163.

[4] Rabin, "The Jew Bill," 159-163.

are more based upon stereotypes and practices than the Jewish religion itself. It can be seen going all the way back to the thirteenth century, when all Jews were expelled from England by Edward I.[5] After their expulsion, Jews were no longer allowed to settle anywhere in England, some converted to Christianity in order to stay in the country, but most fled after the act was passed.[6] Over the next 400 years, before Jews were allowed to settle in England again, Jews came and went for short amounts of time, or for short settlements in England. Most of these Jews were traveling merchants or doctors who stayed only long enough to finish their business.[7] Some Jews living in England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had fled from Spain. After their expulsion, the Jews in England had "converted" to "new Christianity," but were later found out to still be practicing Jews, and were chased down and arrested by the British government.[8] The trends of Jewish communities secretly living in London as Protestants continue throughout their expulsion, until around the 1660s, when Jews were readmitted to Britain, with very restricted rights, and as essentially third-class citizens.[9]

As part of their classification as lower-class citizens, many Jewish Britons lived in deep poverty, resulting in a turn to crime that started and perpetuated stereotypes about the untrustworthiness of Jewish people. Because of their relative poverty, Jewish sellers were also known for selling second-hand, tattered goods, which contributed to the continuation of persecution.[10] One final factor that contributed to this was the exclusion of Jews from craft and artists guilds, making them unable to profit from these areas.[11] Despite the lengthy antiemetic history in England, the passage and quick repeal of the Jewish Naturalization Act is

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[5] Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 To 2000*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 15.
[6] Endelman, *The Jews of Britian,* 16.
[7] Endelman, *The Jews of Britian,* 16.
[8] Endelman, *The Jews of Britian,* 17.
[9] Endelman, *The Jews of Britian,* 18-21.
[10] Endelman, *The Jews of Britian,* 44-46.
[11]Avinoam Yuval-Naeh "The 1753 Jewish Naturalization Bill and the Polemic over Credit," *Journal of British Studies* 57, no. 3 (2018): 468-469.

a critical moment in the larger history of British antisemitism and in the lives of English Jews.

Michael Hoberman, in his article "Home of the Jewish Nation: London Jews in the Eighteenth-Century Anglo-American Imagination," discusses why Jewish people were important to the British economy and why the Jewish Naturalization Act could be passed. Hoberman argues that the shift in the civil and political rights of Jews comes from their widespread economic influence throughout the British Empire during the 18th century. Hoberman discusses that in the eighteenth century, after the readmittance of Jewish people to the British Empire, they made up a small minority of the population, spanning across their Caribbean and American colonies as well as at home in Britain. Jews in London came from every social class, from wealthy to destitute, and engaged in important day-to-day functions of life in London. This is after the expulsion of the Jews from London in the 1200s, and their readmittance to the region starting in the 1650s.[12] Hoberman also described how Jewish people in the broader British empire received naturalization rights in the 1740s with the "plantation act," which affected the American colonies, because of Jews' importance in the Atlantic triangular trade.[13] It also allowed for the naturalization of other religions not outlined in the text. Many Jewish people throughout this time were merchants who traveled between London and the Americas, making them extremely wealthy.[14] This shows the extreme turnaround that Jewish people were experiencing in this time, going from not being allowed in Britain at all for almost 400 years, to being allowed back into the region and being naturalized in other parts of the empire in less than 100 years. Jewish people also became incredibly important in the Empire's military, becoming financiers who could connect the British military to other parts of the world. [15] This is also due to the connections of the Jewish community in London with other parts of the

[12] Michael Hoberman, "Home of the Jewish Nation: London Jews in the Eighteenth-Century Anglo-American Imagination," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 50, no. 3 (2017): 273.
[13] Hoberman, "Home of the Jewish Nation," 271.
[14] Hoberman, "Home of the Jewish Nation," 270-280.
[15] Hoberman, "Home of the Jewish Nation," 273.

Jewish communities around the globe, especially in major parts of the British Atlantic colonies, such as Jamaica and New York.[16] Hoberman's main focus in the article is to argue reasons why the Jewish Naturalization Act would have been passed in 1753, but does not discuss what it was like for everyday Jews living in London before it was passed. He gives a general overview of what life was like overall for a small portion of the Jews living in London.

Antisemitism took many forms in Britain during this time, especially in contemporary media. Salim Rashid demonstrates many of those in the article "Josiah Tucker, Anglican Anti-Semitism, and the Jew Bill of 1753." In the article, Rashid describes many ways in which the people living in London tried to stop the passage of the Jew Bill in both 1751 and 1753.[17] In many cases of antisemitism around this time, protestants in Britain would accuse Jews of horrible crimes, such as crucifying infants or referring to Jewish people as names, like "those of circumcision."[18] After the bill passed in 1753, citizens of England took revenge on those who had voted in favor of it by voting them out of parliament. Many members of parliament found themselves ousted in the elections following the bill.[19] People who defended the Jewish naturalization act when it was passed were ostracized by the British press and other British publications. Josaiah Tucker was accused of supporting "the synagogue of Satan."[20] It is also argued that Christians were inherently anti-Semitic because of their view that Jews could never be allowed in England until they accepted Jesus Christ as the messiah, which directly goes against the Jewish religion.[21] These examples shown in the article show a small amount of the antisemitism that was coming out of London at this time, and how Britons viewed the Naturalization of Jewish people, and how they viewed Jews overall at this time. What this article also does not mention is how the antisemitism was affecting the lives of

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[16] Hoberman, "Home of the Jewish Nation," 274

[17] Salim Rashid, "Josiah Tucker," Anglican Anti-Semitism, and the Jew Bill of 1753," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 50, no. 2, (1982): 191-201.

[18] Rashid, "Josiah Tucker," 195.

[19] Rashid, "Josiah Tucker," 198.

[20] Rashid, "Josiah Tucker," 199.

[21] Rashid, "Josiah Tucker," 191-201.

Jews living on the ground in London, the main idea of the article is outlining how the antisemitism was affecting the press and the overall London life.

Despite the long history of antisemitism, one might wonder why there was a spike after the passage of the Jewish Naturalization act. Dana Rabin argues in her writing "The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation," that there were varied reasons why there was rampant antisemitism in Britain at this time, which led to the repeal of the Jew bill, as well as what it looked like in newspapers and pamphlets. Rabin claims the overarching argument for the bill's passage was the wealthy Jewish merchants living in Britain and the colonies at the time. Many supporters of the bill believed that only those wealthy merchants would be naturalized and not the rest of Britain's 8000 Jews.[22] Rabin details how many prominent anti-naturalization Britons felt about the naturalization of Jewish people during this time. Many viewed it as a start to letting other groups be naturalized, Catholics, non-Anglican protestants, and other religious groups.[23] Others viewed it as a plot by the Jewish people to start a mass conversion of Britons to the Jewish religion, specifically saying that Jews would force protestant men to be circumcised, taking away their masculinity, and endangering the country.[24] These views are demonstrated by Britons through newspapers and pamphlets, with images depicting very stereotypical "semitic looking people."[25] These images and pamphlets argued what Britons feared; some depicted the newly naturalized Jews attempting to turn the English Isles into "the new Jerusalem," while other images showed other religions and peoples coming into "their country."[26] Dana Rabins writing once again outlines what was in the press of the antisemitism that could be seen in England at the time, it still does not give a good idea of what was happening to Jewish people in the day-to-day in England during this time period.

[22] Dana Rabin, "The Jew Bill," 157.
[23] Rabin, "The Jew Bill," 157-171.
[24] Rabin, "The Jew Bill," 160-164.
[25] Rabin, "The Jew Bill," 161.
[26] Rabin, "The Jew Bill," 162.

All three of these authors, Hoberman, Rashid, and Rabin, all address what was happening to Jewish people, and the reasons for the passage of the Jew Bill, throughout the 1750s. These historians take a very broad, bird's-eye view of the matter, focusing mostly on the opinions and views of England's Elites. They give a vague idea of what public antisemitism looked like during this troublesome time for Jewish people. But all three of these historians neglect how this rampant antisemitism affected the Jewish people living in England at the time. They lose sight of how this sentiment applies to the lives of Jewish people in the day-to-day and the small interactions between people. In this paper, I will argue that through the proceedings of the Old Bailey court, the wave of antisemitism caused by the Jewish Naturalization Act can be noticed in the small differences in outcomes of trials concerning Jewish people during the years of 1750 to 1760.

One common theme among the 79 trials that I read on the Old Bailey is the identification of Jews as people who often receive stolen goods, both before and after 1753.[27] In many trials, prosecutors or defendants claim that they bought or sold stolen goods to Jews. But how do these people know that they are selling to someone who is Jewish? There is no evidence to point to the fact that they have ever met before, so it could it be a stereotype in the court that Jewish people buy and sell stolen goods? If this is the case, this would point to the underlying causal antisemitism that already existed in England before the passage of the Jewish Naturalization Act, but most of the cases on the Old Bailey online show this word being used after 1754, showing a direct uptick after the passage and repeal of the Jew Bill. This can also be seen in some cases through calling people Jewish who are not. Being called or compared to a Jewish person during this time period was an insult in British or English culture. In the trial of Richard Jenkins, who was not Jewish, a witness

[27] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0, Autumn 2023), searched for all records the text matched the query 'Jew', the earliest year is 1750 and the latest year is 1760.

reported that his wife referred to him as a "Jew-looking son of bitch."[28] Jenkins was being tried for murdering his wife, and according to this witness, the wife was very violent, justifying his actions, and the proof of the violence was the wife referring to Jenkins as a Jew.[29] A similar example is from the trial of Patrick Reynolds, where a witness for the defense casually says the pawnbroker from whom a stolen item was bought was "A jew-like woman."[30] From these examples, the first of which number into the sixties, it can be seen that antisemitism was a common part of life. The people in these trials had no issues identifying people as Jewish, whether they knew them to be or not; it was assumed because of the corrupt, illegal business in which these people were participating that they were Jewish.

What can also be seen from these trials is that there is insufficient evidence to support a conclusion that the passage of the Jewish Naturalization Act directly affected the Old Bailey proceedings. It can still be argued that there is a small connection between the two, demonstrated by the evidence that there were no not guilty outcomes for Jewish people after the passage and repeal of the Jew Bill, while there were not guilty outcomes for Jewish people before the Jewish Naturalization Act. It can also be seen from all the trials with Jew as a keyword that the underlying, casual antisemitism that was a part of everyday life during this time period seemed to increase after the passage of the Jew Bill.

Starting with cases from the earlier half of the decade, before the passage of the Jewish Naturalization Act, one can start with the aforementioned case of David Toris. As previously mentioned, David Toris was a Jewish merchant living in England in the 1750s, he was

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[28] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) May 1753. Trial of Richard Jenkins , Richard Jenkins (t17530502-20). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17530502-20?text=Jew (Accessed: 17th April 2025).

[29] *OBPO,* Trial of Richard Jenkins.

[30] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) May 1751. Trial of Patrick Reynolds (t17510523-37). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17510523-37?text=Jew (Accessed: 6th May 2025).

accused by Mr. Hopley, a storeowner, of stealing and selling the stolen goods for less.[31] In defense of Mr. Toris, there was a multitude of men whose names suggest that they may be Jewish, all of these men spoke of the good character of Mr. Toris, and how they believed he would never do what he was accused of. [32] David Toris was found not guilty of stealing the stockings, partly because these men spoke well of his character. This case can serve as an example of a Jewish community in London at this time. And not only was there a community, but a community that was willing to come together to help one of their own in a time of need. This case can also be used as an example to show that there were antisemitic sentiments already brewing before the passage of the Jew Bill. Mr. Hopley explicitly points out that Mr. Toris was a Jew; this could be a way to try to discredit him, by using the antisemitic values the people of the jury may have already had. But this case shows that the sentiments in England had not yet reached their peak, as Mr. Toris was found not guilty.

A second case from before the passage of the Jew Bill, is the case of Philip Abraham. Philip Abraham is identified as a Jewish man, only by one of the witnesses stating he went by the name "Scampy the Jew," the only other thing that could identify Mr. Abraham as a Jew was the name of his father, Abraham Miers. Abraham's case was tried in 1751, he, like Mr. Toris, was accused of stealing 29 items "and other things," and selling them for about 12 shillings.[33] This case was quite difference, because the trial account stated, Philip Abraham had the items sold to him, he did not steal them. Mr. Abrahams' trial was very short; he had two people speak on his behalf, one being his father and the other being someone who had known him a long time. With these two-character witnesses, Philip Abraham was found not guilty of theft.[34] Character witnesses were an incredibly important aspect of the Old Bailey system in all trials, not just those of Jewish people. Reputation was a key consideration when it came

[31] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, Trial of David Toris.
[32] MacFarlane, "Jewish Police Men," 225-226
[33] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) January 1751. Trial of Philip Abraham (t17510116-73). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17510116-73?text=Jew (Accessed: 18th February 2025).
[34] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online,* Trial of Philip Abraham.

to sentencing and punishment; having good character was not only helpful in a not guilty verdict, but if the verdict was guilty, the punishment would be considerably less with good character witnesses.[35]

Of course, there are outliers, not every Jewish person was found not guilty during this time. In the Moses Moravia fraud case, John Manoury and Solomon Carolina were found guilty of two of the three men. This, again, is a case where one of the men involved can only be assumed to be Jewish because of their surname, Moses. Solomon Carolina, however, is identified as a Jewish man by one of his character witnesses. The men were accused of fraud by means of a fake charter and fake items being sailed on the ships the Elizibeth and Martha. Throughout the trial, Moravia and Manoury are the only ones identified as perpetrators of the crime, almost at one point implying that Carolina was defrauded by these men as well, not that he was a part of the crime. Both Jewish men had people speak in their defense, these men, similar to the Toris case, also had names that are associated with Judaism. Moses Moravia and John Manoury were both found guilty of this crime, while Solomon was found not guilty and acquitted.[36] This case is a very interesting one because of its difference in outcome, there is nothing in the trial transcript that suggested the guilty and non-guilty verdict had anything to do with the religious identity of either men, it seemed to be a trial truly decided off evidence and character. Despite its differences, this case once again shows that there was a sense of camaraderie among members of the small Jewish community living in England at this time.

After the passage and repeal of the Jewish Naturalization Act, there were only five trials I could find, in which the Jewish people accused were all found guilty, starting with that of Israel Levi. Levi was tried in February of 1756, two years after the repeal of the Jew bill, grand larceny

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[35] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0). Trial Procedures. Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/about/trial-procedures (Accessed 20th February 2026).

[36] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) June 1752. Trial of Moses Moravia , John Manoury , Solomon Carolina (t17520625-51). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17520625-51?text=Jew (Accessed: 21st March 2025).

and was accused of stealing twelve clasp knives. Isreal Levi identified himself as a Jewish man during his defense, also during his defense, Levi claimed he was targeted because he was a Jewish man. He claimed that the man who accused him of theft had put the package of knives into his pocket because he did not like Jews. Levi had three men speak on behalf of his character, but despite this he was found guilty and sentenced to transportation for seven years.[37] This case was similar to that of David Toris, with a couple of small differences. Hopley had a reason to accuse Mr. Toris of theft, in an attempt to get rid of his competitor. In this case, there was no reasoning besides the claim that it was because the man was Jewish. But the key difference is the outcome, Toris was found not guilty of his crime before the passage of the Jew Bill, while Levi was found guilty after its passage and repeal. This case could be one clear example of direct antisemitism directed at a Jewish person. If the claim that Mr. Levi made, that he was set up only because he was Jewish, was true, this would be one very clear example of how antisemitism was affecting Jewish people in London.

The trial of Michael Jacobs also occurred after the passage and repeal of the Jewish Naturalization Act. Jacobs was tried for receiving fifteen stolen goods and taking them despite knowing they were stolen; he was identified as Jewish by a witness. The case of Michael Jacobs is unusual compared to others because no one testified on his behalf. The trial was of six men, four of whom had witnesses attesting to their good character, meaning it was allowed for that trial, but was not used by Jacobs. In the end, Jacobs was found guilty of receiving and selling the stolen goods and was sentenced to transportation for fourteen years.[38] Now this case is very similar to the trial of Philip Abraham. Abraham was

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[37] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) July 1756. Trial of Israel Levi (t17560714-16). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17560714-16?text=Jew (Accessed: 21st March 2025).

[38] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) September 1757. Trial of Brent Coleman , John Roberts , Richard Gregory , Michael Jacobs , Jeremiah Pettit , Thomas Price (t17570914-29). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17570914-29?text=Jew (Accessed: 10th April 2025).

accused of theft, but mostly of receiving and selling stolen goods. The two distinct differences between these two cases are that Michael Jacobs did not receive any character witnesses like Philip Abraham, and the trial of Michael Jacobs was held after the passage and repeal of the Jewish Naturalization Act.

The trial of Higham Levi in 1756 is a similar trial to the others. Levi was tried for grand larceny of one silver mug, and was loosely identified as a Jewish man by a witness claiming to have heard Levi speaking to "the other Jew" in a language he could not understand, as well as his father being identified as someone who worked a synagogue.[39] Mr. Levi had many people speak on behalf of his character, most saying they would never know him to do such a thing, and his own father spoke on his behalf as well. Higham Levi was found guilty and sentenced to transportation for seven years. This trial was similar to some of the others discussed because of the people who spoke on behalf of Mr. Levi. Once again, most of the people who spoke on his behalf had names that seemed Jewish, speaking to the Jewish community that existed in London at this time, even though there were only about 8000 Jews in England at the time.[40] This community can also be seen through this case when it is discussed by one witness that Mr. Levi lives in a house that seems to house other Jewish people, demonstrating that this community was very close and often lived among one another. [41]

The other two trials are of a similar manner, both are theft trials, the trial of Isacc Silver, who was accused of burglary and identified as Jewish by an acquaintance, and the trial of Saunders Solomon who was accused of grand larceny and was identified as Jewish by a witness.[42]

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[39] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) February 1756. Trial of Higham Levi (t17560225-41). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17560225-41?text=Jew (Accessed: 11th April 2025).

[40] Rabin, "The Jew Bill," 157.

[41] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online,* Trial of Higham Levi.

[42] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) May 1759. Trial of Isaac Silver (t17590530-2). Available at:

These cases also had the same outcome as the other three, both men were sentenced to transportation, even with several character witnesses.

These trials are just some of the eighty or so trials that took place in the decade of the Jewish Naturalization Act that contained the keyword "Jew."[43] From what I could tell, there were no not guilty verdicts for Jewish people after the repeal of the bill in 1754, although this is not definitive as the sample size was quite small. This change could also be attributed to a possibly changing judicial climate or a shift away from the term "Jew" in the courts. But these trials can tell us many things about life in England for Jews in the decade of the 1750s. Although they were a small group, most likely spread across the island, the 8000 Jews who did live in England seemed to have formed a close-knit community. In most of the trials presented in this paper, there were friends and family of the prisoners, all who were assumedly Jewish, who came to stand up for their friends, and show their deep sense of community. These trials also show some of the hardships that Jewish people went through during this time, whether that be being accused of crimes they did not commit, like in the trial of David Toris, or being targeted for crimes simply because they were Jewish, like the trial of Isreal Levi.

While there is not enough evidence on the *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* to directly link a rise in anti-Semitic sentiments in the court to the Jewish Naturalization Act, several cases can point to the everyday, casual antisemitism that existed in London during this time. Despite antisemitism not having an impact on court outcomes, the trials give a unique view into how antisemitism and Jewish hate and fear was sewn into everyday interactions, and how credibility and suspicion were woven into Jewish lives. These trials also give us a glimpse into the small, but mighty

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https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17590530-2?text=Jew (Accessed: 12th April 2025). *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0) February 1760. Trial of Saunders Solomon (t17600227-33). Available at: https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/t17600227-33?text=Jew (Accessed: 17th April 2025).

[43] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 9.0, Autumn 2023), searched for all records the text matched the query 'Jew', the earliest year is 1750 and the latest year is 1760.

community of Jewish people who lived in England at this time, how they interacted with the communities around them, and tried to fight the hatred towards their people together.

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## The Faith of Indigenous Resistance

*Riley Kilhoffer*

Deep in the forests of the Yucatán Peninsula in the mid-19th century, a Mayan prophet heard God speak through a little holy cross. This moment sparked a new religious movement at a crucial point in the Caste War of Yucatán. The Mayans recognized that losing this war would mean the end of their ancestral way of life. This new faith was used as a commonality to rally around and became the political basis for a Mayan separatist state whose strength extended the Caste War from what would have likely been a short few years to over half a century. While ultimately the Mayan independence movement was unsuccessful, this faith continues to be practiced by the Maya across the territory of the failed Mayan state.

The Mayans were not the only indigenous group to utilize religion in their rebellions against occupying powers. Some Māori used Te Ua Haumene's Pai Maire faith to resist European colonization in Aotearoa (New Zealand). A subset of the Munda people of the Indian subcontinent, known as the Sardars, rejected the Christian faith of the colonizing British and used it as a common enemy to rally hostility towards. Kinjikitile Ngwale, a traditional oracle and medicine man, led the Maji Maji rebellion against the colonial forces of German East Africa (modern-day Tanzania) promising a new world without evil. Instances of religious indigenous resistance like these have existed across the globe, the Mayan case is by no means unique.[1]

### Nomenclature

This paper was inspired by a quote in Nelson Reed's *The Caste War of Yucatan* (1964) as well as Reed's use of the term 'cult' throughout to describe the new Mayan faith.[2] Is cult an accurate term to use for this religion? In the words of cult scholar and author Robert Lifton,

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[1] Adas, Michael, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order*. University of North Carolina Press, 1979. pp. 89-91, 102-105

[2] Reed, Nelson, *The Caste War of Yucatan*. Stanford University Press, 1964. pp. vii, 135, 136, 138, 209, 251, 276

> Some people say, with some justification, that to use the term 'cult' is pejorative. And I do use it and it is pejorative. But one can also use the term 'new religion' which is more neutral. In that sense I restrict the term cult to groups that show certain characteristics which are: totalistic or thought reform-like practices, which is practices of mind manipulation, which show a shift from general spiritual principles to worship of a particular leader, a particular guru. And which tend to demonstrate a combination of spiritual quest from below, wondering people seeking some spiritual meaning in their life, but being exploited from above, sexual, and economic exploitation from above.[3]

Lifton's definition of a cult will be the one used by this paper. Reed's use of the term seems to be taken from Alfonso Villa's *The Maya of East Central Quintana Roo* (1945) in which Villa calls the faith the 'Cult of the Cross'.[4] The exact origins of this name are unclear, but neither of these books inspire thoughts that this faith aligns with Lifton's definition of a cult. Reed seems to agree; in the 2001 revision of his book the term 'cult', is only used to refer to the new Mayan faith in sections that were not altered from the original: the preface, one instance in the middle that appears to have been missed, and the postscript.[5] The term this paper will use to refer to the faith is The Church of the Speaking Cross, or simply The Church, as used in recent articles about the faith.[6]

Followers of The Church are known as the Cruzob. This term is an amalgam of the Spanish word 'cruz' meaning cross and the Yucatec Mayan plural suffix '-ob'; the Cruzob are 'People of the Cross'.[7] In this paper the terms Yucatecan and Mexican take on slightly more restrictive

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[3] Revenimus, "Robert Jay Lifton: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence and the New Global Terrorism (1999)," YouTube, October 19, 2021.
[4] Villa Rojas, Alfonso, *The Maya of East Central Quintana Roo*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1945. p. 21
[5] Reed, Nelson, *The Caste War of Yucatán*, Stanford University Press, 2001. pp. xi, 155, 346
[6] Kitchel, Jeanine, "The Church of the Speaking Cross and the Chan Santa Cruz Maya" AkumalNow, September 30, 2022.
[7] Reed, 2001. p. 197

definitions than their typical use of referring to someone or something from the Yucatán Peninsula and the present-day territory of Mexico respectively. Yucatecan will refer specifically to someone or something from the Republic of Yucatán (1841-1848). Mexican will refer specifically to someone or something from the Mexican Republic prior to 1846 and the United Mexican States post 1846.

The Cruzob state and its capital city shared a name. In English and Spanish they are commonly called Chan Santa Cruz (Little Holy Cross). In Yucatec Maya the name is written as some variation of Noh Cah Santa Cruz Balam Nah. The city is known today as Felipe Carrillo Puerto and the territory that made up most of the Cruzob state is now part of the Free and Sovereign State of Quintana Roo in Mexico. For ease of understanding throughout this paper the capital city will be referred to as Noh Cah Santa Cruz Balam Nah (The Big Town of the House of the Priest of the Holy Cross) or The Holy City and the Cruzob state will be referred to as Chan Santa Cruz. This matches the language used in a 1997 letter from the descendants of the Mayan martyr Manuel Antonio Ay to a conference on the Caste War held in Mérida, Yucatan that year.[8]

**Context**

In 1835, Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna and the National Congress began the process of defederalizing the country. What were previously the Mexican states with an elected governor became the Mexican departments with a governor appointed by the president and many fewer devolved powers. This did not go over well with the previously elected officials in what had been the State of Yucatán nor with the members of the state militia who were now forced to fight in the Mexican Republic's war with the newly declared Republic of Texas. In 1838, with the help of Mayan communities, a captain in the Yucatán militia Santiago Imán began a two-year rebellion against the Mexican government. In 1840, the rebellion succeeded in ousting the Mexican military from the Yucatán Peninsula and declared that until the Mexican Republic returned to a federal system where states are granted the powers

[8] Ibid. pp. 218, 359-361

they had enjoyed since independence, the peninsula would remain independent.[9]

The Republic of Yucatán was officially founded in 1841 with a constitution that granted rights and freedoms not seen in the region since Spanish colonization began. All Yucatecans were declared to be citizens with the right to directly elect the governor, their deputies, and the members of Yucatán's first bicameral legislature. This constitution also granted freedom of religion, ended special privileges, and maintained a principle that all powers not specifically granted to the government were under the purview of the people. Through this constitution, as well as a few agreements between Mayan communities and the Yucatecan leaders for the Mayan aid in the republic's battles, the Maya were granted rights over their homelands and the ability to conduct themselves how they saw fit to a larger extent than what was previously in living memory.[10]

And a great five years it was. In 1846, Santa Anna, who had been intermittently the president of Mexico for the last 11 years, was engaged in the Mexican-American War and needed all the help he could get. In order to get this help from Yucatán, he promised the republic full state's rights and a national return to the federalized system Mexico had been under in its original 1824 constitution. To the Yucatecan governor Miguel Barbachano this was exactly what the Republic of Yucatán had wanted from the beginning and so he declared that Yucatán was once more Mexican. To those who had seen the might of two allied Texan ships in the initial war between Yucatán and Mexico, the prospect of now being engaged in a war against the U.S.A. was not appealing. That alongside the reunification meaning the loss of many rights Mayans had enjoyed under the short-lived republic inspired a Mayan rebellion that is now called the start of the Caste War of Yucatán.[11]

The first year of the Caste War was by far the most successful military resistance the Maya had ever had against colonialist forces. In just that year, they took nearly the whole peninsula and had the Yucatecan

[9] Ibid. pp. 29, 30
[10] Ibid. pp. 30-37
[11] Ibid. pp. 38-40

capital Mérida under siege. But then it was planting time. All of the Maya packed their things and headed back to their homes which were concentrated in the south-eastern regions of the peninsula, far from the cities they had just spent months capturing. A wholly reasonable thing to do in the minds of the Maya, as had they not there simply would not have been any food the next year. This cost them this phase of the war.[12]

With almost no resistance, the Yucatecan, and later Mexican, forces recaptured the Mayans' hard-won cities. They followed the Mayans back to their homes, killed the men, took the women and children, and burned their fields. Continuously being pushed farther south and east, and without a consistent food supply the Mayans became increasingly concerned with simple survival. Mayan generals like José María Barrera led groups of Mayans, fearful of what the loss of their food sources would mean, into battles to rid their heartland of the Mexican invaders. There were small victories, a city put under siege here and there, but nothing like before. It came to a point where the mostly guerilla tactics of the Maya meant that Mexican forces could move throughout the territory wherever they pleased burning crops and destroying villages, but staying in any place meant the inevitable loss to a Mayan night raid and there seemed no way to truly finish the fight. It was in this position that the Church of the Speaking Cross was.[13]

**Founded**

The anthropologist Alfred Kroeber described what can happen when an indigenous group recognizes themselves being driven to extinction.

> "At this juncture a prophet is likely to arise and picture a wish fulfillment: a release from the human impasse by supernatural mechanism. . . . Therewith a revivalistic movement of return to the good old days is launched. The prophet's motivation may range from sincere delusion to desire for power, fame, or even money, or

[12] Ibid. pp. 84-109
[13] Ibid. pp. 110-145

be compounded of these. His converts follow him because of the stress of their social unhappiness."[14]

José María Barrera was not that prophet; in 1849 he simply led the prophet, Juan de la Cruz Puc, to a cenote (a sinkhole, a traditional source of water for the Maya) and let him drink. Coming from a cross carved into a mahogany tree in the cenote Puc heard the voice of God, and began to believe the Cross to be an intermediary between God and the Mayan people. To spread the good word Puc's friend Manuel Nauat, a skilled ventriloquist, spoke as the Cross and relayed the words Puc heard to the Mayan people who became the Cruzob.[15]

Every part of Puc's religious awakening can be traced back to traditional Mayan religious themes and modes of communication. Cenotes, being a basic necessary source of water, feature heavily in Mayan culture, which is reflected in there being at least 11 villages featuring the word 'cenote' in their names. Speaking idols, in the way Nauat enabled, had been used by Mayan religious leaders for centuries to spread their message until March 13th, 1697 when the last traditional Mayan kingdom was overthrown. In Puc's home village, their cenote was home to the Santíssima Cruz Tun, a stone cross believed to have been there since before the white men arrived, and which told the ancestors how to find the first seed that began the cultivation of corn. Puc believed it was this very cross that had traveled underground to where Noh Cah Balam Na Santa Cruz was about to be founded, which spoke to him.[16]

The Church was influenced not only by the old Mayan ways but also by the Christianity brought by the Spanish during their colonization of Yucatán. Puc wrote, speaking as first the Cross, then as Jesus Christ, and finally as himself, "I began to speak… I entered the presence of my Father… I sign this paper."[17] The God who spoke to Puc through the Cross was the Christian God using the traditional modes of the ancient Mayan gods. During the Spanish colonization of Yucatán, they syncretized

[14] Reed, 1964. p. 135 (This is the quote mentioned earlier)
[15] Reed, 2001. pp. 3, 147-151
[16] Ibid. pp. 3, 148-150
[17] Ibid. pp. 150

Christianity with some of these Mayan religious traditions, which made converting the Mayans an easier process. Puc's new faith was a Mayan reclaiming of this syncretic Christianity that returned aspects of their ancient understandings of faith. Bringing back the old ways in this manner increased support from Mayans already wanting to preserve their way of life against the Mexican invasion.[18]

What also helped convince the Mayans to become Cruzob was that the Cross' (Puc's) most important commandment was that 'the Whites' (Creoles and Mestizos) would never win against the people of the Cross. The Whites won their very first battle against the Cruzob, capturing the original Cross in the process. Without Puc's way with words that may have been the end of a very short new religion. In a letter signed with three crosses, representing the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as well as three new physical daughter Crosses that replaced the one that was stolen, Puc declared that the hour of vengeance was now, that the Maya must punish the whites for their crimes against the Cross. This letter, among others, was successful in not only strengthening the resolve of the Cruzob but continuing to bring more into the fold. After nearly two years of acting as the Cross' voice and with many Cruzob convinced to believe in the power of the Cross, Juan de la Cruz Puc simply disappears from history after one last letter on September 27, 1851. As it turned out The Church of the Speaking Cross did not need Puc anymore and he had left behind the means for The Cross' message to be carried on without him.[19]

**The Structure**

The Cruzob society was in many ways a return to the pre-colonial ways of Mayan self-rule with one important distinction. In pre-colonial times a high priest and a king ruled side-by-side with absolute authority over their respective domains of the religious and the secular. For the Cruzob there was no distinction between the religious and the secular, The Church was everything. The Patron of the Cross (Tatich), whose power came directly from the Cross, held a similar position of power over Chan Santa Cruz to the Roman Catholic Pope's power over Vatican City today.

[18] Ibid. pp. 40-48, 54-56
[19] Ibid. pp. 152-159

The institution of the Church and the role of the Tatich as a strong leader allowed Chan Santa Cruz to fight effectively against the, on paper, more powerful Mexican army.[20]

The most infamous of these Tatich was Venancio Puc, possibly a relative of Juan de la Cruz Puc. His reign was bloody from beginning to end with the killing via machete of dissidents, assumed spies, and any person who was deemed to have insulted the Cross. People do not enjoy living under this constant fear, and his ten-year reign ended in 1863 with a coup. He attempted to escape it, but his leg got caught in the ropes on a mule, which then dragged him around until his leg came off, and if he was not dead already, he bled out.[21]

Under the direct command of the Patron of the Cross were a collection of religious and military positions. The Interpreter of the Cross (Tata Polin) was the receiver of the Cross' messages. The Secretary of the Cross (Escribano de la Cruz) signed documents in the name of the Cross. These two positions were originally held by Juan de la Cruz Puc, but after his death they were split between people. The Oracle of the Divine World (Tata Iktan Than or Tata Kuem Than) was the ventriloquist, being temporarily possessed by God, giving the Cross its voice. The General of the Plaza (Tata Chikiuc) was the military leader of Chan Santa Cruz. Them alongside the Great Father Spy (Tata Nohoch Zul), who maintained a few non-Mayan spies in Mexico, were typically the only military personnel allowed to directly hear the voice of the Cross.[22]

The village secretaries (Escribanos) took on a vital role in their communities. As most Cruzob could not read or write, the few who could took on the role of Escribano for their village so written messages from the Cross could be understood. As generations passed the role of Escribano, through the ability to read and write, naturally passed as parent taught child which created de facto holy families with the power to disperse the written words of the Cross to the Cruzob masses. Beyond

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[20] Reed, 1964. pp. 209-216
[21] Reed, 2001. pp. 198, 240
[22] Reed, 1964. pp. 161-165, 212-215

religious work, the Escribanos also advised planting times with almanacs printed in Mérida that made their way into Chan Santa Cruz.[23]

Like the Escribanos, the Cruzob priests (Maestros Cantores) and traditional medicine men (H-menob) were the groups with power who most frequently interacted with the average Cruzob. The Maestros Cantores were a position created by the Spanish during the colonial era to ensure the Christianization of Mayan villages; in Chan Santa Cruz instead of Catholicism it was The Church of the Speaking Cross they were spreading. The priests engaged in religious ritual, maintained records of the past and taught that past, and were a cultural pillar for communities. The H-menob traditionally took on a role similar to the Maestros Cantores, but Spanish colonial forces effectively reduced them to ritualistic healers. In Chan Santa Cruz individual H-men continued this role.[24]

The average Cruzob was, and still is, a firm believer in the power of the Cross. They were farmers when it was agriculture season and warriors when the Tata Chikiuc rallied them to protect their way of life from the destruction Mexicans sought to enact. Chan Santa Cruz also saw the return of slavery which had been practiced by the Maya pre-colonization. Prisoners of war, often Yucatecan, Mexican, or non-Cruzob Maya, were put to work on various tasks around the villages. Slavery was not a heritable position and was restricted to adults. Anyone captured too young or who was born to slaves were considered free citizens of Chan Santa Cruz.[25]

Noh Cah Balam Na Santa Cruz and Chan Santa Cruz were not the only seat of power for The Church. In 1871 under Priestess of the Cross Maria Uicab the village of Tulum became the seat of a separate Cruzob independence force. For the next twenty years Tulum and Noh Cah Balam Na Santa Cruz were roughly equal in importance to The Church. After some fighting between the two in the 1880s, Tulum became largely depopulated, and by the 1920s, what remained of the Cruzob in Tulum

[23] Ibid. pp. 212-214
[24] Ibid. pp. 211-213
[25] Ibid. pp. 210, 211

moved away in fear of the newly introduced archaeologists (who were there for reasons that will become clear very shortly).[26]

**The Fall of the Cross**

Nothing lasts forever. On June 2nd 1901 The Washington Post reported that Mexican forces had captured Noh Cah Balam Na Santa Cruz and the Caste War of Yucatán was finally over after 54 years. Posited in the news article as a boon for archeologists and historians of ancient Mayan civilizations this event was of great detriment to The Church of the Speaking Cross.[27] The head had been cut off, all that remained were small bands of Cruzob still fighting, but their resistance was too weak without central power in The Holy City. On November 24th, 1902, by decree of Mexican President Porfirio Díaz, what had been Chan Santa Cruz became the Federal Territory of Quintana Roo (now the State of Quintana Roo), much to the dismay of the State of Yucatán, whose soldiers had fought so hard for that land.[28]

Once the dust of the administrative reorganization, and the Mexican Revolution, which had also been brewing in the background, was all settled, Noh Cah Balam Na Santa Cruz had been renamed twice, once to Santa Cruz de Bravo, and then to Felipe Carrillo Puerto after the martyred socialist governor of Yucatán. The Tatich still existed and the Cross, though desecrated by the capture of Noh Cah Balam Na Santa Cruz, still held power to the few remaining Cruzob, but had been reduced to a fringe religion. As of 1997, the Tatich was an elderly man named Florentino May.[29]

Multiple groups of Cruzob were much more resistant to these changes than those of Felipe Carrillo Puerto had been. After the fall of Chan Santa Cruz the groups known as Chunpom, X-Cacal, and Yokdzonot (later called Chancah) remained isolated and largely hostile towards

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[26] Dumond, Don, "The Talking Crosses of Yucatan: A New Look at Their History," *Ethnohistory* 32, no. 4 (1985): 291.
[27] *The Washington Post,* "Lost City of Yucatan: Fall of Chan Santa Cruz, Last Capital of the Mayas," June 2, 1901.
[28] Reed, 2001. pp. 302, 303
[29] Ibid. pp. 311, 322, 339, 356

outsiders until at least the late 1930s. X-Cacal, in a village of the same name, maintained their own Holy City, Tatich, and a Cross that is distinct from the ones in Chancah, Chunpom, and Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Their social order was very similar to that of Chan Santa Cruz, but instead of the sole authority being held by the Tatich it was held by a council of chiefs.[30] It is unclear whether or not these splinter groups still exist or not, the villages still do though. Nothing new seems to have been written about them since the 1970s, and even those works were primarily based on Alfonso Villa Rojas' work from 1945.

*The Washington Post* article was correct in assuming that the fall of the Cruzob state would be a boon for archeologists and historians. Without the fall of Chan Santa Cruz Villa Rojas, Reed, and Kitchel would not have been able to take their visits to where the Cruzob remain. We also got actual pictures of the Crosses for the first time that let people from the outside see the decorations around them and the ways they are housed. There are exceptions to this of course, the Cross at Tixcacal (possibly X-Cacal) is believed by some to be the original Cross that spoke to Juan de la Cruz Puc on that fateful day. This Cross is guarded very closely and no one at all is allowed to see it.[31]

Robert Lifton's definition of cult certainly matches the activities and mannerisms of groups like Aum Shinrikyo (the cult he was talking about in the quote), but it does not match The Church of the Speaking Cross. Where Aum Shinrikyo was heavily centered on a single leader who themselves were worshiped, The Church is and has always been centered on the worship of the Cross as God. Individuals did take prominent positions; Juan de la Cruz Puc keeping his fledgling faith alive for the first two years, and Venancio Puc twisting the powers of the Cross for more harm than benefit to the Cruzob during his time as Tatich. But every time the individual died the Cross survived. It was not until Mexican military force killed the state of The Church that the Cross lost its significant influence.

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[30] Jones, Grant, "Revolution and Continuity in Santa Cruz Maya Society," *American Ethnologist* 1, no. 4 (November 1974): 659–83

[31] Kitchel, 2022.

Historians across various subjects have followed a pattern of discounting the role religion plays in the behavior and organization of humans.[32] The case of the Cruzob demands discussion of the role of religion in resistance. The Caste War of Yucatán was rightly named for the situation that spawned it. However, a lens of caste relations does not explain how the Mayans sustained themselves throughout it. The Church was a central component of the successful 50 years of resistance against Mexican forces. There was no central Mayan authority to command and rally forces without the Church.

It is rare, globally, to see indigenous resistance be successful for a length of time. The Mayans' Caste War, by most metrics, should have been no different. They were outgunned, outmanned, outnumbered, and out-planned. Very luckily The Church of the Speaking Cross appeared as their right-hand man. While the Mayan independence movement that the Church was created to support has all but died out, the Cross, as always, survives.

[32] Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe*, Princeton University Press, 2000. pp. 11, 12

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## Manufacturing Memory: Government, Media, and Racial Inequality after Hurricane Katrina

*Dan Larsen*

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast as a Category 3 storm, with wind speeds of 140 miles per hour. The hurricane moved eastward and ravaged areas in Alabama and Mississippi. New Orleans faced wind gusts of up to 100 miles per hour and significant flooding after levees in the city were compromised by rising flood waters. By August 31, 2005, 80% of New Orleans was submerged underwater.[1] In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, as water flooded New Orleans, media sources aired sensationalized and sometimes false news reports, government agencies issued reports that scattered blame, and survivors began to narrate their own stories of abandonment and racial injustice. These competing narratives did more than just document the past; they influenced how Katrina would be remembered. Scholars of collective memory have long argued that historical events are remembered through narrative processes, rather than unbiased documentation. This work builds on Michel-Rolph Trouillot's book *Silencing the Past* and his concept of historical "silencing," where "Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing," and Andy Horowitz's longue durée approach to the infrastructural history behind Hurricane Katrina in his book *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*.[2]

The public's memory of Hurricane Katrina was shaped by competing institutional and community narratives. Rather than coming from the storm, Katrina's memory was actively manufactured through institutional archives, news coverage, and community testimony, all of which reinforced the city's existing hierarchies of race, class, and power.

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[1] National Archives, "Hurricane Katrina | George W. Bush Library," www.georgewbushlibrary.gov, 2018, https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/research/topic-guides/hurricane-katrina.

[2] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995), 75; Andy Horowitz, *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2020.)

Although Hurricane Katrina is frequently remembered as an unavoidable natural disaster, its public memory was intentionally shaped by governmental institutions, the news media, and survivor communities in ways that reflect and reproduce longstanding racial and social inequalities. Government agencies created an "official memory" that minimized responsibility and portrayed failure as unavoidable, whereas media narratives racialized disorder and crime. Local survivors and documentary filmmakers, on the other hand, preserved a counter-memory focusing on displacement, neglect, and systematic injustice, indicating that Katrina was not only a natural disaster, but also one of policy and public memory.

**Flood Defense and Institutional Memory**

New Orleans has always been a city that is built around water. Located in a low-lying basin between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, the average elevation of metropolitan New Orleans is 1.8 meters below sea level, and a complex system of levees, pumps, and upstream control structures on the Mississippi River is necessary to maintain dry conditions in the city.[3] Since 1718, New Orleans has implemented a flood protection system, despite racial and economic priorities. This system, however, is not neutral, as it demonstrates vulnerability, unequal access to resources, and levee protection. Black New Orleanians viewed Hurricane Katrina's devastation as part of a much longer pattern of institutional neglect because of these historical differences, becoming ingrained in the city's collective memory.

In the early 20th century, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was the primary institution responsible for flood defense infrastructure.[4] After the catastrophic 1927 Mississippi flood, according to The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), “more than half a million black Americans lost their homes” and “Hundreds of thousands of African Americans were displaced

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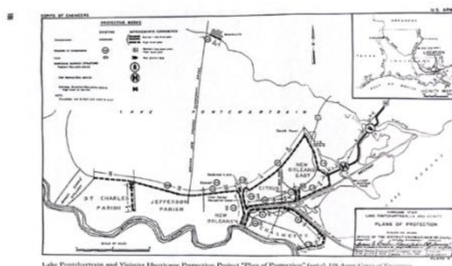
[3] “New Orleans and Lake Pontchartrain,” Nasa.gov (NASA Earth Observatory, January 15, 2007), https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/7311/new-orleans-and-lake-pontchartrain.

[4] “National Levee Database,” Army.mil, 2022, https://levees.sec.usace.army.mil/levee-basics/history-of-levees/.

from their communities and workplaces.”[5] In 1928, Congress passed the Flood Control Act, which authorized the USACE “to design and construct flood-control projects and emphasized the requirement for local communities to perform post-construction operation and maintenance for flood-control levees.”[6] However, the initiatives did not focus on addressing the issues of hurricane-driven coastal flooding, and Black communities in NOLA repeatedly reaped the consequences. Black New Orleanians' collective memory of these earlier disasters shaped how they later viewed the government's failures during Katrina, not as singular mistakes but as part of a historical pattern.

It was not until Hurricane Betsy took its toll on New Orleans in 1965 that the Federal Government issued the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project (LPVHPP)[7] which initiated a new focus on storm surge protection and flood risk for the vulnerable and burgeoning eastern portions of the city. The scale of the LPVHPP makes it one of the most ambitious public works projects in American history.[8] The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 1962 Plan of Protection map depicts the infrastructure upgrades planned for the LPVHPP.

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[5] [5] Laura Coyle, “The Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927,” National Museum of African American History and Culture, September 7, 2016, https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/great-mississippi-river-flood-1927.
[6] “HISTORY of LEVEES,” n.d., https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema_history-of-levees_fact-sheet_0512.pdf
[7] An Act Authorizing the Construction, Repair, and Preservation of Certain Public Works on Rivers and Harbors for Navigation, Flood Control, and For Other Purposes, Pub. L. No. 89-298, 79 Stat. 1073 (October 27, 1965)
[8] Craig. E. Colten, *Perilous Place, Powerful Storms: Hurricane Protection in Coastal Louisiana* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 56.

This map shows the federal government's intent of developing a system of levees, floodwalls, and surge protection (including surge barriers) throughout St. Charles, Jefferson, and Orleans Parishes. Unfortunately, when Hurricane Katrina made landfall many of the levees that were not designed for severe hurricanes, and only for “standard” hurricanes were destroyed.[9] According to USACE’s plans for unwatering New Orleans, “the hurricane protection system is not designed for the largest storms and as a result, the metropolitan area is vulnerable to flooding from hurricane storm surges.”[10] These projects disproportionately impacted Black and working-class neighborhoods, making them more vulnerable to floods.

As the 20th century progressed, the systematic bias in flood protection worsened. Levee construction was often highly variable, with weaker or unfinished levees protecting largely Black and lower-income areas. So, the question stands: why did the levees fail? According to *A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina*:

> Levee breaches could have been caused by a number of factors, such as a design that was inappropriate for the actual application (a shared deficiency), storm conditions that were simply too severe for the levees to withstand (an act of nature), improperly constructed or not securely fastened levee walls (a USACE deficiency), improper levee maintenance (a local deficiency), or a combination of these.[11]

This illustrates that human choices, as much as the storm itself, were responsible for failures. The system was constructed unevenly from the beginning, However, when government agencies issued their post-

[9] Select Bipartisan Committee, “A FAILURE of INITIATIVE a FAILURE of INITIATIVE,” February 15, 2006, https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1209/ML12093A081.pdf.

[10] Un-Watering Plan, at 1, Select Bipartisan Committee, “A FAILURE of INITIATIVE a FAILURE of INITIATIVE,” February 15, 2006, https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1209/ML12093A081.pdf.

[11] Select Bipartisan Committee, Fix all caps in notes like this“A FAILURE of INITIATIVE a FAILURE of INITIATIVE,” February 15, 2006, https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1209/ML12093A081.pdf.

Katrina evaluations, they characterized these errors as engineering miscalculations or unpredictable storm conditions, resulting in an official memory that downplayed USACE responsibility. It's important to distinguish between the flood protection system's real failure and the following narrative framing. Levee breaches, poor infrastructure, and the use of erodible materials are all examples of engineering and policy failures. However, there was more to the post-Katrina legislative and agency reports: they interpreted these failures. By blaming natural forces, design limitations, and various government departments, these reports reframed structural flaws as technical difficulties or unexpected storm conditions.  As Andy Horowitz reported, an 11-mile section of levees needed to defend St. Bernard Parish was hit by the storm surge and found to be inadequate. The portion was still incomplete and many feet shorter than what the plans called for, and the Independent Levee Investigation Team (ILIT) discovered during a forensic audit that the levees were made of "highly erodible sand and lightweight shell fill" from the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet and the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway.[12] This unequal protection was not limited to what was ignored; it also included what was actively developed. The Industrial Canal, built in the 1920s, and the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MRGO), built in the late 1960s, were two engineering projects that intentionally increased flood risk in specific regions. These failures were not shocking to many; they confirmed long-standing suspicions that Black communities' safety was consistently underestimated by government initiatives.

In 1956, Congress authorized the creation of the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MRGO) a 76 mile channel that is supposed "to provide an emergency outlet from the Mississippi River in the interest of National defense and general commerce and as a safer and shorter route between the Port of New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico."[13] Many in the New Orleans community after Hurricane Katrina have referred to the MR-GO

[12] Horowitz, Andy. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015* (Harvard University Press, 2020), 129
[13] "New Orleans District > Missions > Environmental > MRGO Ecosystem Restoration > History of MRGO," www.mvn.usace.army.mil, n.d., https://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/MRGO-Ecosystem-Restoration/History-of-MRGO/

as a “hurricane highway", but why? According to Hassan Madhriqui, an LSU scientist stated that MR-GO worked as a funnel which increased the height of the storm surge and “caused floodwater to stack up several feet higher than elsewhere in the metro area and sharply increased the surge’s speed as it rushed through the MR-GO and into the Industrial Canal.”[14] When Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, storm surge from the MRGO caused numerous levee breaches and catastrophic flooding, claiming the lives of hundreds of people in New Orleans East, the Lower Ninth Ward, and St. Bernard Parish.[15] Although engineers and the community acknowledged the possible threats posed by the levees, the haunting shadow of structural defects persisted into the 21st century. Hurricane Pam was a large-scale disaster preparedness exercise conducted by FEMA in 2004 to simulate the aftermath of a major storm that hit New Orleans. The simulation was designed to assist officials in developing joint response plans for a catastrophic hurricane in Louisiana.[16] Authorities concluded during the Pam exercise that severe flooding from a devastating hurricane in New Orleans could confine hundreds of thousands of people and endanger the lives of 60,000 others, while also rendering local resources inaccessible for weeks or months.[17]

The Hurricane Pam simulation revealed a disconnect between preparation and planning, yet its suggestions were largely ignored despite its clear warnings. Just one year later, when Hurricane Katrina turned what

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[14] Report on Levee Performance, at 1-5; Matthew Brown, Katrina may mean MR-GO has to go, TIMES-PICAYUNE (New Orleans), Oct. 24, 2005, at 1; Senate Hearing: Why Did Levees Fail (statement of Ivor L. van Heerden)

[15] “Coalition Unveils Findings on MRGO Ecosystem Recovery 15 Years after Hurricane Katrina,” Restore the Mississippi River Delta, October 1, 2020, https://mississippiriverdelta.org/coalition-unveils-findings-on-mrgo-ecosystem-recovery-15-years-after-hurricane-katrina/.

[16] Select Bipartisan Committee, “A FAILURE of INITIATIVE a FAILURE of INITIATIVE,” February 15, 2006, https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1209/ML12093A081.pdf. Pg. 81

[17] “HURRICANE KATRINA: A NATION STILL UNPREPARED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . REPORT of the SENATE COMMITTEE on HOMELAND SECURITY and GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS ,” Maricopa.gov, 2022, https://apps.fcd.maricopa.gov/pub/docs/scanfcdlibrary/802_069HurricanKatrina_A_Nation_Still_Unprepared_ExecutiveSummary_May_2006.pdf.

had seemed possible into a terrible reality, the inability to act on these recognized threats would be ultimately fatal. When federal officials later presented Katrina as an unexpected disaster, they failed to mention that FEMA had already predicted this scenario. Yet, the language used in official reports usually obscured how much the disaster had been predicted. Political Scientist James C. Scott claims that state institutions often simplify complex facts to make them easier to understand and control. In this sense, documents function as what Scott describes as "abridged maps," which "represented only that slice of it [society] that interested the official observer."[18] Government reports portrayed Hurricane Katrina as primarily an unexpected natural disaster, emphasizing environmental forces and bureaucratic breakdowns while downplaying the city's vulnerability stemming from a long history of policy decisions. This omission became part of the government's official memory of the storm. The history of flood defense in New Orleans is influenced by segregation, disinvestment, and political negligence rather than being solely a story of hydrology or civil engineering. Black New Orleans residents created a collective memory in which they perceived Katrina as an inevitable result of systemic injustice. Memories of racial injustice were strengthened by the storm's aftermath, which demonstrated to many that the institutions in charge of protecting the city had consistently given importance to some areas over others.

The history of New Orleans' flood defense system is not just a story of failed engineering; it is also a story about government memory, showing how government agencies fabricate official narratives to conceal inequalities and excuse failure. In the months following Katrina, government agencies worked hard to determine how the disaster would be officially remembered. Congressional investigations and presidential briefings cast the disaster as a broader social failure rather than a failure of federal governance alone. According to *A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina*, the report concluded, "Our

[18] James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

investigation revealed that Katrina was a national failure, an abdication of the most solemn obligation to provide for the common welfare. At every level – individual, corporate, philanthropic, and governmental – we failed to meet the challenge that was Katrina."[19] This quote looks to acknowledge responsibility, but rhetorically it distributes blame so far that no single government institution is held accountable. By insisting that "every level" failed, they successfully diluted the flaws of FEMA, DHS leadership, and the White House, translating essential government failures into a broader story of collective breakdown.

These competing narratives demonstrate that responsibility for Katrina didn't flow in a single direction; although federal authorities blamed governors and mayors, local leaders argued that Washington had abandoned the city. As Mayor Ray Nagin later argued in the *New York Times*, the root of the breakdown was the federal government's failure to deliver relief supplies and personnel quickly. He is quoted as saying, "They kept promising and saying things would happen," and "I was getting excited and telling people that. They kept making promises and promises."[20] This clash of interpretations created the ground for government authorities to establish their own story, and a perfect example of that is from former FEMA Director Michael Brown. In Brown's book, *Deadly Indifference: The Perfect (Political) Storm: Hurricane Katrina, the Bush White House, and Beyond*, he repeatedly faults Mayor Ray Nagin due to his indecisiveness and inaction to evacuating the city. 2 days before Hurricane Katrina hit, Mississippi's governor Haley Barbour issued a statewide mandatory evacuation, whereas in New Orleans, the director of the National Hurricane Center Max Mayfield asked Nagin to immediately order all residents to leave New Orleans. Instead, according to Brown, "Mayor Nagin declared his city to be in a state of emergency and suggested that the residents voluntarily evacuate. He especially wanted the

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[19] Select Bipartisan Committee, "A FAILURE of INITIATIVE a FAILURE of INITIATIVE," February 15, 2006, https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML1209/ML12093A081.pdf

[20] Scott Shane et al., "After Failures, Government Officials Play Blame Game," *The New York Times*, September 5, 2005, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/05/us/nationalspecial/after-failures-government-officials-play-blame-game.html.

residents in the low-lying areas to leave. If they so chose. It was really up to them, though it would be a good idea."[21] However, this narrative of events missed the structural fact that tens of thousands of citizens lacked cars, money, or the ability to evacuate even under a mandatory order.

By stressing Nagin's alleged indecisiveness, Brown contributed to the creation of a "official memory" of Katrina in which the burden of blame fell on local leadership rather than federal negligence, levee oversight problems, or delayed mobilization. This story shows how government officials did more than just respond to the crisis; they actively controlled how it was remembered. The stories created around the breached levees exposed not only engineering failures but also a government determined to alter history in order to hide the racial injustices that caused Katrina's devastating effects. Government reports were not the only source of problems in explaining Katrina. The National Media produced its own version of events while government agencies attempted to frame the disaster with official investigations and policy documents. The media and state institutions did not operate independently. Rather, media coverage often reinforced and enhanced official narratives, turning bureaucratic explanations into widely circulated images and narratives that influenced the public's perception of the disaster. It is important to examine how Hurricane Katrina was portrayed in print and television news in the days following the disaster to understand how it came to be remembered as a story of chaos and disorder rather than structural failure.

## Media, Imagery, and the Shaping of Public Memory

In the days following Hurricane Katrina, news broadcasts, newspaper headlines, and online images were the nation's window into the disaster. However, these media stories did more than just report; they shaped the public's memory. Journalists and broadcasters impacted Americans' understanding of who suffered, who was to blame, and what the crisis meant by using word choice, framing, and imagery. The following narrative was heavily racist, with black survivors being

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[21] Brown, Michael D, and Ted Schwarz. 2011. Deadly Indifference : The Perfect (Political) Storm : Hurricane Katrina, the Bush White House, and Beyond. Lanham: Taylor Trade Pub.

characterized as criminals or looters, while white locals were portrayed as victims of circumstance. The media's presentation of Katrina created a national memory that reinforced existing racial and class hierarchies, and how that narrative was eventually challenged by community voices and documentary filmmakers. In the process of creating a national memory of the disaster, news organizations like Fox News and CNN actively shaped racial meaning via language and imagery, portraying black survivors as looters and white survivors as victims. These media choices shaped the public's first shared memory of Katrina, which associated being black with crime.

In the days following the storm, it is clear that white-dominated national media outlets misrepresented Black survivors.[22] The night after Hurricane Katrina on August 29th, 2005, news stations struggled to report on its impact, and with little time to generate stories or images, channels like NBC and Fox News initially reported that New Orleans had been spared the worst of the hurricane. Fox News that night featured a title on television, "Katrina plows through LA, largely spares NO." Then, it proceeded to cut away from Katrina's coverage to provide reports on Martha Stewart being released from prison and the shooting of hip hop producer Suge Knight.[23] Not only that, Fox News' representation of Katrina did not even include reports of massive flooding. Fox News anchor Shepard Smith was quoted as saying, "The levees were not breached. The levees held for the most part."[24] CNN, on the other hand, according to Soledad O'Brien, "had deployed more resources into the field to report on Katrina than the other networks, including hundreds of people deployed via convoy from Atlanta." But why did CNN send more resources than the other networks?

[22] Rhonda Sonnenberg, "The Picture of Prejudice: Media Portrayals of Black Survivors," Southern Poverty Law Center, September 2, 2025, https://www.splcenter.org/resources/reports/hurricane-katrina-racial-stigma/.

[23] Cook, Bernie. *Flood of Images: Media, Memory, and Hurricane Katrina*. University of Texas Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.7560/771345 Pg. 25

[24] Bernie Cook, *Flood of Images* (University of Texas Press, 2015) Pg. 26

That is because CNN producer Kim Bondy's brother called her in tears about her parents' house (a house Bondy was restoring with the intention of moving back to New Orleans from NYC), which had begun flooding, along with her brother's house next door, which was completely flooded. Only when a producer shared personal information from over the phone with her family did the network begin to adjust its coverage.[25] CNN, followed by NBC and FOX, sent news flashes about the levees failing and flooding a large portion of the city late Monday and Tuesday, August 30, 2005. The first reports from the flooded Ninth Ward came from CNN's Jeanne Meserve and Mark Biello, who reported hearing cries for assistance from residents stranded in the attics of flooded homes.[26] However, the networks started to highlight the threats that survivors posed to private property and "security" almost as soon as they started to highlight the direct danger that those affected by Katrina faced and the urgent need for search and rescue.[27]

Fox placed more emphasis on portraying survivors as criminals on Tuesday than on saving them. Fox depicted Black New Orleans citizens as responsible for their own fate by moving from concern to blame to fear.

*Mothers and daughters, described as "looters," wading in floodwater* (FOX 8.30.05).

[25] Bernie Cook, *Flood of Images* (University of Texas Press, 2015) Pg. 27
[26] "Hurricane Katrina Devastates the Gulf Coast: CNN.com - Transcripts," Cnn.com, August 30, 2005, https://transcripts.cnn.com/show/bn/date/2005-08-30/segment/01.
[27] Bernie Cook, *Flood of Images* (University of Texas Press, 2015) Pg. 39

In one shot from Fox News with the headline “Looters raid stores in New Orleans & other cities”, the image presents two mothers and their young daughters wading through the flood holding plastic bags, possibly filled with their belongings, food, or water.

Despite this, Fox labeled the women and children as "looters," accusing them of stealing from stores.[28] Fox News purposefully shaped the country's early memory of Katrina as a crisis fueled by Black violence rather than a natural disaster defined by government inaction, in addition to misreporting events by consistently labeling images of everyday survival as criminal activity.

CNN's wide-angle shots on Tuesday seemed very different from what it showed on Monday night. After Meserve's coverage ended, CNN provided an alternate perspective on Tuesday, potentially because of Fox News’ coverage before CNN aired. For example, CNN shows shots of multiple African Americans carrying bags of some kind, while the camera’s main interest is on the bags, CNN anchor Aaron Brown’s voiceover is quoted as saying “(New Orleans) is not simply a natural disaster tonight. It has become the sort of disaster humans cause.” continued by, “There is looting and lawlessness, overwhelming in some places the ability of the police to keep order.”[29] By using similar language and focusing on "looting" and "lawlessness," CNN constructed a narrative that shifted focus from the survivors' being rescued to the notion that human behavior, specifically Black residents, was to blame for the disaster. By doing this, the network helped shape a public perception of Katrina that placed more emphasis on social breakdown than on institutional inadequacies in responding and protecting.

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[28] Bernie Cook, *Flood of Images* (University of Texas Press, 2015) Pg. 49
[29] Bernie Cook, *Flood of Images* (University of Texas Press, 2015) Pg. 43

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana.

(AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it AP Associated Press



This was not exclusive to television coverage. In print and online media, similar racist interpretations were applied, even when visual evidence suggested basic survival rather than criminal activity. One of the most famous examples shows a pair of photos showing New Orleanians wading through chest-deep floodwaters, carrying bags. The first image, distributed by Associated Press, depicted a black man. The description stated that he "was looting a grocery store." The second photo from Getty Images showed both a white guy and a white woman; it was captioned, "after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store." The contrast implies that a white person "finds" while a black person "loots."[30] White people are represented compassionately, whereas Black people are frequently criminalized even in moments of survival. This disparity in vocabulary illustrates how the media perpetuated biases during the tragedy.

After a few days, news outlets were reporting on very far-fetched rumors. "The situation in New Orleans, which had seemed as bad as it could get, became considerably worse yesterday with reports of what seemed like a total breakdown of organized society,"[31] says the New York Times. On top of that even public officials were believing these stories. According to investigative journalist A.C Thompson, he stated, "The

[30] Horowitz, Andy. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015* (Harvard University Press, 2020), 121.
[31] "BBC NEWS | Americas | Press Blames Anarchy on Rescue Delays," Bbc.co.uk, 2025, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4208962.stm.

people who contributed to the chaos were the people in power — Mayor Ray Nagin and Eddie Compass, the police superintendent, who scared the population and stirred a sense of fear and chaos, and the police [who] treated Black people with contempt,"[32] In the Superdome, a shelter used by storm survivors, the New Orleans Police Superintendent went on the Oprah Winfrey show and said "We had little babies in there, some of the little babies getting raped." and Mayor C. Ray Nagin on the same show warned citizens that, "They have people standing out there, have been in that frickin' Superdome for five days watching dead bodies, watching hooligans killing people, raping people."[33] One final piece of media is from The Huffington Post when they asserted that, "black hurricane victims in New Orleans have begun eating corpses to survive."[34] Those reports were false. One National Guardsman at the Superdome revealed that the stories were "99% bullshit" and that "99% of the people in the dome were very well behaved."[35]

As a use of Counter-memory, Spike Lee's documentary, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* recovers the story of Black New Orleanians from the skewed national narrative. Lee transforms lived experience into a communal act of remembrance by rehumanizing survivors through first-person interviews who were ignored or misrepresented by media coverage. The documentary emphasizes the racial and emotional components of systemic failure by carefully selected interviews with journalists, public officials, and Black American survivors. Direct-to-camera interviews allow survivors to share their own stories, which are usually misinterpreted or ignored by the

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[32] Rhonda Sonnenberg, "The Picture of Prejudice: Media Portrayals of Black Survivors," Southern Poverty Law Center, September 2, 2025, https://www.splcenter.org/resources/reports/hurricane-katrina-racial-stigma/.
[33] David Carr, "More Horrible than Truth: News Reports," *The New York Times*, September 19, 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/19/business/media/more-horrible-than-truth-news-reports.html?_x_tr_sl=auto&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=wapp.
[34] Randall Robinson, "New Orleans," HuffPost, September 2, 2005, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/new-orleans_b_6643.
[35] Horowitz, Andy. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*. Harvard University Press, 2020. Pg. 121

media. Lee's documentary also calls for justice and dignity for the Black residents of New Orleans, in contrast to traditional news sources that focused on looting or chaos. For example, presenting Joseph Melancon and Gralen B. Banks' responses to being referred to as "refugees" emphasizes one of the film's central themes: the denial of Black citizenship during times of emergency. Therefore, *When the Levees Broke* supports and humanizes the systemic analysis found in scholarly and government reports, highlighting and emphasizing the emotional effects of neglect and prejudice.

Media outlets such as FOX News, CNN, and the Associated Press have used "refugee" to describe those displaced by the destruction of Hurricane Katrina. Why were media outlets referring to citizens of the United States as "refugees?" More importantly, this was not the first time Black citizens in New Orleans had been described this way. During Hurricane Betsy in 1965, Black citizens displaced by flooding stayed at the Eighth Naval District Station in Algiers. A reporter estimated that 98% of the people there were black and described them as "refugees without a home to go to."[36]

This early use of the phrase demonstrates how Black people were portrayed as non-citizens in their own country long before Katrina. When survivors publicly rejected being referred to as "refugees" decades later in Spike Lee's Documentary, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts,* one account is from Joseph Melancon, a resident of the 3rd ward. He was upset and "couldn't do nothing but drop his head because I say I'm a United States Citizen of America. Calling me a refugee?" Gralen B. Banks, resident of uptown and Director of Security at the Hyatt Hotel, was also outraged. Bates fumed, "What kind of shit is this man? "Refugees?" and "Damn, when the storm came in, that blew away our citizenship, too? What, we aren't American Citizens anymore? What kind of shit is that?"[37] In addition to misrepresenting the disaster's reality, these depictions

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[36] Horowitz, Andy. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*. Harvard University Press, 2020. Pg. 60

[37] Spike. Lee et al.. *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* [New York?]: HBO Video, 2006.

deprive Black New Orleans residents of their humanity, dignity, and, in some cases, even citizenship. By portraying Black survivors as outsiders rather than citizens entitled to protection, the media helped shape a public memory of Katrina, which reduced federal responsibility and reframed the crisis as a social issue rather than a failure of the government.

These damaging portrayals in the media contributed to the justification of violence as well as neglect. Many Black citizens were viewed as threats by law enforcement and National Guard soldiers in the chaotic days following the hurricane, rather than as victims of Hurricane Katrina. Governor Blanco stood with the National Guard and declared, “I have one message for these hoodlums: These troops know how to shoot and kill, and they are more than willing to do so if necessary, and I expect they will."[38] Statements like this reflected a broader narrative circulating in national media coverage that focused on looting and rioting rather than the humanitarian crisis. When law enforcement and military troops entered the city based on these beliefs, the distinction between police and rescue became blurred.

National media largely looked the other way or failed to acknowledge the police violence occurring in New Orleans. Eleven citizens were shot by the NOPD police, five of whom died.[39] For example, one of the most infamous events occurred on the Danziger Bridge. Six days after Katrina made landfall, Police responded to a report of policemen under fire on the Danziger Bridge. When they came, they aimed their assault weapons and shotguns at the defenseless Bartholomew family, who were looking for food and medicine. The Police then shot all six unarmed family members, which resulted in 2 deaths.[40] As Sadiya

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[38] "Military Due to Move into New Orleans," CNN.com, September 2, 2005. Horne, Breach of Faith, I21. Sabrina Shakman, Tom Jennings, Brendan McCarthy, Laura Maggi, and A. C. Thompson, "New Orleans Cops Say They Got Orders Authorizing Them to Shoot Looters in the Chaos After Hurricane Katrina," NOTP, August 25, 2010.
[39] “Law & Disorder,” ProPublica, February 17, 2010, https://www.propublica.org/series/law-and-disorder.
[40] “Five Officers Plead Guilty in Post-Katrina Shootings,” FRONTLINE, n.d., https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/five-officers-plead-guilty-in-post-katrina-shootings/.

Hartman argues in her Book *Scenes of Subjection,* that “writing the history of the dominated requires not only the interrogation of dominant narratives and the exposure of their contingent and partisan character but also the reclamation of archival material for contrary purposes.”[41] In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, media coverage and political rhetoric led to a narrative on disorder and criminality in NOLA rather than abandonment and state failure, This tragedy shows how the prosecution of Black survivors, which was encouraged by political discourse and bias in the media, not only made state-sanctioned brutality possible at the time but also solidified as a justification in public memory. By depicting Black people as dangerous rather than abandoned, the narrative produced a distorted image of the disaster that absolved institutions of responsibility, converting an avoidable state failure into a narrative of chaos. While American perceptions of the immediate aftermath of Katrina were shaped by media narratives, the effects went far beyond news coverage. The depiction of Black survivors as chaotic or reckless shaped how politicians and the general public perceive Post-Katrina recovery efforts. More than just technical solutions for fixing the levees, decisions about evacuation, reconstruction, and public housing demolition were influenced by narratives that portrayed certain groups as vulnerable citizens in need of assistance, and others as problems to be managed or displaced. Examining public housing demolition and evacuation failures shows how these narratives shaped policy and urban reconstruction, changing New Orleans’ physical and social memory.

## Structural Inequality and the Memory of Displacement

Hurricane Katrina did not cause inequality in New Orleans; rather, it revealed and solidified it by using racialized narratives that showed displacement, suffering, and survival. The memories created around the storm by the media, government officials, and citizens themselves shaped how this injustice was viewed and frequently enforced preexisting societal structures. Long before the hurricane made landfall, the city's most vulnerable citizens had already been put at risk by decades of institutional

[41] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection* (Oxford University Press, 1997). Pg. 10

racism, housing segregation, and neglect. Social and political decisions determined the city's geography of vulnerability, including who could rebuild, who could evacuate, and who was left behind. Race and class influenced the disaster's continued public memory. In addition to exposing patterns of structural inequality, evacuation failures, housing demolition, and inadequate flood protection also influence how these inequalities are remembered, ignored, or justified in the years that follow, influencing not just the experiences of survivors but also how the tragedy is widely remembered, frequently in ways that minimize rather than challenge uneven effects.

Many individuals heeded the official warnings and acted in the days and hours leading up to Hurricane Katrina. Actually, before Katrina made landfall, an estimated 1.5 million people evacuated.[42] Some analysts considered the evacuation "successful" because so many people departed in such a short period of time, yet it is clear that many were left behind.[43] Many of the people who remained wanted to go, but they were unable to act on the evacuation order. Before Katrina, more than a quarter of New Orleans households (particularly those from low-income and minority backgrounds) lacked a car and relied on public transit.[44] According to Randal O'Toole's "Lack of Automobility Key to New Orleans Tragedy," he stated that "There are significant differences by race: 35 percent of black households but only 15 percent of white households do not own an auto."

The city had no strategy to evacuate the most vulnerable residents from danger, and they lacked the resources to locate reliable transportation in the event of a hurricane. In 2005, A Times-Picayune reporter, Bruce

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[42] Peek, Lori and Kai Erikson. "Hurricane Katrina." Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology. Ritzer, G. (Ed). Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Blackwell Reference Online. 6 July 2009

[43] Brian Wolshon, "Evacuation Planning and Engineering for Hurricane Katrina," NAE Website, March 1, 2006, https://www.nae.edu/7624/EvacuationPlanningandEngineeringforHurricaneKatrina.

[44] Robert D Bullard and Beverly Wright, *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2009), 73.

Nolan, summed up the emergency transportation plan eloquently: "City, state and federal emergency officials are preparing to give the poorest of New Orleans' poor a historically blunt message: In the event of a major hurricane, you're on your own"[45] Plans for evacuation that are based on the assumption that people would take private transportation are flawed policies that will never work. These rules exclude the poor, mostly people of color, the elderly, and those with disabilities since many of them lack the physical mobility or transportation to evacuate, while favoring middle-class to upper-class, able-bodied, and non-elderly households, which are more likely to possess vehicles.[46]

The city's evacuation protocols became not only a logistical failure, but also a moral one, creating Katrina's memory as one of abandonment among both survivors and officials. For the people who did not evacuate, the flood was devastating. 80% of the city was underwater, with some areas reaching a depth of 20 feet, resulting in over 1,300 deaths. According to Andy Horowitz, "The Majority of the dead were African American. Of the 692 New Orleanians in the state's official casualty count, 459 were classified as African American."[47] Not only was the lack of transportation for the most vulnerable citizens a logistical mistake, but it also demonstrated the structural inequalities that had left thousands of people essentially abandoned before the hurricane hit. For many years, housing segregation, discriminatory policies, and disinvestment forced low-income and Black residents into disaster-prone neighborhoods, concentrating them in the most hazardous areas of the city, frequently low-lying areas that were particularly susceptible to flooding. After Katrina, while one in every four White and Hispanic homes, and one in every three Asian homes were flooded in the tri-parish metropolis of Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard (24, 24, and 36 percent, respectively), nearly two out of every three African American homes (60 percent) were

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[45] Manuel Pastor et al., "In the Wake of the Storm Environment, Disaster, and Race after Katrina," n.d., https://www.issuelab.org/resources/9932/9932.pdf.
[46] Robert D Bullard , Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2009). Pg. 69
[47] Horowitz, Andy. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*. Harvard University Press, 2020. Pg. 119

flooded.[48] According to John Logan's report *The Impact of Katrina: Race and Class in Storm-Damaged Neighborhoods*, "Damaged areas were 45.8% black, compared to 26.4% in undamaged areas."[49] After the levees collapsed, nearly all of the city's survivors fled. Some people were just temporarily transferred, whilst others faced a long-term relocation that may be permanent. At least 800,000 people had been displaced.[50] According to Oral Historian Alessandro Portelli, oral testimony is important not just because it records factual events, but also because it discloses how people interpret and assign meaning to events. Portelli describes how oral sources "tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did."[51] In this sense, survivor narratives in *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* serve as a counter-archive, preserving the memories of displacement and abandonment that are mostly absent from official reports and statistics. In Spike Lee's Documentary, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, Louisiana's Lieutenant Governor Mitch Landrieau asserted that "More African Americans were more dispersed than whites."

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[48] "Journal of American History - through the Eye of Katrina - an Ethnic Geography of New Orleans," Oah.org, 2024, https://archive.oah.org/special-issues/katrina/Campanella.html.

[49] John Logan, "The Impact of Katrina: Race and Class in Storm-Damaged Neighborhoods," 2006, https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Hurricane/report.pdf.

[50] Horowitz, Andy. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*. Harvard University Press, 2020. Pg. 118

[51] Alessandro Portelli, "WHAT MAKES ORAL HISTORY DIFFERENT," n.d., http://archive.eclass.uth.gr/eclass/modules/document/file.php/SEAD427/Portelli%20What%20Makes%20Oral%20History%20Different.pdf.

In John Logan’s "Unnatural Disaster: Social Impacts and Policy Choices after Katrina” he displayed this map on Race and Flooding in NOLA**:**

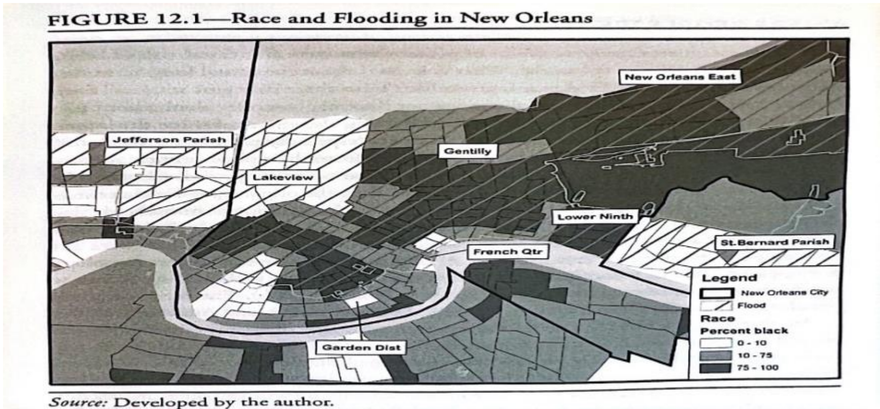


FIGURE 12.1—Race and Flooding in New Orleans

*Source:* Developed by the author.

This map shows how much of the most affected areas - the Lower Ninth Ward, Gentilly, New Orleans East - were mostly Black neighborhoods.[52] Relative to the Black neighborhoods, some white neighborhoods like Lakeview, and Jefferson Parish also flooded, but towns with the wealthiest residents like Garden District and French Quarter stayed dry.[53] But people in those neighborhoods generally had more access to resources, stronger infrastructure, and quick recovery efforts, which shows how race and class are related to vulnerability when facing a disaster. Many African Americans in New Orleans lived in public housing projects that were frequently underfunded, overlooked by public officials, and in flood-prone areas. Statistically speaking, the project neighborhoods typically had poverty rates in the range of 60-80% of the population, unemployment is

[52] Bullard, Robert D, and Beverly Wright. *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina : Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*. Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2009.

[53] Horowitz, Andy. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*. Harvard University Press, 2020. Pg. 119

above 20%, and they were all predominantly black (with African Americans accounting for 90% or more of their residents)[54]

New Orleans first generation of housing projects, commonly referred to as the "Big Four," which consisted of B.W. Cooper (Caliope), C.J. Peete (Magnolia), Lafitte (St. Thomas), and St. Bernard. There are 6 such neighborhoods in New Orleans. According to the STATUS OF THE 'BIG FOUR' FOUR YEARS AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA, "They were New Orleans' greatest public housing complexes, with over 4,500 apartments. While some of these units suffered significant damage from Hurricane Katrina, the majority emerged with minor damage that we believe could have been repaired.

Unfortunately, the decision was taken to destroy each of these units."[55] Even though the projects suffered no substantial damage, HUD boarded up virtually all of them immediately after the hurricane, placed them behind gated fences, and denied Katrina survivors entry. People were not even permitted to pick up personal stuff. The destruction of public housing buildings during Hurricane Katrina was about more than merely assessing damage. The destruction also highlighted deeper patterns of societal neglect and inequality. For example, the bulk of the "Big Four" housing estates had little to no substantial damage and could have been restored, but they were closed, gated off, and eventually demolished. This forced displacement disproportionately affected Black residents and disrupted long-standing communities. In her book *Root Shock,* Mindy Fullilove defines the term Root Shock as the "traumatic stress reaction to the loss of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem."[56] Root Shock had hit New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. The demolition of the "Big

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[54] John Logan, "The Impact of Katrina: Race and Class in Storm-Damaged Neighborhoods," 2006, https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Hurricane/report.pdf.
[55] "- STATUS of the ``BIG FOUR'' FOUR YEARS after HURRICANE KATRINA," Govinfo.gov, 2025, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hhrg53251/html/CHRG-111hhrg53251.htm.
[56] "Looking Back: Root Shock at Twenty | National Trust for Historic Preservation," Savingplaces.org, 2024, https://savingplaces.org/stories/looking-back-root-shock-at-twenty.

Four" did not just demolish housing units; it also dismantled the social connections and shared memory that had supported these communities for decades. HUD presented the demolition of mostly intact public housing as "revitalization," but in public memory, it represented state-approved erasure and the deliberate neglect of Black New Orleans. City officials referred to demolitions as "revitalization", but for many displaced residents, the destruction represented a second disaster that would be remembered as intentional erasure rather than recovery. However, housing was just one aspect of disaster vulnerability.

In New Orleans, the unequal distribution of levee protection has been a clear indication of structural inequality and its impact on disaster vulnerability. The systemic bias in flood protection was exacerbated as the 20th century continued. Levees were often constructed to considerable variability, with lower-income and primarily Black neighborhoods protected by weaker or incomplete levees. In *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice After Hurricane Katrina;* Robert D. Bullard and Beverly Wright believe that "there is a racial component to post-Katrina levee protection." This claim is supported by the 2007 Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force Risk and Reliability Report from the USACE:

**TABLE 1.1—Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force Risk and Reliability Report, Army Corps of Engineers, June 20, 2007**

| Neighborhoods | Average Depth of Flood Water Decrease | Fatalities Decreased | Property Loss Decreased |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lake View | 5.5 ft | 70% | 32% |
| Upper Ninth | 0.5 ft | 31% | 11% |
| Lower Ninth | 2.0 ft | 29% | 4% |
| Gentilly | 0.5 ft | 19% | 5% |
| N.O. East (West Lake Forest) | NC | NC | NC |
| Michoud | NC | NC | NC |
| New Orleans East | 1.0 ft | 83% | 24% |

*Source:* Army Corps of Engineers Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET), "Risk and Reliability Report" (June 20, 2007). Available at http://nolarisk.usace.army.mil.

This table shows that the average resident of Lake view, a mostly white and affluent community in NOLA, should expect at least 5.5 ft of increased levee protection. Towns like Ninth Ward, Gentilly, and New Orleans East that are majority African American communities receive little, if any, increased protection.[57] Bullard and Wright believe that Black New Orleans residents, regardless of financial status, receive less federal flood protection than their white counterparts in Lakeview.[58] In result, Hurricane Katrina did more than merely reveal pre-existing racial and economic inequalities; it worsened them. From failing evacuation operations to the removal of Black public housing and levees that did not provide fair protection, the disaster demonstrated that institutional racism and willful neglect were embedded in every aspect of vulnerability. While the storm passed, the aftermath revealed whose life was worth saving and whose was not. The aftermath of Katrina demonstrated how inequality is not only experienced but also remembered and actively rewritten through post-disaster policies and narratives. These actions influenced public memory by implying that displacement and loss were natural results of the storm rather than the result of structural negligence. Ultimately, the displacement of Black residents and the erasure of their neighborhoods were more than just the result of structural inequality; they became ingrained in the city's reconstructed memory of progress, allowing policymakers to portray uprooting as revitalization rather than the continuation of historical injustice.

Hurricane Katrina showed not only New Orleans' physical weakness, but also deeper vulnerabilities in the city's political, social, and media institutions. Government agencies, media outlets, and survivor communities all created competing memories of the disaster, influencing how Katrina was remembered even after the flooding passed. Federal agencies such as FEMA, DHS, and the USACE issued studies framing the

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[57] Army Corps of Engineers Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET), "Risk and Reliability Report" (June 20, 2007). Available at http://nolarisk.usace.army.mil.

[58] Robert D Bullard and Beverly Wright, *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina: Struggles to Reclaim, Rebuild, and Revitalize New Orleans and the Gulf Coast* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2009).

disaster as a logistical or engineering failure, distributing blame so broadly that institutional negligence transformed into a story of widespread failure. Media outlets also twisted news reports by racializing the issue and depicting Black people's behaviors as criminal and white people as sympathetic victims. These conflicting government and media accounts attempted to downplay suffering, minimize federal responsibility, and depict systemic failures as unavoidable effects of a storm.

In opposition to these representations, the survivors had formed a counter memory. Through oral histories, documentaries, and community testimony, Black New Orleans residents argued that Katrina was a predictable outcome of years of discriminatory housing policies, inadequate flood protection, and governmental neglect rather than an inevitable natural disaster. Their stories show how long-standing injustices, rather than unexpected chaos, were reflected in displacement, demolition, and post-Katrina policing. By placing Hurricane Katrina within a much longer history of racial injustice, these community voices argue with the government's attempt to create an official memory. Finally, remembering Hurricane Katrina is to recognize that natural disasters are never just weather events; they are social and political outcomes with controversial meanings. How we remember Hurricane Katrina decides who suffers, who is held accountable, and whether the systems that enabled such devastation are allowed to continue.

## The *Leeds Intelligencer* on the American Stamp Act Crisis

*Caleb King*

Reports on colonial resistance to the American Stamp Act by a British newspaper called the *Leeds Intelligencer,* based out of Leeds, England which is situated right in the middle of the main English isle, reached a peak when they wrote that upon the arrival of the official stamps, "all the vessels in the harbour hoisted their colours half-mast high, the bells began to ring being first muffled, and continued so until evening, and every countenance added to the appearance of sincere mourning."[1] I wish to explore how the *Intelligencer* developed this strong sentiment after starting out by covering American issues as side stories, and how that played out within British civil society.

The political environment in Britain leading up to and during the Imperial Crisis was not one of unanimity.[2] Different people, factions, and towns had varied reasons for either supporting or opposing the American Revolutionary War and the events leading up to it, even though the status of Americans in British society was generally agreed upon. Stephen Conway writes that before the Americans allied with the French during the Revolutionary War, which created a new sense of hostility toward their once-fellow Englishmen, they were seen by both proponents and opponents of the Stamp Act as British brothers, not merely subjects of the crown.[3] However, one thing was certain: like the American colonists, the British were quite politically active during the Imperial Crisis. Historians such as Hannah Barker have articulated that, in fact, though seldom revolutionary, Britons held values such as liberty close to their hearts - informing oneself of the current nature of the empire and political activism were encouraged, creating a commonly formed public opinion that was able to be skeptical of the state and state power, fed by the press.[4] Barker notes how instrumental newspapers were to the eighteenth-century

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[1] "America." *Leeds Intelligencer*, November 26, 1765, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

[2] Stephen Conway, "From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2002) 84.

[3] Conway, "From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners," 100

[4] Hanna Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society 1695-1855* (Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 22-23.

political world, particularly in shaping public opinion surrounding government action during events such as the Excise crisis and the Stamp Act.[5] Britons viewed the press as a critical and quintessentially British institution that both enshrined and enhanced treasured liberties. Freedom of the press was one of these perceived traditional values of the English, thus the press was a crucial medium for radicals and also served as one of the main defenses against a corrupt government.[6] Because the press was a cornerstone of British society, printers had influence and responsibility in the issues that they published, and depending on the makeup and layout of news, newspapers shaped public opinion and molded the political environment.

Because of their prominence in English society, Kathleen Wilson and other historians have studied the structure and content of eighteenth-century newspapers to glean what was important to readers and how that changed during the late eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century British newspapers engaged their readers with a wide variety of topics. Papers usually included large commercial sections consisting of local trade and shipping, listing numerous products from across the empire that had come into harbor, as well as the ships they arrived on. The structure and content of the papers sometimes dedicated large portions of their issues to this purpose, and could sometimes make up ⅓ of the post, provoking a mercantilist, trade-centric view both at home and abroad.[7] This was not the only issue at hand - the pattern extended to include prevalent topics such as imperial colonialism, wars abroad, diplomacy, local and national politics, as well as having dedicated sections to “American affairs" starting around the 1750s, leading up to the Seven Years’ War.[8] This meant that the British began to see events in America on the same level of importance as local, national, and imperial news, which in turn prompted Britons to keep up with happenings in the American colonies, adding them to the

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[5] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society 1695-1855,* 5

[6] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society 1695-1855,* 28

[7] Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*, (Cambridge, 1995), 38.

[8] Wilson, *The Sense of the People,* 39; Stephen Conway, “From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2002) 79.

realm of public opinion. Historians have found that towns all across England were engaged in politics by way of the press, especially since newspapers had a wide circulation that included libraries, pubs, and coffeehouses, with public readings for the illiterate who could not engage in the popular debate societies, and the poor who could not afford the paper.[9] Wilson articulates that the "political impact of the press lay in its ability to organize knowledge, shape expectations, mobilize identities, and proffer ideals, perspectives, and attitudes through which politics could be interpreted."[10] By ensuring virtually every British citizen was informed and politically active, regardless of status, when America began to crop up in issues, all Britons were sure to keep up on the colonies and form an opinion alongside everyone else in English society.

This sentiment is echoed by Linda Colley, who emphasizes that the easy access to papers made it almost impossible not to imagine Great Britain as a whole.[11] Additionally, trade was considered tantamount to religion - Britons wrote of trade that "Our trade is the most considerable of the whole world. And, indeed, Great Britain is, of all other countries, the most profitable for trade," and that "Whenever our trade perishes, so must our public dignity and strength."[12] As we have already seen, trade is quintessentially British, and its presence in the newspapers stakes its place in British identity. With a vast trade empire like Great Britain held in the eighteenth century, trade was its economic powerhouse - if the merchants were doing well, the empire was good, if the merchants were hurting, the empire was in turmoil. The press emphasized trade as a central institution that made Britons, Britons.

An aspect of the political status of Great Britain that weaved its way into the *Leeds Intelligencer* was the rise of Patriotism. Amy Watson writes that the Patriots were a political group that strove for a wide British Empire that held Great Britain and her colonies in equal standing,

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[9] Wilson, *The Sense of the People,* 32-33; Hanna Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society 1695-1855* (Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 68.
[10] Wilson, *The Sense of the People,* 53-54
[11] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale University Press 1992), 41
[12] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale University Press 1992), 60

encouraged the protection of the American colonies against the enemies of France and Spain, and fought for the universal rights of British subjects - not only in Great Britain, but across the Atlantic - such as habeas corpus, due process, trial by jury, and free speech, placing an emphasis on healthy trade within the empire.[13] Watson notes that "Patriots harnessed the British press to circulate their ideas, printing pamphlets, satires, and a wildly successful newspaper called the *Craftsman"* which were "swiftly recycled in newspapers around the British Atlantic, causing the movement to take root in places such as Scotland and the new British colony of Georgia," and although Watson focuses her research on the environment in New York, I wish to explore these tactics as they were utilized by the *Intelligencer.*[14]

While historians mention public opinion, the importance and popularity of the press in British politics, and the American colonies' rise to prominence in the late eighteenth century, they fail to tie these together within a common framework of British nationalism and ideology. As reflected in the press, some individuals viewed Americans as fellow British brothers and Englishmen, taking pity on their plight over the Stamp Act in 1765. On the other hand, proponents of taxation on the colonies used the same rhetoric to argue that, as fellow Englishmen, Americans were subject to Parliament and thus to taxation.[15] There was no consensus on the Stamp Act Crisis in America - Britain was effectively split on the matter, with strong arguments coming from both sides. Papers, then, fed heavily into the political spectrum thanks to their position among the British. One of these papers, the Patriotic *Leeds Intelligencer,* was certainly sympathetic to the American cause and ultimately supported their position. I closely examined every issue of the *Leeds Intelligencer* from the year the Stamp Act was in place from March 22, 1765 to March 18, 1766, and found that the paper reflected the values of Patriotism and

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[13] Amy Watson, "The New York Patriot Movement: Partisanship, the Free Press, and Britain's Imperial Constitution, 1731–39," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 77, no. 1 (2020), 36

[14] Watson, "The New York Patriot Movement," 36

[15] Stephen Conway, "From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2002) 84-86.

changed in its expressiveness and extremity regarding its length and layout, reporting style, and content value over this period, which reflected the paper's shift from treating the crisis as a just another neutral news item to effectively advocating for the colonists to their British readers, and how their argument and politics changed from initially staunch opposition for the Stamp Act, to becoming more moderate once the political field shifted in their favor, though never turning from support for repeal.

The paper was founded by Griffith Wright, about whom there is little scholarship. The *Leeds Intelligencer* is an institution in its own right rather than a political mouthpiece for Wright. In order to fully recognize the effect of the contents of the *Leeds Intelligencer*, it is essential to understand how the paper was formatted. The *Intelligencer* printed weekly issues, each one with three posts: a Wednesday/Thursday post, a Friday/Saturday post, and a Sunday/Monday post, with the paper being released on Tuesday. The structure of the paper was split into regional sections - the two sections that were always present were the London section, and the “country news” section (local news). However, most of the time, another regional section would be included, bringing news from Ireland, very rarely Scotland, and America, all three being some of Britain’s colonies that were seen as extensions of Britain and Britishness as opposed to the more estranged and foreign Eastern, African, or Caribbean colonial holdings. Content spanned between 2-3 columns per page, and each weekly issue included the typical newspaper advertisements, lotteries, obituaries, and a section called “hull,” which dictated ship arrivals and departures. This formulaic structure hardly ever waivered, except to include the occasional letter to the printer and, in a few rare occasions, more unique content. It is important to note that the content from America is dated earlier than it is printed because it took some time for the packets to arrive at the printer, leading to a slight lag in updates.

# An issue of the Leeds Intelligencer

## SUNDAY's and MONDAY's POSTS.

☞ *Arriv'd the Mails from* Holland, France, *and* Flanders.

*St. James's, September 7.*

BY a letter from Dunkirk received yesterday, we learn, that the demolition of the Jettees of the Channel of Dunkirk was begun the 2d instant.

The King has been pleased to appoint his Grace Thomas Holles Duke of Newcastle, to be Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the Town and County of Nottingham. *Lond. Gaz.*

A M E R I C A.

*Boston, July 8.* The people of Canada are in an ill temper, and groaning out their grievances, the Savages threatening the Southern Governments with a new war.—Trade, burthened beyond all possible bearing, bleeding, dying. The whole of English America in the depths of despair upon the loss of privileges, the most dear and invaluable; such as a right to levy taxes by their own Representatives, trials by juries, and the secure and quite possession of one's own house.

L O N D O N, Sept. 7.

It is said the death of the late Emperor of Germany will occasion the early nomination of an English Nobleman to visit the Continent in a public character, on affairs of great importance.

It is said the Emperor of Morocco has requested the mediation of Great Britain, towards a compromise of differences with the Court of France.

A strong Memorial is said to have been just received from the French Court, vindicating their pretensions and right to trade on certain parts of the African coast, said to be highly inconsistent with the commercial interests of this kingdom.

As an instance how much the American Colonies are in earnest to oppose the new stamp and other duties, we are informed several eminent Council are begun already to be retained, in behalf of the provinces of New-England, Virginia, and Massachuset's Bay.

They write from Philadelphia, that several families are going to embark for the Dutch settlements on account of the late Stamp Duty; thinking it, as they say, more eligible than to live where they have so little security for their properties; and where they are governed by laws in the making of which they have not so much as the poor consolation of a consent.

His Majesty has been pleased to constitute and appoint Lieut. Gen. Lord Robert Manners to be Colonel of the 3d regiment of dragoon guards, in the room of the Hon. Sir Charles Howard, Knt. of the Bath, deceased.

We are informed that the residence of their Serene Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Brunswick in England, will be for some months; and, it is said, his Majesty will accompany these illustrious personages on their return, in order to visit his electoral dominions in Germany.

Governor Cornwallis, from Gibraltar, is arrived in town. He landed at Spithead, from on board the Juno frigate, on Wednesday last. The Juno brought home 300,000 dollars for the Merchants, which were conveyed this morning to the Bank.

From Staines, Windsor, and other places towards Berkshire, we are informed, that since the late seasonable rains began, the second crop of grass has advanced surprizingly; in many places it is nine inches, and a foot long; and they doubt not but by Michaelmas they shall have a very good second crop of hay.

We hear the Weymouth and Panther men of war are ordered to be fitted out for the coast of Guinea.

It is assured that our Court is resolved to redeem all their subjects who are slaves in Barbary, amounting to about 600 men, the most of them natives of the Island of Minorca, who had been taken on board Italian ships.

Yesterday morning, about one o'clock, a single highwayman robbed all the stages at and near Turnham-green; and, after robbing the Exeter coach, was pursued and pulled off his horse at Hammersmith turnpike, but escaped, leaving in the hands of one of his pursuers the left lap of his waistcoat, which was of mazarine blue cloth, bound round the edges; in the pocket an old plated spur, and the impression of a seal of a public office. He was mounted on a small black gelding, about thirteen hands three inches high, an almost new saddle, and blue saddle cloth. The horse was brought to town.

On Tuesday the Merchant's ship Friend's Delight, outward-bound for America, was robbed of a small bale of wrought silk, valued at near 200l. The villains were pursued as far as Stone Stairs, by two boats, well-manned but the thieves having a galley, with four oars, they got off towards Limehouse, where it is thought they put their stolen goods ashore. The Captain of the vessel must sustain this damage.

This morning, about two o'clock, the fire near Durham-yard, in the Strand, broke out again and burnt for some time with great fury, and had it not been for the assistance of St. Martin's engine, all the damaged houses in front must have inevitably been burnt to the ground.

Some few days since, an old woman who had purchased about six months ago, an annuity for her own life, being extremely ill, and told that it was impossible she should recover, insisted upon getting up, being dressed, and carried in a chair to the person of whom she had purchased her annuity, in order (as she said) to reprimand him for *defrauding* her, by making such an *unreasonable bargain* with her, and to insist on his *refunding* some part of the purchase-money back again. This, the [illegible] put into execution; but not being able to bring the party to reason, or even to listen to her proposals, it threw the enraged annuitant into such a passion, that she expired a few moments after her return home.

*Extract of a Letter from Stratford upon Avon, Sept. 1.*

"Since the 8th of July I have made a tour through Lancashire, Cheshire, part of North Wales, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Brecknockshire, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Glamorganshire, Monmouthshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire, and noticed the produce of the earth. The hay, a short crop, but good, and very well (and cheap) got together. The rye and wheat, very good and clean, heavy-headed, and well and cheap got in. Barley, in general, the same. Pease, next. Oats, in some places short straw, but in general well-headed. Beans, much the same, but (as a Farmer in Gloucestershire told me) they were very tidy stuff when got together, meaning well podded. The fine rains, since the 2d of August, have greatly refreshed the earth, and brought forward the grass, which now looks fine and plenty. The clover, for seed, now bosses or heads well; the hops look healthy; and of apples there is a tolerable crop. In South-Wales, which furnishes a deal of oats, and Northwards, &c. some of the Innkeepers in July sent circular letters, to advance oats from 2d. to 3d. a quartern; but the late rains frustrated their design, and but very few now require more than 2d."

Bank Stock, 139. India Stock, 161. South Sea ditto, 104 1-half. 3 per Cent. Bank Reduced, 100 3-4ths. 3 per Cent. Con. 90 1-4th a 3-8ths. 3 1-half per Cent. ditto 1758, 95 1-half a 5-8ths. 4 per Cent. Con. 103 1-half a 5-8ths. 4 per Cent. Navy, 101 1 half. 4 per Cent. 1763, 102 5-8ths. 3 per. Cent South Sea Old Ann. 90 a 1-4th. Ditto New Ann. 89. Bank Long Ann. 28. India Bonds, 58s. a 64s. prm. 4 per Cent. Excheq. Bills, 2s. prm. New Navy Bills, 2 1-half disc. Tontine. 90 5-8ths a 3-4ths. Tickets, 11l. 19s. 6d. a 12l. The rest shut.

L E E D E S, September 10.

The Inhabitants at the Back of the Shambles, began last Week to take in their Shop Windows and pull down their Penthouses, in order to make a better Passage for Carriages, the want of which has been long and loudly complained of; but much more to the credit of this opulent Town wou'd it be to purchase the whole Pile of Buildings, which stand in the Middle, and so greatly obstruct the passage of that otherwise noble Street [Briggate] which it is said might easily be done, and raze it even with the Ground; by which numberless Misfortunes that are now almost daily happening there, wou'd effectually be prevented; and the Street render'd one of the most spacious and commodious Streets in all England.

Last Tuesday Joseph Stocks, of Horton, near Bradford, was committed to Prison, by Mr. Alderman Atkinson, on Suspicion of stealing a Parcel of Worsted from John Robinson, of this Town.

On Thursday last, a Cricket-Match was played at Sheffield, between the Gentlemen of that Place, and the Gentlemen of this Town, which was won hollow by the former.

By advice from Newcastle, the late differences between the Pitmen and Coal-owners there, which had given so much uneasiness, and had caused a great stagnation in trade, were as good as compromised; and that the Pitmen have agreed to work on the old terms.

On Friday last, the Body of Peter Shawcross, Confectioner in this Town, was found hanging in an Outhouse, about 7 o'Clock in the Morning. The Coroner's Inquest sat upon the Body, that Evening, and brought in their Verdict, *Lunacy*. Ever since the Death of his Wife, which happen'd about three Weeks ago, he has appeared very dull and melancholy; and the Evening before, he *bid adieu to the Hope of a Christian*, and labour'd under the greatest Anxiety.—[ The excellent Dr. Clarke, has the following Remark on Suicide, or Self-Murder; "What Scripture, Nature, and Reason teach concerning the Crime of attempting another Man's life, is applicable in proportion to the folly of a Man's deliberately, and upon discontent with Providence, bereaving himself of his own life; for, as no Man knows all the ends and designs for which the divine Providence appointed him his station, whatsoever it be in this present world; so no Man has a right to remove himself therefrom; to anticipate the time of God's calling him to Judgment, or to deprive the public of a member." To this, may be added, the words of an eminent heathen Philosopher, "All pious Men," says he, "ought to have patience to remain in the body, so long as God, whose temple and palace this world it, shall please to continue them there; and not force themselves out of the world, before he calls for them; lest they be found deserters of the station appointed them of God."]

On Sunday last died, after a lingering Illness, which she bore with true Christian Fortitude and Resignation, and is much lamented by all her Friends and Acquaintance, Mrs. Alcock, the Wife of Mr. John Alcock, an eminent Attorney at Skipton.

To-morrow the following Horses, &c. are entered to run at Manchester for the Five Years old Plate of 50l. Mr. Stanhope's black Mare Candaca; Mr. Cross's chesnut Horse, Toper; and Captain Samuel Noble Wright's grey Horse, Coxcomb.

On Thursday for the Give-and-Take of 50l. Mr. Lowther's chesnut Gelding, Jack I'll tickle thee; Hon. John Smith Barry's brown Horse, Young Davy; Captain Samuel Noble Wright's grey Horse, Coxcomb; Dr. Simpson's brown Horse, Snap; and Mr. Neaden's grey Horse, Smiling Billy.

And on Friday for the Aged Plate of 50l. Mr. Cross's chesnut Horse, Toper; Mr. Chamber's chesnut Gelding, Gimcrack; Captain Samuel Noble Wright's grey Horse, Coxcomb; and Hon. John Smith Barry's bay Horse, Young Sylvio.

*R I C H M O N D* R A C E S.

On Tuesday last, the 50l. was won by

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mr. Cornforth's bay mare, Dido | 1 | 1 |
| Mr. Alcock's roan mare, Miss Peeper. | 2 | 2 |
| Wednesday, the 50l. Four Years old, was won by | | |
| Mr. Fenwick's brown colt, Dux | 1 | 1 |
| Mr. Fawcett's grey colt, Slow-and-Easy | 3 | 2 |
| Mr. Hewitson's chesnut gelding, Brisk | 2 | dr. |
| Mr. Jackson's grey filly, Poor-Chance | dis. | |
| Thursday, a Cup, value Eighty Pounds. | | |
| Mr. Fenwick's brown Horse, Le Sang | | 1 |
| Mr. Wentworth's bay horse, Volunteer | | 2 |
| Mr. Hutton's brown horse, Sylvio | | *rider thrown* |

The same Day the Sweepstakes was won by Mr. Shaftoe's Colt.

*Newcastle, Sept. 7.* On Thursday the 29th of Aug. last, the silver medal, gorget and silk banner were shot for at Darlington, by the gentlemen archers there, when the medal was won by Mr. Sober Hall, the gorget by Mr. Robert Hall, and the banner by Mr. James Portees.

On Thursday was held here, the anniversary meeting of the sons of the clergy, when the collection at church and at Mr. Parker's Long-room amounted to 305l. 6s. 4 d. The sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Dr. Vane, Prebendary of Durham.

*Edinburgh, Sept. 2.* The following pretty remarkable affair happened, we are told, within these few days in a town at some distance from this city. A man who had been many years married, it should appear, had conceived some dislike at his wife, and had planned the design of getting rid of her. The method he took was uncommon: While asleep, he put a noose over her neck, and pulled her up to the ceiling, where he kept her hanging so long a time, that he made no doubt of her death. He then put her into the bed where she had been before, left her, and went to alarm the neighbourhood with the story of his wife's being in a fit, and expiring. The neighbours immediately came to his assistance; but to his amazement and mortification, in place of finding his wife dead, he found her alive, and able to tell distinctly, to all around, the story of his wickedness. It is added, that the man was presently committed to prison.

A meteor, consisting of a ball of fire, with a tail of the same, was seen passing over Banff, on the evening of the 8th ult. about six o'clock. Its direction was from east to west.

H U L L, September 8.

*Imports.* Operto-Packet, R. Schonswar, from Operto, with Wine, &c. Sarah, W. Lambert, from Amsterdam, light. New-Success, R. Gylby, from Bremen, with Yarn, Clapboard, Elfridge Wooll, &c. Manchester, W. Burstall, from Hampton in Virginia, with Tar, Turpentine, Barrel Staves, Tobacco, &c. Success, G. Mennell, from Middlebro', with Old Iron, &c. John and Mary, J. Chappell, from Koningsbro', with Flax, Yarn, Hemp, &c.

*Exports.* William and Thomas, R. Hopper, for Stockholm, with Oats. Margaret and Elizabeth, J. Dixon, and Star, S. Brown, for Hambro', with Cools, Earthenware, Pitch, Woollendrapery, Ironmongers-Wares, &c. Keppel, R. Kirkhouse, for Petersburgh, with Woollendrapery, Ironmongers-Wares, Cotton-Velvets, &c.

*Laid on.* Thames, J. Howlett, for Cadiz. Ann, T. Jackson, for Rotterdam.

*Coasters arriv'd.* Hope, W. Tayler, from Liverpool. Friendship, F. Blanch; Stafford, T. Savile; Phœnix, W. Reeder; and Hopewell, T. Thorney, from London. Lynn-Packet, J. Burleigh, from Lynn. Cromer, W. Ager; Benjamin and Sarah, T. Forster; and Experience, J. Francis, from Blackney and Clay. Happy-Return, R. Wharton, and Francis, J. Terry, from Sunderland. Rose, J. Newby; Eleanor, R. Barrowby; and Friendship, J. Friend, from Newcastle. William and Sarah, J. Dowsing, from Southwold. Industry, J. Watson, from Alemouth.

*Coasters sail'd.* Thomas and Susan, J. Richardson, for Aldbro'. Barnevelt, J. Scales; Unity, J. Walker; Sincerity, R. Webb; Royal-Oak, A. Ombler; Lancaster, T. J. Thompson, and London, C. Richardson, for London. Ann and Margaret, G. Caithness, for Dundee. Christopher and William, C. Hopper; Providence, H. Hopper; and Robert and Peggy, J. Burleigh, for Lynn. Industry, Tho. Hardison; Samuel and Mary, S. Meggitt, and Hannah, I. Middleton, for Whitby. Ann, J. Smyth, for Leith and Scarbro'. Janet, A. Riche, for Borrowstoness. Success, S. Staniland, for Sunderland. Kingston, G. Fawcett, for Whitby and Sunderland. Dreadnought, W. Scropholme, for Salt[illegible].


NOTICE *is hereby given,*

THAT a final DIVIDEND of the Estate and Effects of SAMUEL WESTGARTH, late of Wakefield, will be made and paid by his Assignees, to and amongst such of his Creditors as shall be intitled thereto, on Thursday the Ninteenth Day of September Instant, at the House of Mr. Charles Cooper, Innholder, in Wakefield, at Two o'Clock in the Afternoon of the same Day.

FLED for FELONY,

JOHN WOOLLER, of Horton, near Bradford, by Trade a Blacksmith, but can weave Worsted-Stuffs, a thick broadset Man, about Five Feet Seven Inches high, broad faced, red or flaxen colour'd Hair, squints on one Eye, and looks as if he was almost blind of it, the Eye-Lid covering Part of the Eye, one Leg rather crook'd, occasioned by its being broke, may be about Forty Years of Age, is pitted with the Small-Pox, and had on when he went away a blue Coat.——Whoever apprehends the said John Wooller, and brings him to James Helliwell, Constable of Horton aforesaid, shall be well rewarded for their Trouble.

To be SOLD, to the Highest Bidder,

*On Wednesday the Eighteenth Day of September Inst. betwixt the Hours of Three and Seven in the Afternoon, at the House of* Richard Crosby, *in Armley, in the Parish of Leeds, pursuant to Conditions of Sale, to be then and there produced,*

A FREEHOLD ESTATE, situate in Armley aforesaid, consisting of seven Dwelling-Houses or Tenements, with Outbuildings thereto belonging, now in the Occupation of Widow Close, Jeremiah Bannister, James Worsnup, the Elder, James Worsnup, the Younger, John Walker, William Lupton, and Stephen Guy. Also two Closes of Meadow Land, in the Occupation of the said John Walker, opening upon Armley Common, on which there is an extensive Common Right.——The Tenants will shew the Premisses. For further Particulars enquire of Mr. James Newport, Attorney, at Leeds.

To be SOLD,

ALL that the MANOR of LEATHLEY, in the County of York, with its Rights, Royalties, Members, and Appurtenances; and the Capital Mansion House there, with divers Tenements and Hereditaments, situate within the said Manor; together with a Fulling-Mill, and certain Closes of Ground therewith occupied, situate in Poole, and adjacent to the said Manor. For further Particulars enquire of Mrs. Hitch, of Leathley Hall.

Mr. John Moyses, or Mr. John Fairburne, will shew the Premises.

*N. B.* Leathley is situate in Wharfdale, two measured Miles from Otley, nine from Knaresbro', and nine from Leeds, all Turnpike Roads.

*This Day is publish'd,*

And sold by JOHN BINNS, Bookseller in Leeds,

*In a handsome Pocket Volume, Price 3s. neatly bound.*

THE COMPLETE SPORTSMAN; Or, Country GENTLEMAN's RECREATION.

Containing the very best Instructions under the following Heads, viz.

Of Breeding and the Management of *Game-Cocks*. Of *Cock-fighting*. Of *Colts* and backing *Colts*. Of the Breeding and Management of *Race-Horses, Hunters, &c.* Of *Horse-Racing*. Of *Bowling*. Of *Coursing*. Of *Hare-hunting*. Of *Fox-hunting*. Of *Buck-hunting*. Of Breeding and Ordering all Manner of *Dogs, Pigeons, Rabbits, &c.* Of *Angling*. Of *Otters*, and *Otter-hunting*. Of *Pheasants, Partridges, Woodcocks*, and all Manner of Game. Of Breeding and Managing *Canary Birds, &c. &c.* And several other Articles too numerous to be mentioned in a Title Page.

*Compiled by Mr.* T. FAIRFAX.

—— *By Exercise the flaccid Nerves*

*Grow firm, and gain a more compacted Tone.*—Dr. ARMSTRONG.

London: Printed for J. Cooke, at Shakespear's-Head, in Pater-noster Row, And sold by most other Booksellers in England.

The first appearance of the American Stamp Act was on March 26th, 1775, and it was briefly mentioned in a list of bills that received Royal Assent (approval by the king), found near the bottom of the first column under the London section.[16] With little to no American news available at the time, this report of the Stamp Act was merely a drop in the flood of England-related news, indicating that the Act's potential impact had not yet been fully realized, the crisis not yet at the forefront of British minds. From the beginning of April to July 30, news from America was sparse or entirely neglected, and the content presented was of little value or relevance. Once American news returned, it returned with heat - the rumblings of the Stamp Act were in full swing, with an announcement of the Stamp Act, and a reprint of a colonial newspaper.

Besides the previous regular announcements about the new Stamp Act, the very second post after the summer dry spell was a repost of an *entire page* from the *New York Gazette*. Before the *Gazette* piece, the *Intelligencer* included an editorial note that read: "An Extract of some Observations on the Taxation upon the American Colonies, which occasions much Uneasiness, and many gloomy Speculations in that Part of the King's Dominions, … wishing the Readers here-of may unanimously Interest themselves in their Application to the Legislative Power, for a Redress of what is likely to become intollerably grevious to their Fellow Subjects, in that Part of the World."[17] This disclaimer was placed at the very beginning of the page, and begins to hint at the *Intelligencer's* stance towards the American Stamp Act. Firstly, the *Intelligencer* was being informative at this moment - they wanted their readers to know about this trouble in America. Second, the language confirmed that Britons (at least the Britons behind the *Leeds Intelligencer*) thought of Americans as "fellow subjects." Third, the *Intelligencer* was already utilizing its influence to suggest that this Act would cause problems in America, and that its readers should speak to the legislature about remedying the law. Fascinatingly, this instance of the *New York Gazette* was one of only a few

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[16] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, March 26, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

[17] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY'S POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, August 6, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

colonial newspaper reposts during the Stamp Act era in which the Intelligencer allowed the colonists' full, unedited views to be heard. The *Gazette* issue itself expressed passionate opposition to Great Britain, arguing that it was genuine loyalty, since Americans wanted to stand up for and protect their British rights.[18]

Content-wise, rather than the occasional announcement or reprint from another newspaper, letters were one of the main forms of news in the *Leeds Intelligencer*. Aside from the main news included in the North American packets, it would include letters from various colonists and merchants to each other or correspondents in England. One such letter was posted in the *Intelligencer* on August 27, 1765, but it strayed from the usual format.[19] Typically letters were posted as excerpts, and the printer would decide which part or how much would be included in the issue, ranging from one sentence - as seen in the post from August 6, 1765 where a Boston merchant was already concerned about how the Stamp Act would negatively affect the trade industry and lead to bankruptcy - to more than one column, like the one from August 27th. Written by a Philadelphia merchant, the letter ends off the page and the London section, however, starting halfway through the issue and spanning a column and a half. The length is already unusual for the *Intelligencer*, let alone the fact that it begins with an overly large capital letter, styled similarly to how the newspaper pages themselves begin. By dedicating so much space to print the entire letter, and by styling it as they did, the paper clearly desired its readers to take notice of the issue, and, because so much is said about it, note its prominence. The merchant wrote a very detailed complaint on major issues in the colonies, particularly the colonists' rights as Britons, taxation without representation, the mandatory trade route to England, the tax burden, and quartering soldiers, among other things. Over the next month, the *Leeds Intelligencer* continued to show how big a problem the Stamp Act had become and would continue to be in America.

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[18] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY'S POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, August 6, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

[19] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, August 27, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

In response to the anxieties and concerns of its merchant constituents, the Leeds Intelligencer shifted its coverage in September. On September 10, 1765, the initial section in the *Intelligencer* was the America section, which, in the previous very few instances it appeared, brought, for the most part, Indian affairs and miscellaneous trade news, and now for the first time was conveying key political news from the colonies. The *Intelligencer* reported that trade was bleeding and dying, and that "The whole of English America [is] in the *depths of despair*[20] upon the loss of privileges, the most dear and invaluable; such as a right to levy taxes by their own Representatives, trials by juries, and the secure and quiet possession of one's own house."[21] The language here was from the printer, not an excerpt or letter, inferring the paper's negative stance towards the Stamp Act and its effects on colonists' rights. Following the American section was the London section, where American content was given priority over the London news. Again, in the printer's wording, they wrote that the Americans were "earnest to oppose the stamp and other duties," and that some families were actually leaving for the Netherlands, thinking it better to live there than in America, where they had so little security in their rights and property.[22] Even two North American governors requested their dismissal (reported near the top of the first column under the London section in the issue from September 24th).[23] America was given clear priority in this issue - the printer wanted to ensure that the American disturbances were the first thing their readers ingested, drawing attention to how unsettled and unsatisfied their British brothers, particularly merchants and their readership concerned with trade, were with the effects of the Act.

One of the last American issues in September was an excerpt of a letter from New York, where the author relayed how he intended to return to England because of how destitute trade had become in the colonies,

[20] Emphasis added
[21] "SUNDAY'S and MONDAY'S POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, September 10, 1765, 3. *British Library Newspapers*
[22] "SUNDAY'S and MONDAY'S POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, September 10, 1765, 3. *British Library Newspapers*
[23] "SUNDAY'S and MONDAY'S POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, September 17, 1765, 3. *British Library Newspapers*

likening it to a plague, and blaming it on the "proposed stamp duty, which makes a great noise in North America."[24] The narrative the *Intelligencer* provided here aligned with previous posts by highlighting Americans' discontent. In the months following, the *Intelligencer* began to report many detailed instances of colonial rebellion and violence as the printers scorned actions that might hurt British Atlantic trade and encroach on the rights of their fellow subjects - this escalation in content and tone was when the *Intelligencer* began wrestling with the unsettling idea that the Stamp Act crisis may turn into a larger scale issue that could result in not only a hindrance to overall imperial trade, but all out revolution.

Accounts of protests rose up in mid-October and would continue quite regularly thereafter. In the very first section on October 22, 1765, which was the America section, the first piece of news was how a great crowd assembled at the stamp officer's house "with loud acclamations for Liberty and Property."[25] Upon hearing that the stamp officer had resigned his position after hearing it was a dangerous position to accept on account of it being "contrary to the Rights and Privileges of Englishmen," the crowd dispersed without doing any damage to his house or property.[26] The next week, an excerpt of a letter from Boston was posted, interestingly placed at the bottom of the second of three columns under the London section, even though the America section was first. According to the letter, in order to continue trading without Stamped papers, trade may need to cease entirely. Some people were of the opinion that "Parliament will not enforce such an act utterly irreconcilable to the friends, not of a part only, but of the WHOLE PEOPLE of America."[27] The author went on to warn that if the colonies decided to stop ordering manufactured goods from England, which they would be in necessity of doing soon, then

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[24] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY'S POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, September 24, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

[25] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, October 22, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

[26] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, October 22, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

[27] Emphasis original

“thousands of her useful labourers and their families must starve - so great a dependence has the mother upon her children."[28]

Sure enough, under the London section in the middle of the first column on the very next page, it was reported in the paper’s own words “that among other schemes of public economy, a resolution has been taken to import no more corn spirits from England, in order to encourage their own distilleries.”[29] November 5, 1765, delivered a significant quantity of disturbances in the column-length America section of the page, again taking priority over other news. In this issue we hear of two instances of hanging and burning of a stamp distributor in effigy, a stamp distributor by the name of George Messervy that was appointed to the position, but resigned upon it being too disagreeable to the people, and the hanging and burning of effigies of three men, two of whom had their houses vandalized by the mob, with the third, a stamp distributor, threatened into resignation.[30] The *Intelligencer* drew attention to how upset the Stamp Act was making Americans, while also showing how *the protests were working*. Not a single man could occupy the office of stamp distributor without being humiliated, attacked, and threatened by the colonists. While not verbally quelling the riots or omitting them from the paper entirely (the latter being an easy way to address the disturbances by simply not addressing them), which would effectively snuff out their perceived effect on their readers, what the printer did instead was place them in the spotlight while not outright praising the rebels. This way, the unnecessarily long, detailed, and frequent coverage signaled to readers the importance of these protests on the overall crisis and how the printer condoned the resistance as a response to Parliament’s overreach. In doing so, the *Intelligencer* started to turn their stance towards influence by being sure to include a large quantity of violent but successful protests from America so that their readers might see how angry and how far the

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[28] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, October 29, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

[29] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY'S POSTS." Leeds Intelligencer, October 29, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

[30] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, November 5, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

colonists were willing to go to protect their rights, and sympathize with the American effort. The rest of November really solidified the *Leeds Intelligencer's* shift from more informative to more influential in what and how they chose to post news from the American colonies.

A critical piece was posted on November 12 of 1765. In the London section, at the bottom of the only column with content on that page, the following clip was posted:

By yeſterday's North American Packet came a News-paper, which came out on Saturday the 21ſt of September laſt, under the title of 'The CONSTITUTIONAL 'COURANT, containing matters intereſting to *Liberty* 'and no wiſe repugnant to *Loyalty*;' printed by *Andrew Marvel*, at the Sign of the *Bribe refuſed* on *Conſtitution Hill*, North America. It contains ſeveral eſſays relating to the Stamp Act, all of which are merely local, and by the introduction ſeem to have been refuſed by the Printers of the regular News-Papers at New-York It has an emblematical head-piece, of a ſnake or ſerpent cut into ſeveral pieces on each of which are the initial letters of the names of ſeveral colonies, a N. Y.--N. E.--P.-- for New-York, New-England, Philadelphia, &c. &c. and over it are the words "JOIN OR DIE," in large letters. At the end of the ſeveral letters is the following paragraph.

[Since the foregoing pieces came to the Printer's hands, certain intelligence has been received from England of an univerſal change in the Miniſtry, whereby all thoſe great Officers who had rendered themſelves obnoxious to the people, by their impolitic and arbitrary proceedings, are excluded from any ſhare in the Adminiſtration; and their places filled up by ſome of the moſt diſtinguiſhed Patriots in the nation, who it is hoped and believed will ſoon give a happy proof to his Majeſty's ſubjects, in Europe and America, of their ſincere love of Liberty, for which they have been long contending with its enemies, by adhering to ſuch meaſures, and ſuch only, as are conſiſtent with the principles of the Conſtitution.]

The *Constitutional Courant* was a very radical propaganda paper - so blatantly matching the ideology of the radical revolutionaries that even the American printers didn't want to publish it. Following suit, the *Intelligencer* smartly chose not to print articles that didn't even line up with such radical and riled-up anti-Stamp Act colonists - potentially fearing backlash and censure from the British government. However, they *did* repost a paragraph at the end, which explained that the Patriots were taking office in England and that they did a better job of pleasing the people on both sides of the Atlantic regarding their rights and their liberty.[31] Not only this, but the *Leeds Intelligencer* also included a description of a major political cartoon originally created and used by Benjamin Franklin during the French and Indian War to call for colonial unity. The author of the *Constitutional Courant,* William Goddard, repurposed it - dropping the comma (Franklin's "Join, or Die vs. Goddard's Join or Die") to give the image new meaning in colonial opposition to the Stamp Act and to British authority.[32]

The Constitution mentioned in the *Courant* is not the American Constitution (which wasn't written until 1787), but the British Constitution, from which the colonists argued they drew their rights as British subjects. By choosing to post the paragraph from the *Courant*, it signaled not only the colonists' stamp of approval but also the approval of the *Intelligencer* on the shift in government. Going forward, the *Leeds Intelligencer* exhibited greater freedom in the content and comments it chose to print, and its argument became more moderate, showing greater empathy for the English side while remaining an advocate for repeal. This may have stemmed from the new Administration reported in the Courant and the fact that the Patriots were the arbiters of the sense of "Britishness" and transatlantic patriotism that the Intelligencer and the colonists had been arguing the Stamp Act violated. Because of this, the *Intelligencer*

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[31] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, November 12, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

[32] Ralph Fresca, "Benjamin Franklin's Printing Network and the Stamp Act" *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 71, no. 4 (2004): 403-419, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27778636

began writing more politically correct pieces while still maintaining its faith and arguing against the tax.

This didn't halt the wave of colonial news, as on November 26, 1765, the Stamp Act shone as a primary topic for the paper as a whole. On the Friday and Saturday page, the America section headed the news, when typically there are a few miscellaneous international letters to start. This time, the first thing the *Intelligencer* wished its readers to know is that upon the arrival of a new stamp distributor in Virginia, he was invited to a ball and treated very politely, but when the night was over was told that his belongings were placed on a return ship to England and that he should leave if he valued his life, as it would be in danger if he remained as stamp distributor, and so he went.[33]

This was the highest American news had appeared on the page yet, indicating that the American Stamp Act crisis was the most important issue to the *Intelligencer* and one of the most important issues it believed its readers should be informed about. To close the weekly post, the *Leeds Intelligencer* included a fourth page, which strayed from its format. The only news content on this page was the America section, which drew on the *Pennsylvania Gazette.* British officer Captain Holland arrived with the Stamp papers for Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, staying at Delaware under the protection of a man of war, but upon his ships' arrival, "all the vessels in the harbour hoisted their colours half-mast high, the bells began to ring being first muffled, and continued so until evening, and every countenance added to the appearance of sincere mourning."[34] The *Leeds Intelligencer* took the time to tell its readers (on an extra page) that the colonies greeted the arrival of the official Stamp Act documents and stamps with ceremonial mourning, a detail that need not have been included. If they were merely informative, the report may have gone no further than relaying the arrival of the stamps, omitting the resistance and opposition. The *Intelligencer* not only included the American protest but also continued the issue with what was essentially a play-by-play account

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[33] "FRIDAY and SATURDAYS POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, November 26, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

[34] "America." *Leeds Intelligencer*, November 26, 1765, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

of several thousand colonists' attempt at preventing the Stamp Act by threatening another stamp distributor by the name of John Hughes, again drawing readers' attention to the intense and dangerous opposition to the Act.[35] The *Leeds Intelligencer* was now wading in influential waters, but would not definitively jump into the deep end until December 17, 1765.

At the very beginning of the crisis, the *Leeds Intelligencer* outright prompted their readers to pay attention to the upcoming Stamp Act and its projected negative effects on the colonies, encouraging them to take political action as citizens. We see an example of just this in the paper from December 3, 1765, where the *Intelligencer* posted an excerpt of a letter from a British merchant. Found under the London section (the only section on this page) in the middle of the second of the two columns, the letter was redacted such that the colony and issue that was the subject of the letter could not be clearly identified, at least not without proper context. He wrote that the merchants threatened to leave the colony, but every man who opposed the ---- was met with military force and driven out of his house. The merchants drew up a memorial and sent it to the Lords of Trade in hopes they would have sympathy and compassion on the colony, stating the general state of confusion felt throughout the entire province, using the words "anarchy" and "distressful" to describe the situation.[36] When placed among other recent accounts and issues, it can easily be deciphered that the merchant was speaking of the American Stamp Act crisis, meaning that this was an account of a sympathetic British merchant, who also wished to oppose the Stamp Act, even going so far as to contact a legislative body about it. A massive step in playing to their readers, the *Intelligencer* voiced the opinion of a true Briton - this way, readers were hearing the troubles of the Stamp Act straight from the mouth of their countryman and not from an overseas mob, instantly making the issue personal to Britons.

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[35] "America." *Leeds Intelligencer*, November 26, 1765, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

[36] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY's POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, December 3, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

Finally, on December 17, 1765, the *Leeds Intelligencer* reached a definitive influential stance in regards to the Stamp Act crisis. The Wednesday/Thursday issue brought news that the Ministry was considering changes that would cause great ease to the distressed Americans.[37] On the next page, the Friday/Saturday post, it heads the paper with the America section with a statement by the merchants of New York. Over 200 New York merchants resolved to refrain from shipping, selling, or buying from England until the Stamp Act was repealed, with retailers agreeing not to sell such goods.[38] Later in the America section, the stamps are written about as a hot potato item - neither the Lieutenant Governor nor an officer named Captain Kelly, both of whom had jurisdiction over stamps, wanted the stamps on account of the dissatisfaction of the colonists, and so they agreed to deposit the stamps in New York City Hall in order to appease the people. However, on this matter, the *Intelligencer* included a sentence that inherently solidified the *Leeds Intelligencer* as both sympathetic to the American cause and influential in their writing.

In the printer's own words, the paper read: "We must not omit mentioning one more circumstance, which is an alarming one."[39] This sentence was unnecessary, as was the following information to which it referred, being that the cannons at the forts near the harbor and many of the merchants' cannons were spiked (the fuse was rendered unusable) so that they could not be used by the colonists to take the stamps by force.[40] This sentence and info were in their own paragraph at the end of the America section report - again reinforcing the notion that they were tacked on as a comment. The strong language in that initial sentence indicated the disapproval the printer had towards the hindrance of the colonists' ability to gain ahold of the stamps. After this, the *Intelligencer*

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[37] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, December 17, 1765, 1. *British Library Newspapers*
[38] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY's POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, December 17, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*
[39] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY's POSTS." December 17, 1765, 2.
[40] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY's POSTS." December 17, 1765, 2.

periodically dropped strong, influential language into their reports, as well as extra content that furthered the American agenda.

One of these unique pieces of content was printed the very next week on December 24, 1765 on a fourth page - part of a work called *A Defense of the New England Charters,* by Jer Dummer, who was a colonial political actor, and printed posthumously. The strong arguments contained in the pamphlet were freely printed by the *Leeds Intelligencer*, in such a way that they had to break format and add a dedicated part of an extra page to it. Some excerpts of the *Defense* were as follows: "The proper nursery for this plant is a free Government, where the laws are sacred, property secure, and justice not only impartially but expeditiously distributed. For to what purpose shall the Merchant expose his estate to the danger of the tea, the enemy, and many more accidents, if after all he cannot save it at home from rapine and violence?" going on to say, "As this is evident, so is it that whatever injures the trade of the Plantations, must in proportion affect Great-Britan, the source and centre of their commerce… The blow then may strike the Colonies first, but it comes home at last, and falls heaviest on ourselves."[41] Dummer was a native to the colonies, but moved to England and became involved in politics as an agent for the Massachusetts Bay Colony - it was after this that he wrote his defense of the charters.

As someone who had standing in Britain and the British political sector, the pamphlet can be seen as a British colonial defense, a middleground where parties on both sides of the Atlantic could see reflections of themselves - Dummer, born in Massachusetts, writes as a Briton, referring to England as "home" in the essay. By showing pro-American arguments from a British actor, the *Intelligencer* was placing views in their readers' home field. The post was also pro-trade, an increasingly clear sentiment pushed by the *Leeds Intelligencer* over the coming months. This consistently repeated sentiment for trade is bound with British identity and commonly shared across the Atlantic, explaining why the decay of trade and the harmful effects of the utter shutdown of

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[41] "A Defence of the New England Charters. By Jer. Dummer." *Leeds Intelligencer*, December 24, 1765, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

American trade with Britain began to be a central issue and pro-repeal argument by the *Intelligencer.*

By the end of the year, the American melting pot was boiling over with the Stamp Act. In the final post from 1765, under the London section, Philadelphia was abstaining from importing from Great Britain, and they pushed an argument that that no money should be paid by Americans to the British, either in debt or in lawsuit. In a letter from Charlestown, it was written that "Our whole attention is now engrossed with the effects of the Stamp Act. We are become as great sons of liberty as the New Englanders."[42] This is followed by a detailed account of violent protest, but the fact that the paper printed that portion of the letter and did not omit the mention of the name "sons of liberty" was paramount that even in small ways the *Intelligencer* was making tweaks (or not making tweaks) to not condemn the American cause, but bring the disturbances into light.

On January 7, 1766, the *Intelligencer*, for the third time (at the end of the London section on the second column), shares that a collection of merchants have refrained from shipping from Britain, framing America's growing separation from the mother country further by reporting as well that America was becoming self-sufficient and making their own clothes, becoming their own manufacturers. Although independence would not be seriously considered until 1775, the *Intelligencer* was growing cautious of the extent to which the riots were continuing and the effects they were having on British unity. The paper wished to show the fragmentation of the colonies, which would potentially frighten their readers with this projection, wishing them to yearn for healing - all Britons joining hands across the Atlantic again.

The *Intelligencer* ended the page with a fiery letter that read "Don't imagine that your acts of parliament have no power here: They have had the power of working miracles; of turning, by a few dashes of the pen, a million of as good, faithful, and affectionate subjects, as any government ever had, into little less than downright rebels. England and its parliament

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[42] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY's POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, December 31, 1765, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

had the love, respect, and veneration of every American, from the first settlement of the colonies: Heretofore, their hearts were always on the *right side*, but now are on the *wrong*;[43] your late state physicians having, like their brethren in Moliere, *change tout cela.*"[44] The last phrase, translated from French, means *change all that* and is used as a facetious reproof to someone who lays down the law on everything and talks contemptuously of old customs and the like, just as Parliament had been doing with the Americans on the status of their Britishness. Here, the "late state physicians" the *Intelligencer* was accusing may be referring to the British Administration before when we saw a Patriotic government emerge in the report from the *Constitutional Courant.*[45] Essentially blaming the old regime for turning the American colonies against them, the *Intelligencer* looked to this new era with hope that the new government may earn back the respect of their subjects.

At the end of the Sunday/Monday page, we see the emergence of a new, unique section titled "political controversy," under which the printer wrote that the Americans have no tenderness for the mother country because their goods were so cheap, even though they were not buying from Britain. "In short, there is no man acquainted in America, who doth not know, that the Americans take nothing from us which they can do without, and that they smuggle as fast as they can upon their extensive coasts. And it is now plain, that poverty neither is, nor ever was, the real cause of their refusing submission to the stamp act."[46] Feeling comfortable in their newfound political correctness with the shift in Administration, the *Leeds Intelligencer* was now outright addressing and commenting on the political controversy of the Stamp Act, and in doing so would be able to sway many a Briton who relied on the paper for their knowledge of politics and society. Notably, their comments have become more protective of the British argument and more critical of the trade

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[43] Emphasis original

[44] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY'S POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 7, 1766, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

[45] See page 14

[46] "SUNDAY's and MONDAY's POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 7, 1766, 3. *British Library Newspapers*

crisis, articulating here that the colonists *could* pay the tax if they wished, but are refusing. More unique content continued to appear over the coming months, speaking on the British side of the crisis.

Presented at the end of the regular news on January 17, 1766, was a section titled "Political Questions." This section posed questions (all answered with a NO) regarding the members of the current Administration, including denying that they were the enemies of Liberty of the Press, and denying that they devised the American Stamp Act.[47] By including this portion of the paper, the *Intelligencer* was communicating to their readers that they were not condemning the *current* British government, but merely showing disapproval of how the issue was being handled. This was a change in how they treated the Administration before November - with outright rage towards the Stamp Act and writing that fueled the colonial plight. Regardless, the general desire of all British subjects at the time was unity and brotherhood, as could be seen in the ways the crisis had been conveyed in the paper, however both sides were worried that the government would not take the proper corrective measures to amend the insulting tax of the colonists. The issue from January 21, 1766 was headed by more special content - a speech from King George III. King George addresses Parliament on account of the disturbances in America, noting that there is still time to issue orders to colonial governors and command forces in America, trusting Parliament to "preserve those Constitutional Rights over the Colonies, and to restore to them that harmony and tranquility" that has been interrupted by riots.[48]

King George here was essentially saying that it was up to lower forms of government to fix the Stamp Act Crisis and subdue the rebellion, and by the *Intelligencer* printing this, their readers could see that even the king wanted the American disturbances solved, and that having such pro-American opinions as were being shared in the *Leeds Intelligencer,* then, were not contrary to being obedient subjects and loyal to the king, both seen as primary British values, even by Americans. The king's address

[47] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 14, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*
[48] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 21, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

may also have helped to manufacture loyalty, unity, patriotism, and even sympathy surrounding the turbulence on the colonial front. At the top of the London section from the same page, and excerpt of a letter from Birmingham was posted, saying, "The American Stamp Duty is matter of serious concern hereabouts; it is supposed, if it be not soon repealed, twenty thousand people in this town, and the neighbourhood, will be destitute of necessary support."[49] Great Britain was beginning to feel the effects of the colonies' separation and protest, inflating the issue now not to be just overseas, but a homefront predicament.

The Stamp Act crisis was gaining traction, and the more the British became concerned, the more the paper contained Stamp Act news - the entire third column from this page was dedicated to the Stamp Act. There was even a rare fourth page in this issue, with the main section titled "The Conduct of the American Colonists towards the Mother Country, in some Particulars, censured," and was essentially a pro-British-trade account by the printer of the smuggling and illicit trade done by America, and a grievance that the Americans won't pay the Stamp tax even though they are capable.[50] We see here again, the true reason behind the abstention of the tax - the Americans believe it is unfairly laid and enforced and so simply do not pay it, thinking it better for them to tax themselves. The *Intelligencer* was not as kind to the colonies in this issue as they had been in the past. They used the same rhetoric as Parliament used to justify the tax - writing how Britain defended the colonies from France, who would have imposed 10 times as many taxes, and used the taxes to defend and protect America, even saying that England should "reap the just and natural benefits of commerce with her daughter colonies, by prohibiting them to trade with any foreign nations."[51] The *Intelligencer* used rather strong language to describe the North American smuggling - "abuses,"

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[49] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 21, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

[50] "The Conduct of the American Colonists towards the Mother Country, in some Particulars, censured." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 21, 1766, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

[51] "The Conduct of the American Colonists towards the Mother Country, in some Particulars, censured." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 21, 1766, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

“lawless commerce,” and other such loaded words and phrases. Surrounded by colonial sympathy, this staunchly British argument indicates that the *Intelligencer* may not have been fully on board with smuggling as a means of resistance - overall a pro-British trade piece, the *Intelligencer* was becoming disturbed that the Stamp Act was becoming detrimental to British trade, but because the Act was partially to blame for disrupting trade, the paper still pushed for repeal.

The *Intelligencer* lends a fourth page on January 28, 1766 to a discussion of arguments for and against repealing the Stamp Act. Arguments for repeal include taxation without representation and taxation unheard, that the Americans may embrace and topple the pillars of the constitution, burying England with them like Sampson, America and Americans have been disrespected - “It has indeed been the fashion of late, to treat the Americans with much contempt and foul language; but this has neither been prudent nor politic; for America is too respectable, and the commerce of this country of too much consequence to be sported away with calling names,” and until the Act is rescinded, the commerce of Great Britain and the affection of the colonies will not be restored.[52] Against repeal, the *Intelligencer* offers that Parliament has enacted other polices, such as the navigation act, that have not been disputed, when Parliament discussed the Stamp Act, they deemed it was right to tax America, and in the 12 months in between sessions before the actual bill was heard, Parliament did not prepare arguments against the Act, and that if Britain had no right to tax America, they had no right to tax Ireland or other such colonies, as well as the fact that the stamps may have been rated too high, which could be easily altered.[53] In an impressive feat of journalism, the *Intelligencer* had printed both sides of a delicate argument, and although definitively still pro-American, they took the time to print out solid, valid arguments that the British were circulating against the colonial revolt, seeming that the paper had become more moderate in their opposition to the Act, where before they would only print pro-colonial

[52] "A Short Sketch of the Arguments for and against the." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 28, 1766, 4. *British Library Newspapers*
[53] "A Short Sketch of the Arguments for and against the." *Leeds Intelligencer*, January 28, 1766, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

news, omitting such hardcore British comments. Even still, the *Intelligencer* showed its respect to Americans by discouraging calling them foul names, yet another sign that they did not view the colonists as full rebels, insurrectionists, or treasonous.

News had been dropped here and there over the course of the last month or two that the British Government was looking into amending, if not repealing, the Stamp Act, and, with it being officially repealed on March 18, 1766, the February issues of the *Leeds Intelligencer* were chock full of American news, far more than presented previously. The Stamp Act crisis was on everyone's minds, and the vast, related content in the paper mirrored society. In the Wednesday/Thursday issue from February 11, 1766, the America section was first again, reporting from Philadelphia that a captain had arrived from Barbados and had brought with him a stamped newspaper that was printed there (Barbados did not meet the Stamp Act with as much resistance as did the 13 colonies), which was burned that evening at the coffee house in front of a large, cheering crowd.[54] From Barbados they wrote on the fact that the Stamp Act was endangering trade there, as the tax must be paid in specie, which the colony was running out of.[55]

A large portion of the London section was dedicated to a memorial signed by 280 Philadelphia merchants that was sent to merchants in England, asking for their assistance in obtaining relief in respect to the emission of paper currency, the Stamp Act, and the Sugar Act. Unless the Act of Parliament barring paper currency be altered, even just such that Americans could pay their own debts with paper credit instead of specie, which would not affect England, they would be compelled to drop trade with Great Britain.[56] Once more the *Intelligencer* was drawing attention to trade and alerting their readers to the consequences of the colonies' onset and continuing separation. Farther down the column, the

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[54]"Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*
[55] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*
[56] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*

*Intelligencer* reports "One of the great questions relative to America, viz. That the British Parliament have a right to tax the Americans, is now no longer a matter of dispute. But the other great question, viz. Whether the Stamp-act shall be repealed, it is said, will not be determined for some weeks." It was known that Britain could tax the colonies - a fact that the *Leeds Intelligencer* stood by, however the argument against Britain was that they were taxing the colonies in an unjust manner. The *Intelligencer* settled this by promoting British taxation while still remaining hopeful for repeal, a sign that the *Intelligencer* was changing their tune - still to argue against the Stamp Act, but now for British reasons, not colonial.

The final piece of American news from this page was that the mob was quiet for now, probably because they were waiting for a decision on the Stamp Act, but they could still be raised at any moment by so much as a whistle. They were so large, powerful, and frightening now, that a man was threatened out of town by just a few letters from the mob.[57] Nearly the majority of the Friday/Saturday post encompassed American colonial news, with one of the most notable reports being a one-off comment that the number of men that could be capable of bearing arms in the American colonies and West Indies was 800,000 - signaling a warning of the force Britain may be up against should the conflict have turned to war, as some, like the *Intelligencer,* seemed to be frightened of.[58] The Sunday/Monday post implied that Great Britain was treading carefully in colonial affairs - there were two accounts of orders given to Naval officers to either sail, or be ready to sail, to North America, the duty on tea would be reduced to discourage smuggling, and the Act for restraining North American paper currency would be repealed.[59] However, whispers of negotiations to end the Stamp Act did not suspend three men being hung and burnt in effigy in New York - one of the principal authors of the Stamp Act, one who executed it on vessels, and one who executed the very first stamped

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[57] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*
[58] "Friday and Saturday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 2. *British Library Newspapers*
[59] "Sunday's and Monday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 3. *British Library Newspapers*

instrument in New York.[60] All this to say that the *Intelligencer* was not satisfied, or felt satisfied in regard to their readers, by reporting as a side note that rumblings to repeal the Stamp Act were underway. No, they made sure to inflate the crisis into the main issue the paper was engulfed with. Back when the Stamp Act was just beginning to crop up in the news, the *Intelligencer* mentioned it on the side here and there, but now the Stamp Act was a raging flame on the page, fully swapping places with main news stories, which now were given little to no time or space.

The final news from the February 11th post came from the London section on a fourth page, detailing in the printer's words that letters from New York and Philadelphia said that some merchants refused to sign the papers abstaining from importing goods from England, "as they considered the signing such a paper as opposing the will and pleasure of a *good and gracious king,*[61]"[62] however even without signing they were made to comply, otherwise their goods would be destroyed by the enraged multitude. The *Intelligencer* here was showing how the riotous mob created by the Stamp Act inhibited loyalist merchants who, if not able to use stamps on account of the persecution they would receive, could not even ship English goods. By this point, the *Intelligencer* had backed the colonists when they did not possess such a hive mind, and when they were targeting a non-Patriotic government, but now with the mob at beck and call with an itchy trigger finger, the *Intelligencer* was worried that the protests had gone too far, and were causing too much disruption towards trade and the new government, which the paper supported.

February 18, 1766, brought the greatest amount of unique, framework-breaking content and inherent Stamp Act discussions in a single issue yet, starting with a section titled "Vox Populi" at the end of the regular news in the Friday post. Addressed to "Royal, Right Honorable, Reverend, and Honorable Sirs," this section was a plea of the people to repeal the Stamp Act, lest war break out, reassuring that "You [Great Britain] have absolute power to do right; and likewise can enforce

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[60] "Sunday's and Monday's Posts." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 3. *British Library Newspapers*

[61] Emphasis original

[62] "London." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 11, 1766, 4. *British Library Newspapers*

an erroneous resolution by the sword; but if you condescend to be gracious to so great a people, none but the envious and malicious can suggest that you do it from a fear of their superiority: For what are the Americans in power when compared to Great-Britain?"[63] This section advocated quite strongly for the American cause, while building up the strength, power, and ego of a benevolent Great Britain the entire time, making a case for the colonies while appealing to even the most patriotic British reader. Later on the very same page was another unique section called "Pro Bono Publico," addressed to "Men of England, the Colonists, brethren!" and was simply a quote: "Should we clash, we are shattered."[64] Here again, the *Intelligencer* was crying for unity, imploring their British readers to make amends with the colonies and attempt to be brothers once more.

February 25, 1766 brought a climactic and accusatory comment in the America section, which began in the second paragraph of the paper. It was written that the unhappy disturbances in America on account of the Stamp Act led to the following remarks and queries: If North America had not helped Great Britain against Cartagena, Cape Bretton, or Havana, they might not have succeeded. Britain took Quebec with the aid of 25,000 North American troops, claiming it was for America's sake - but Britain knew better, and that it was for their own sakes. Britain rewarded the above service with insupportable taxes, stamp duty, etc., and by sending the colonies prisoners such that the highways between Philadelphia and New Jersey are more dangerous than ever Hounslow-heath was. The remarks ended with a punch: "Such are some of the precious returns from our indulgent parent for our many services."[65] Although not the printer's original words and opinions, printing them anyway still says a lot about what the *Intelligencer* believed, without using the strong language they had used in January to communicate the unfairness of the Stamp Act crisis. The final page from February 25th detailed optimistic news at the

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[63] "FRIDAY's POST." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 18, 1766, 2. *British Library Newspapers*
[64] "FRIDAY's POST." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 18, 1766, 2. *British Library Newspapers*
[65] "FRIDAY and SATURDAY's POSTS." *Leeds Intelligencer*, February 25, 1766, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

top of the London section, halfway up the first column - namely that the House did not rise until 3 am, and it was rumored that the extended meeting time was because they came up with a bill to repeal the Stamp Act.

With Great Britain's decision to repeal the Stamp Act settled, related news slowed down as the British Atlantic waited with bated breath for the follow-through enforcement. March was a time of joy and celebration - on March 4, 1766, it was reported that on account of the Stamp Act being repealed, merchants of England rejoiced because now business could go back to normal, debts could be paid, and the poor could be employed. Church bells rang all day, coffeehouses all across England and America were illuminated with celebration, and merchant vessels in the Thames flew their colors.[66] The decision to fully repeal the Act was not yet made, and yet, England was rejoicing and the *Intelligencer* was proclaiming it. The printer was eager to show the rest of England how much their countrymen truly resented the American Stamp Act with displays of public celebration, and how happy they were that their government had come through with restorative action, as they had trusted and hoped.

America stayed quiet and hopeful until March 25, 1776, with the reception of the Stamp Act's repeal reaching the *Leeds Intelligencer* a week after the repeal date of March 18th. The celebration in the colonies appeared midway up the first column, in the middle of the London section, and mirrored that of their brothers in England - the principal American merchants created a 50-coach procession on their way to pay their duties to the king and express their satisfaction for the repeal of the Stamp Act. Several copies of the act for repealing the Stamp Act were forwarded to New York, and all the trade vessels in the river hoisted their colors and were adorned with streamers by order of the merchants. Several churches, too, rang their bells, and several houses were illuminated, and universal joy appeared in people's countenances.[67] Finally, at the end of all of the

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[66] "Wednesday and Thursday's Posts. Arriv'd the Mails from Holland, France, and Flanders." *Leeds Intelligencer*, March 4, 1766, 1. *British Library Newspapers*
[67] "???" *Leeds Intelligencer*, March 25, 1766, 2. *British Library Newspapers*

Stamp Act commotion, at the end of the same page as the above content, the *Intelligencer* printed an "Intelligence Extraordinary" section, in which, in the printer's words, general affection towards the king at the happy repeal of the Act was expressed. It was said that his Majesty's dominions were true friends to Britain and would support them against the base machinations of her enemies - reinforcing the argument of the colonists all along that if Britain would just atone for their mistake and repeal the Act, the colonies would happily rejoin hands with the mother country because they truly loved Britain so much. It was also reported that there was a funeral procession for the Stamp Act - a ceremonial mourning, this time not out of resentment, but of respect for the authority of England, a fascinating turnabout for the colonists, and for the *Intelligencer* to include. *The Intelligencer* was finally at peace, knowing that the Ministry they supported had listened to the cries of their subjects and had managed to amend the Stamp Act, reunifying the mother country and her daughter colonies.

Over the course of the American Stamp Act Crisis, the *Leeds Intelligencer* initially displayed the Act as a side story, not dedicating much space, if any, to American politics before August of 1765, whereas afterwards, from August to November, colonial news crept its way into *Intelligencer* headlines, where the Stamp Act was written about with fervor, showcasing protests galore and highlighting often the negative effects the Act was having on trade, which were many. After November, the *Intelligencer* changed and became far more influential in its writing, utilizing strong language, reflecting its Patriotic values, and particularly after Patriots took office in the British Administration, the *Intelligencer* backed down on its fury, arguing more moderately, now not for colonial reasons, but for British reasons, although the main yearning for unity, brotherhood, and justice was still staunchly present. In the final months of the life of the Stamp Act, the *Leeds Intelligencer* seemed visibly alarmed that the protests were growing stronger, Americans had cut off trade from England, and that the fracture in the colonies would lead to separation or war, spending nearly entire pages covering American affairs, updating their readers on every riot, every fragment of colonial ideology, fully engrossed in the controversy as the main topic of the paper, leaving news

that would have been elevated back in March or April of 1765 in the dust. Finishing out in March of 1766, the *Intelligencer* focused on the universal celebration of the Stamp Act's repeal, indicating their satisfaction that trade could return to normal, and Britons - colonists and Englishmen alike- rejoiced with ceremonial bell ringing and adornment of ships and public gathering places. Such a celebration reinforced the notion that all along, the Stamp Act had come in between the familial relations of Great Britain and America, who now could rejoin hands, with the *Intelligencer* stressing that British values and a unifying sense of Britishness could overcome even discrepancies such as this, and that the process of healing would strengthen the British identity by reasserting shared ideology.

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**Objectifying Conversos and Jews in the Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo (1449): From Religious to Racial Discrimination in Late Medieval Castile**

*Abby LeClere*

Persecution of the Jewish community has afflicted Christian-ruled Spain for centuries. Although anti-Judaism existed in various forms across medieval Europe, the Iberian Peninsula was unique, as there was a significantly higher Jewish and Muslim population compared to other regions as a result of the Islamic conquest of 711 and the relatively more tolerant yet imperfect policies regarding Jews adopted by Muslim rulers. Under Christian rule, the discrimination of Jews was legitimized through legal codes, as shown by the *Canon II of the Sixth Council of Toledo* from the Visigothic era and Alfonso X of Castile's *Siete Partidas*. Longstanding anti-Jewish myths such as the notorious ritual murder and blood libel myths perpetuated from below were based on slandering Jewish rituals throughout the Iberian Middle Ages. As historian Yitzhak Baer argues, Spaniards were paradoxically the most tolerant and most fanatical people in medieval Europe because of the region's unique religious composition.[1]

While anti-Judaism was a long-standing phenomenon in medieval Spain, it took on a new, more sinister character in mid-fifteenth century Toledo as Christians began constructing the idea of a Jewish race. Although Jews had been discriminated against for centuries under Christian rule in the Iberian Peninsula, Jews were othered based on their alleged religious practices rather than racial difference before the fifteenth century. While scholars such as Geraldine Heng argue that the racialization of Jews began as early as the thirteenth century demonstrated by cases of ritual murder accusations, Jews were not racialized based on their perceived lineage until later.[2] While the medieval concept of race was distinct from modern racial constructions, the rhetoric used in the *Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo* (1449) marked a significant shift in

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[1] Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 1* (Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 2.

[2] Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 27-9.

European Christian thinking of Jews from race based on religious or cultural traditions to race based on lineage or blood. In other words, Toledan Christians viewed the inferior status of Jews as fixed and unchangeable according to Sarmiento's proclamation in the *Sentencia*. The racialization of Jews was justified by the ancestral and cultural connection between Jews and *conversos*, Jewish-born converts to Christianity. By 1449, Christians treated Jews and *conversos* as one monolithic group while denying their actual lived experiences, which were indeed diverse. The racialization of Jews introduced in the *Sentencia* was partly a result of a popular tax rebellion that escalated into an attack on the *conversos* where Toledan Christians pejoratively defined *conversos* as Jews in which longstanding anti-Jewish myths and stereotypes were applied to them.[3] Anti-Judaism became racialized by the mid-fifteenth century in Toledo through intensified anti-*converso* rhetoric that was justified by anti-Jewish stereotypes and myths, the victimization of "Old Christians," and most significantly, the construction of a Jewish race based on lineage and blood.

The scholarship on the Spanish Middle Ages has been and continues to be relatively sparse in comparison to other regions. The history of Jews and other minority groups during the Middle Ages has also received little attention. Long before any other significant scholarship on medieval minorities was published, Yitzhak Baer laid the groundwork for Jewish studies in the Iberian context. Baer's famous two-volume work, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (1945), provided a large-scale overview and analysis of Iberian Jewish history from the Visigothic era to the official expulsion of the Jews in 1492.[4] Baer's monumental work paved the way for subsequent histories of medieval Iberian Jews and conversos. In *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (1996), Nirenberg focused on situating violence against the

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[3] Kenneth B. Wolf, trans., "Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo, 1449," Medieval Texts in Translation, 2008, https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1043&context=pomona_fac_pub.

[4] Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 1.*

Jews and other minority groups in their local contexts.[5] More contemporary historians including Jonathan Ray have built on the work of Baer and Nirenberg through new approaches such as focusing on inner Jewish and *converso* life and specific case studies.

*Convivencia*, the idea that Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived in cultural harmony in medieval Spain, has for better or worse significantly shaped the understanding of interfaith relations in this region. A historian's acceptance or refutation of convivencia directly informs how they frame anti-Judaism in terms of drastic change or continuity. Over time, historians have started placing a greater emphasis on anti-Judaism and the subsequent "*converso* crisis" in their respective local contexts.[6] Only in recent years have historians started to critically address the racial turn that anti-Judaism took in the mid-fifteenth century, filling in a crucial gap in the scholarship.[7]

Yitzhak Baer provided a framework for all subsequent scholarship on Jews in medieval Spain and Jewish studies in general. Baer's monumental two-volume work is a comprehensive overview of Jewish history from Visigothic Spain to the official Jewish expulsion of 1492. Baer ambitiously addressed Jewish social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual life over the course of hundreds of years, highlighting change and continuity. Baer was one of the first modern scholars to seriously study Jews in medieval Spain, and his work was consequential for a couple of reasons. Baer argued that convivencia never existed in medieval Spain, which was significant because this demonstrated the continuity of intolerance from earlier periods up to the expulsion of 1492.[8] In addition, Baer did not adhere to the popular teleological claim that correlated medieval pogroms with modern genocides. While Baer's scholarship was

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[5] David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 4-5.
[6] "Conversos" refers to Jewish born converts to Christianity in late medieval Spain. The converso population significantly increased following the anti-Jewish riots of 1391.
[7] Historians have focused more on the anti-Jewish riots of 1391 and the official Jewish expulsion of 1492.
[8] Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 1*, 2.

certainly monumental for its time, his extremely broad historical overview made his arguments less compelling and more difficult to follow.

Baer's overarching argument focused on the rejection of convivencia and that conversos were still culturally Jewish.[9] Throughout his historical overview, Baer stressed the continuity of the dominant culture's intolerance of Jews through both subtle and blatant examples. Baer presented Islamic Spain and later Christian Spain as a refuge for Jews in comparison to more oppressive states in Christian Europe, along with stressing that the treatment of Jews was often dependent on the political circumstances of Jewish courtiers.[10] While acknowledging that Jews filled positions of power, Baer emphasized that their places in society were unstable and significantly less secure than their Muslim or Christian counterparts. Baer argued that Jews were forced to assimilate in order to lead successful lives throughout the medieval period.[11] In addition, Baer claimed that the treatment of Jews varied based on the local political structure under both Islamic and Christian rule.[12] In relation to my focus on the shift to race-based antisemitism in Toledo, Baer addressed that the first mention of Jewish blood was during the Toledan Rebellion of 1449.[13] This is significant because before that point, Jews were largely defined by their religious practices. It cannot be understated that Baer provided a foundation in the historiography of Jews in medieval Spain and would heavily influence future histories on the topic.

The historiography of Jews in medieval Spain was scarce in the years following Baer's work. There was minimal scholarship focused on Iberian Jews during this time period, and most works that were published focused solely on the expulsion of 1492 and the Spanish Inquisition of the sixteenth century. The historical conversation was not seriously resumed until the 1990s when David Nirenberg published his famous *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, where he

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[9] Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 1*, 246.
[10] Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 1*, 24, 31.
[11] Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 1,* 38, 42-3.
[12] Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 1*, 32.
[13] Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain: Volume 2* (Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 279.

presented his thesis that violence against religious minorities must be situated in its respective local context in order to fully understand the extent of medieval prejudice. Nirenberg's work was revolutionary for its time, as medievalists had given little attention to minorities and their place in society until this point.[14] In *Communities of Violence*, Nirenberg argues that violence against minorities is not just about their marginalized position in society.[15] He poses the provocative question: If anti-Jewish stereotypes and attitudes originated from essentially the same place, then why did local responses to these accusations vary so significantly?[16] This notion is significant because Nirenberg denounced the idea of a "longue durée," which he defined as an oversimplification of the series of violent outbursts directed at minorities during the Middle Ages.[17] Rather than simply explaining Christian violence against Jews with the straightforward explanation of deeply rooted anti-Judaism, Nirenberg presented this historical problem as more complicated and fluid, arguing that there were multiple factors that contributed to anti-Jewish violence.

Nirenberg uses the example of the "Shepherds' Crusade" of 1320 and the "Cowherds' Crusade" of 1321 to situate violence against Jews in their local contexts while also relating the problem back to the prevalence of anti-Jewish mentalities.[18] Through these case studies, Nirenberg argues that there were factors besides anti-Jewish sentiments that were relevant to these outbursts of violence, such as people's ideas about monarchy, feudalism, and even sexuality.[19] He introduces the idea that the treatment of marginalized groups in medieval society was interconnected with these other issues. Nirenberg constructs an entirely new outlook on medieval anti-Judaism through his groundbreaking thesis. Nirenberg's approach is highly relevant to the racialization of Jews in the mid-fifteenth century, as there were economic interests that influenced the dispute of the Christian

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[14] Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 16.
[15] Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 11.
[16] Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 11.
[17] Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 11-12.
[18] Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 11.
[19] Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 15.

rebels during the Toledan Rebellion of 1449, leading them to use the *conversos* as scapegoats.

There were significantly more histories on Sephardic Jews and other minorities in medieval Europe after the turn of the twenty-first century. This phenomenon can largely be attributed to Nirenberg's breakthrough in the historiography of medieval religious minorities. In particular, there was more interest in Jewish inner life and culture, which contrasted the previous focus on Christian attitudes toward Jews. By this time, convivencia was widely denounced by scholars, as shown by the emphasis on assimilation in both Islamic and Christian Spain.[20] Over time, historians began approaching Iberian Jewish community on a more local level, focusing on case studies and moving away from large scale works like that of Baer. Historians of this period argue that the transition from Judaism to Christianity was more of a radical social change than religious one for conversos.[21] Some historians question if antisemitism in Spain was distinguished at all and propose that it was only unique in how late its rulers were in expelling the Jews compared to other major states.[22] These historians emphasize the importance of social class during the anti-Jewish riots of 1391, claiming that class warfare was also a significant factor that went along with religious zeal among those involved in the violence against Jews.[23] This recognition of secular motivations behind what appears to be religious violence on the surface first introduced by Nirenberg is essential in understanding Iberian anti-Judaism and medieval inter-faith relations in general. The historiography is still limited, as historians do not significantly delve into the nuances of the constraint and relaxation of Jewish rights throughout the fifteenth century. This phenomenon would later be addressed by Jonathan Ray in his work *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain: A New History*.

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[20] Joseph Pérez, *History of a Tragedy: The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, trans. Lysa Hochroth (University of Illinois Press, 2007), 11.
[21] Yom Tov Assis, "Spanish Jewry–From Persecutions to Expulsion (1391-1492)," *Studia Hebraica* 4 (2004): 310.
[22] Pérez, *History of a Tragedy*, 2.
[23] Pérez, *History of a Tragedy*, 42-3.

By the 2010s, historians began turning their attention toward the *conversos*, or *cristianos nuevos*. Previously historians focused more on the persecution of openly professing Jews because they had the tendency to concentrate on the years leading up to the 1391 anti-Jewish riots or the official expulsion of the Jews in 1492, rather than the consequential years throughout the fifteenth century in which attacks on Jewish and *converso* rights escalated. Historian Erika Tritle proposes that anti-Judaism evolved into animosity toward the *conversos* in the fifteenth century, as the *conversos*' opponents believed that there were sins inherent in Jewish lineage that could not be overcome by baptism.[24] Tritle argues that anti-Jewish and anti-converso rhetoric reflected Christian anxieties within their own society, particularly debates over the nature of nobility and lineage as shown by their insistence that conversos were still inherently Jewish despite baptism.[25] Tritle's article on conversos and ideas about Jewish lineage closely aligns with my study of anti-Jewish rhetoric in mid-fifteenth century Toledo when conversos became the primary scapegoats.

There has been significant scholarship on the Jewish community in medieval Spain over the past few decades, and this scholarship continues into the present day. Contemporary historians are more interested in exploring more specific case studies relating to medieval Iberian antisemitism such as the blood libel myth and the anti-Jewish missionizing campaign. These historians also tend to focus more on anti-Judaism within a local context, which is undoubtedly a legacy of Nirenberg's work. One of these recent historians, Jonathan Ray, has contributed significantly to the scholarship on Jews in medieval Spain. Ray's ambitious work traces the history of Spanish Jewry from the ninth century to the official expulsion of 1492.

Ray argues that expulsion was not a settled conclusion throughout most of the fifteenth century and that viewing the fifteenth century as an "inexorable march toward exile" is problematic because it fails to recognize the inconsistent policies toward the Jews throughout the

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[24] Erika Tritle, "Anti-Judaism and a Hermeneutic of the Flesh: A Converso Debate in Fifteenth-Century Spain," *Church History and Religious Culture* 95, no. 2-3 (2015): 201, .

[25] Tritle, "Anti-Judaism and a Hermeneutic of the Flesh," 193.

century.[26] Similarly to other historians, Ray asserts that the anti-Jewish fervor of zealous Christians was replaced by animosity toward the conversos, which is essential in understanding the change in Jewish persecution during the fifteenth century.[27] He convincingly argues that the so-called "*converso* crisis" was the most significant historical phenomenon of fifteenth century Spain and that the problem of integrating them into society was of utmost concern to "Old Christians" who were anxious about the flexibility in religious boundaries as a result of the mass conversion of Jews following the infamous anti-Jewish riots of 1391.[28]

The scholarship on Jews in medieval Spain has evolved over the years from broad historical overviews to more specialized works in which studies are more localized and focused on shorter chronologies. Despite the increase in scholarship on the Iberian Jewish community, the origins of biological racism in regards to Jews are only briefly mentioned by historians even though it is an essential component in the evolution of Iberian anti-Judaism. Departing from the arguments of previous historians, I focus on the shift to race-based antisemitism in Castile by using the case study of Toledo, a topic that fewer scholars have explored.[29] The origins of race-based antisemitism also fit into the larger body of scholarship that explores how European Christians defined and marginalized ethnic and religious groups they negatively defined as "other." This new obsession with blood and lineage beginning in the late Spanish Middle Ages would become a key facet in antisemitic ideology moving forward and would have a far-reaching impact.

The racialization of Jews in late medieval Castile cannot be understood without studying earlier Iberian legislative texts which defined the social and political status of the Jewish community. Therefore, the

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[26] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 225.
[27] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 226.
[28] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 248.
[29] Race scholar Adam Hochman argues that a modern concept of race as he defines it appeared in the late Middle Ages, specifically in mid-fifteenth century Spain due to the biological turn in anti-Jewish beliefs; Adam Hochman, "Is 'RACE' MODERN? Disambiguating the Question," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 16, no. 2 (2019): 648, 650-2, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X19000286.

*Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo* (638), the *Lex Visigothorum* (654-81) and Alfonso X's *Siete Partidas* (1265) must be taken into consideration.[30] These legal codes from the early and high Middle Ages reveal Iberian Christian anti-Jewish sentiments from two different political regimes. Although the Visigoths and the Castilians were both Christian, their policies regarding religious minorities differed. In addition, there were hundreds of years between Visigothic and dominant Castilian rule because of the significant period in which Muslims controlled the Iberian Peninsula. Although these laws were not necessarily enforced, they still reflect a pervasive dominant ideology of anti-Judaism coming from Christian governments.

Anti-Jewish and anti-convert rhetoric on the basis of religion in the Iberian Peninsula can be traced back as early as the Visigothic era in the seventh century. Visigothic secular and Catholic authorities were blatantly antagonistic toward the Jews and used impassioned language to attack Jewish life. In 638, a Toledan church council led by Visigothic king Khintila in the *Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo* argued that so-called Jewish "superstitions" must be eliminated and conveyed that the Jewish faith should be eradicated in Spain.[31] According to the council, the king legally banned any non-Catholics from living in his dominions, essentially outlawing the practice of other faiths including Judaism.[32] The introduction of anti-Jewish policies aligned with the official Visigothic conversion to Catholicism.[33] This direct prohibition of Judaism under the Visigoths was notably harsher than the policies of their Muslim and

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[30] "Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo," trans. Jeremy duQ. Adams and "Siete Partidas," trans. S.P. Scott, in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable (University of Philadelphia Press, 1997), 21-3, 269-75; *The Visigothic Code*, trans. S.P. Scott (The Boston Book Company, 1910), 365-408, Internet Archive.

[31] The "superstitions" refer to Jewish religious observations that Visigothic rulers and clergy were ignorant of; Jeremy duQ. Adams, trans., "Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo," in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable, 2nd ed. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 21.

[32] Adams, trans., "Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo," 21.

[33] King Reccared was the first Visigothic ruler to convert to Catholicism and carry out anti-Jewish policies in the sixth century; Adams, trans., "Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo," 21.

Castilian Christian successors who treated the Jews as a protected minority, however flawed that system was.

The Toledan church council declared that rulers may not assume their position until swearing an oath denouncing Judaism, in which they would not allow the Jews to desecrate Catholicism and would not succumb to Jewish "infidelity."[34] If a monarch violated this oath after ascending the throne, he was to be excommunicated and was believed to suffer for eternity in hell.[35] This law made it so that a Visigothic king's legitimacy was contingent on publicly condemning Judaism with severe consequences if the oath was not followed. The council stated that this expectation of condemning the Jewish faith also applied to the clergy and ordinary people, implying that Jewish persecution came from all levels of Visigothic society, even if initiated from above.[36] The laws of this seventh century Toledan church council indicated that discrimination against the Jews was socially acceptable.

Similarly to the Toledan church canon, the *Lex Visigothorum* presented legislation that specifically attacked Jews. While outlawing and condemning Judaism was the main focus of the Toledan church council, the *Lex Visigothorum*, compiled from 654 to 681, was more concerned with Jewish-born converts to Christianity. The law code stated that people born Jewish could not testify against traditional Christians in court, regardless of whether or not they converted to Christianity.[37] Descendants of converts were required to be examined by a priest, a judge, or the king himself to confirm their character and devotion to Christianity in order to testify alongside traditional Christians.[38] The strict requirements imposed on converts where they had to be assessed by a member of the Christian elite demonstrates how converts were looked on with suspicion. In

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[34] Adams, trans., "Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo," 23.
[35] Adams, trans., "Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo," 23.
[36] Adams, trans., "Canon III of the Sixth Council of Toledo," 23.
[37] Jeremy duQ. Adams and Jacob R. Marcus, trans., "Selections from the *Lex Visigothorum*," in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable, 2nd ed. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 24.
[38] Adams and Marcus, trans., "Selections from the *Lex Visigothorum*," 24.

addition, Jews or converts were explicitly prohibited from prolonging their own baptism or that of another Jew.[39] This demonstrates that converting to Christianity was expected for Jews in Visigothic Spain, even though they would continue to face prejudice after conversion. The *Lex Visigothorum* reveals that Jews and converts were viewed as essentially the same, with an inferior legal status compared to that of traditional Christians in Visigothic society. The same rhetorical devices of prohibiting Jews and converts from participating in civic life, particularly the law in which Jews and converts could not testify against Christians, would be used throughout the Middle Ages into the fifteenth century, including in the *Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo* (1449). While Jews and converts from Judaism were certainly treated as inferior in comparison to their Christian counterparts under Visigothic rule, the Visigoths did not use language that defined Jews and converts based on racial ideas.

Christian legislation marginalizing the Jewish community continued in the kingdom of Castile. Alfonso X's thirteenth century *Siete Partidas* established the subordinate legal and social status of Jews and converts from Judaism; however, his policies were more lenient regarding the Jews than the Visigoths in a few ways. According to the law code, Jews were allowed to freely practice their faith without fear under the condition that they do not speak out against Christianity, but emphasized that Jews should absolutely not preach or attempt to convert any Christians.[40] While this law also applied to Christians who were not permitted to convert Jews through violence, Christians were still encouraged to preach to Jews with the ultimate goal of conversion, revealing a clear double standard.[41] Jews who violated this law would be put to death and their property confiscated.[42] This law reflected the state's desire to convert the Jews through its language regarding the treatment of converts that emphasized their legal rights and efforts to assimilate them

[39] Adams and Marcus, trans., "Selections from the *Lex Visigothorum*," 26.
[40] S.P. Scott, trans., "*Siete Partidas*," in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable, 2nd ed. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 399.
[41] Scott, trans., "*Siete Partidas*," 401.
[42] Scott, trans., "*Siete Partidas*," 399.

into Hispano-Christian society. The legislation stressed that converts to Christianity should be treated with honor and dignity by all subjects and that no one should insult them or their descendants.[43] Additionally, converts were still allowed to hold the same offices and titles as traditional Christians.[44] The legal and social recognition of converts and their children in the *Siete Partidas* is significant because it established the possibility for converts to be perceived as true Christians without being defined by their Jewish lineage, which would not be the case by the fifteenth century.

Disturbing false myths about Jews were referred to in the *Siete Partidas*. For centuries throughout the Middle Ages, anti-Jewish sentiments were commonplace among ordinary people in Spain in the form of ritual murder and blood libel accusations.[45] In the ritual murder accusation, Christians claimed without evidence that Jews would kidnap Christian children and crucify them to mock the crucifixion of Christ.[46] The longstanding blood libel myth claimed that Jews consumed the blood of Christians during Passover in order to fulfill their religious rituals, also without any evidence.[47] Essentially, these myths were used as a justification for violence against Jews. The *Siete Partidas* legitimized the ritual murder myth circulating throughout Castile among the lower classes by confirming the rumor that Jews kidnap Christian children and crucify them on Good Friday to fulfill their religious rituals with the malicious intention of mocking Catholicism.[48] The acknowledgement of anti-Jewish myths in Alfonso X's law code reveals how widespread they really were and in turn promoted these malicious rumors to a population that already believed them. The inclusion of these popular accusations in the *Siete*

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[43] Scott, trans., "*Siete Partidas*," 401.
[44] Scott, trans., "*Siete Partidas*," 401.
[45] The first known popular anti-Jewish myth accusing Jews of kidnapping Christian children originated in twelfth century England and France, and would become widespread throughout medieval Europe; Francois Soyer, "Jews and the child murder libel in the medieval Iberian Peninsula: European trends and Iberian peculiarities," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 13, no. 3 (2021): 310.
[46] Soyer, "Jews and the child murder libel in the medieval Iberian Peninsula," 310.
[47] Soyer, "Jews and the child murder libel in the medieval Iberian Peninsula," 310.
[48] Scott, trans., "*Siete Partidas*," 399.

*Partidas* signaled that the Castilian crown was moving away from traditionally defending their Jewish subjects in favor of appealing to the indignant Christian masses.[49]

In terms of popular violence, Iberian Jews faced various attacks by Christians which were organized at the grassroots level while simultaneously receiving royal protection from those attacks throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Jewish communities were viciously attacked on an unprecedented scale never seen before in Spain in the summer of 1391.[50] These assaults quickly spread to various urban centers throughout Castile, Aragon, and Valencia where Christians across social classes participated in violence against their Jewish neighbors. The Christian mobs destroyed entire aspects of Jewish life including homes, businesses, and personal belongings. The Christian mobs violently forced Jews to choose between conversion or death. In the outbreak of violence, most Jews were murdered, fled Spain, or were forced to convert to Christianity.[51] While royal and municipal authorities attempted to intervene to protect their Jewish subjects, these efforts were overwhelmingly unsuccessful. This is partly because popular violence directed at minority groups was also an attack on royal authority, as Jewish fortunes were for better or worse connected to their position as protected subjects of the crown.[52]

In a continued effort to eradicate Judaism for good even after the brutality of the 1391 riots, zealous Christian missionaries led by Vincente Ferrer preached against Judaism and attempted to convert all the Jews in Castile in the years following the riots into the early fifteenth century.[53] In some cases, Jews converted out of genuine faith. Ironically, the responsibility of converting Jews was often given to *conversos* themselves because they were the most familiar with Jewish religious and cultural

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[49] Traditionally throughout the Middle Ages, there was an unwritten economic alliance between Jews and Christian Spanish kings who were known to protect their Jewish subjects for the “mutual” benefit of both sides.
[50] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 199-205.
[51] Assis, “Spanish Jewry-From Persecutions to Expulsion (1391-1492),” 308, 310.
[52] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 2-3.
[53] Assis, “Spanish Jewry–From Persecutions to Expulsion (1391-1492),” 311.

practices.[54] The horrors of 1391 and the aggressive missionizing campaign led by Ferrer not only demoralized and dispersed the Jewish communities of Spain, but forever altered Judeo-Christian relations through the rise of a new social group, the *conversos*, also known as the *cristianos nuevos*.[55]

Paradoxically, the massive increase in converts made way for a new form of anti-Judaism as “Old Christians” transferred their historic hatred of the Jews onto the *conversos*, who were perceived as an even greater threat than the Jews. The “*converso* crisis” was the foremost social issue afflicting fifteenth century Castile.[56] The discrimination of the *conversos*, Jewish-born individuals who converted to Christianity, was firmly rooted in preexisting anti-Jewish sentiments. The attack on the *conversos* serves as a way to understand Christian anxieties surrounding Judaism and proximity to it. “Old Christians” were more suspicious of *conversos* who were allegedly pretending to be Christian than Jews who accepted their status as outsiders.[57] After the mass conversions of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, there was little that differentiated “Old” and “New” Christians, which concerned “Old Christians.” In addition, the perseverance and successes of the *converso* community in both Jewish-dominated and Christian occupations were seen as threats to “Old Christians.” While prejudice against both Jews and converts had existed for centuries in Spain, as shown by persistent anti-Jewish legislation, persecution, and the obsession with categorization, it intensified in alignment with the upsurge in *conversos* after the riots of 1391.

Many “Old Christians” continued to insist that *conversos* and their descendants, even into the second and third generations after 1391, were inherently different from them, and accused them of “judaizing,” or continuing to participate in Jewish culture and religious practices.[58]

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[54] Oriol Catalán, “Anti-Jewish Preaching as Part of an Anti-Jewish Narrative in Late Medieval Spain,” *Christian, Jewish, and Muslim preaching in the Mediterranean and Europe: identities and interfaith encounters* 15 (2019): 127, Brepolis.
[55] *Cristianos nuevos* refers to “New Christians.”
[56] Jonathan Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 248.
[57] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 251.
[58] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 248, 250.

*Conversos* started occupying positions previously filled by Jews, such as royal financial advisors and tax collectors, which further provoked the bigotry of "Old Christians," as these positions were traditionally associated with Jews.[59] Some *conversos* did continue to partake in cultural activities alongside their Jewish neighbors and even practice Judaism in certain cases. For instance, some *conversos* continued to go to their local synagogue on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, purchased kosher meat from Jews, attended Jewish weddings, and received matza from relatives during Passover.[60] *Conversos* continued to participate in Jewish customs after conversion for various reasons. Some *conversos* still had Jewish family members, some may have wanted to retain their cultural practices without the religious intent, and others may have still been genuine believers of the old faith they publicly left behind.[61] However, these interactions between Jews and *conversos* did not justify the establishment of a staunch anti-*converso* rhetoric as the new form of anti-Judaism in the fifteenth century.

There were also *conversos* who did not associate themselves with Judaism at all after their conversion. What was even more alarming to "Old Christians" were *conversos* who started to occupy positions that Jews were excluded from which included important episcopal seats, membership in religious orders, and municipal government offices.[62] Specifically in Castile, wealthy *conversos* became connected with the aristocracy through marriage, inciting resentment from powerful "Old Christians" which made its way to the masses who already held negative stereotypes of Jews and subsequently the *conversos*. The variance in *converso* identity and experience shows that the religious boundaries were no longer as clear as they were before 1391. *Conversos* represented this new "middle ground" between Christianity and Judaism, as many lived between cultures, which was looked on with suspicion by "Old Christians"

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[59] Jews who worked in the financial sector were limited to lending to non-Jews, as rabbis did not allow them to lend to fellow Jews; Gregory B. Milton, "Jews and Finance in Medieval Iberia," in *The Jew in Medieval Iberia (1100-1500)*, ed. Jonathan Ray (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 235.
[60] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 250-1.
[61] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 250-1.
[62] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 251-2.

who favored homogeneity.[63] Anti-*converso* sentiment was further fueled by Castilian monarchs actively defending the legal rights of *conversos*, particularly their eligibility for the same offices and titles as "Old Christians," which strengthened prejudice.[64] To "Old Christians," the *conversos* were a significantly greater social and economic threat than openly professing Jews because they were allegedly deceiving others about their true identity in order to improve their social status while challenging the old class of Christians.[65]

Decades of anti-*converso* sentiment culminated in 1449, as a popular tax rebellion broke out in the city of Toledo which quickly escalated into an attack on the already vulnerable *converso* population. Originally a rebellion against excessive taxation and royal authority, the people of Toledo were protesting a forced loan of one million *maravedis* imposed on the city by Álvaro de Luna, the infamous favorite advisor of Juan II of Castile.[66] Pedro Sarmiento, the king's chief steward who controlled the Alcázar, the royal fortress of Toledo, assumed leadership of the rebels and took control of the city. What started as a protest against high taxation escalated into a violent anti-*converso* movement. Elite *conversos* were brutally attacked by Sarmiento and the rebels.[67] They were arrested, tortured so they would confess to the crime of "judaizing," and ordered to be burned at the stake. In the months that followed, wealthy *converso* merchants were attacked, murdered, robbed, or forced to flee Toledo in a wave of violence that eerily resembled the anti-Jewish pogroms that swept the Iberian Peninsula in 1391.

Sarmiento was successful in uniting the "Old Christian" rebels against Alonso Cota, Toledo's treasurer responsible for collecting the loan

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[63] This desire shared by "Old Christians" for a clear boundary between Jews and Christians as shown through anti-Jewish rhetoric reflects anxieties within Christian society, specifically debates over the nature of nobility and its relationship to lineage and merit; Tritle, "Anti-Judaism and a Hermeneutic of the Flesh," 193.

[64] Juan II of Castile was known to defend the *conversos*, as he issued a decree ordering all subjects to honor *conversos* and their descendants; Tritle, "Anti-Judaism and a Hermeneutic of the Flesh," 187.

[65] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 251.

[66] Maravedis was the form of currency used in fifteenth century Castile.

[67] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 252-3.

who also happened to be a *converso*, and Álvaro de Luna, who was seen as sympathetic toward the Jews and *conversos*.[68] Cota was representative of the rising social status of the *conversos* who replaced Jews in financial positions, which the rebels exploited to their advantage to condemn all *conversos*. As the fifteenth century progressed, Christian resentment of the *conversos* grew because of their success in assimilating into society through their attainment of important positions, even after the devastation of 1391 and the intense missionizing campaign of the early 1400s. Christians increasingly saw this emerging social class as a threat to their political and economic power, and retaliated by claiming that *conversos* were inherently Jewish in order to discredit them. "Old Christians" imposed a racial framework onto *conversos* and Jews to legitimize their blatant discrimination against these groups.

This shift toward race-based antisemitism is illustrated in the *Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo* (1449). The *Sentencia* was written by Sarmiento and the Christian rebels in the midst of the rebellion as a response to Juan II threatening to send his military into Toledo if unrest continued.[69] The petition called for the removal and barring of *conversos* from all public and private offices, reflecting the animosities against *conversos* of rising status. The *Sentencia* brought attention to the rebels' demands against the forced loan on the city, but more significantly, presented their argument on why *conversos* should be excluded from civic life based on their Jewish lineage and religious practices. Sarmiento made a case for the Toledan rebels who were attempting to oust the city tax collector, Cota, by arguing that *conversos* were incompetent by pejoratively asserting that all *conversos* were indeed Jewish, despite their adoption of Christianity. Sarmiento insisted that the *conversos* were Jews in disguise, reflecting Christians anxieties surrounding *conversos* who were suspected of practicing Judaism within their communities. In the eyes of the Christian rebels, Sarmiento's anti-*converso* argument was the answer to their plight, as they blamed Cota and subsequently all Castilian *conversos* for the royal tax imposed on Toledo. Rather than fighting against de Luna and the king, the people most responsible for initiating the

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[68] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 252.
[69] Ray, *Jewish Life in Medieval Spain*, 252-3.

tax, the rebels attacked the already vulnerable *conversos*. Sarmiento used provocative language that victimized the "Old Christians" to cultivate a sense of unity against the *conversos* and invoked traditional anti-Jewish myths and stereotypes. Most significantly, he characterized *conversos* as Jews, emphasizing the importance of lineage which marked the introduction of race-based antisemitism.

In his petition, Sarmiento used extremely hostile, defensive rhetoric which victimized the "Old Christians," which provided them with an imagined unity against the *conversos*. Sarmiento heavily exaggerated the alleged problems that "Old Christians" faced as a result of the increase in *conversos* and their success in society. This hatred of successful *conversos* who experienced upward mobility in their newfound government positions is demonstrated through condemning Álvaro de Luna, the court favorite viewed as a Jewish and *converso* sympathizer, and his so-called "followers" and "allies" who were referred to as the enemies of the "Old Christians."[70]

The *Sentencia* invoked popular anti-Jewish myths and stereotypes that had been employed in earlier Iberian texts, but instead applied them to the *conversos*. Sarmiento applied a common Jewish ritual accusation to the *conversos* to justify his criticism of them. He denounced the *conversos* by vaguely describing that they slaughter lambs and eat them as part of a sacrificial ritual to ridicule Christians on holy Thursday, without any concrete evidence.[71] In doing so, he gave credit to this false myth while supporting his claim that *conversos* and Jews were one and the same because they participate in the same ceremonies that insult "Old Christians." Although these types of harmful accusations can be found in earlier texts such as Alfonso X's *Siete Partidas*, they only attacked Jews, while Sarmiento focused more on the *conversos* because of their perceived proximity to Jewishness. The use of a traditionally anti-Jewish myth but accusing *conversos* in their place is indicative of this new form of antisemitism based on lineage. Sarmiento also claimed, again without

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[70] These so-called "followers" and "allies" likely referred to Alonso Cota and other *conversos*; "Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo, 1449."

[71] "Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo, 1449."

actual evidence, that the *conversos* stole *maravedis* and silver from the royal treasury.[72] Sarmiento exploited the fact that Cota, the local tax collector who was also a *converso*, by blaming all *conversos* for robbing the king. Through accusing the *conversos* of stealing money, Sarmiento invoked the longstanding medieval stereotype of the Jew as a dishonest moneylender, which further established their status as outsiders.[73] He went further to relay the history of the Muslim Conquest of 711 in which he faulted the Jews of Toledo for selling the city along with the Christians in it by allowing the Muslims to take control.[74] Sarmiento's interpretation of this historical event is not based on fact, but on the fanatical motivations to discredit the Jews and *conversos* of "Jewish lineage" in any way possible.

Sarmiento's insistence that Jews were defined by their lineage in the *Sentencia* demonstrates how anti-Judaism was becoming a racialized, biological idea. Rather than persecuting Jews based on their religious practices, Christians started othering *conversos* based on their lineage, and therefore were also othering Jews through their alleged racial connection to *conversos*. Although the term "race" was not explicitly used in the *Sentencia*, Sarmiento was communicating an early concept of race through his use of language such as "Jewish lineage" and "descending from the Jewish line," which had not been used in previous anti-Jewish documents.[75] According to Sarmiento and the rebels, *conversos* were not only seen as distinct from, but as inferior to "Old Christians." In his declaration that *conversos* were to be barred from holding any public or private office in Toledo, Sarmiento argued that the *conversos* were untrustworthy and deceitful because they came from the "perverse line of the Jews."[76] Sarmiento's choice of derogatory language conveyed the rebels' idea that *conversos* and Jews are lesser than and subordinate to the "Old Christians." The idea that *conversos* were inherently "other" was furthered through the argument that *conversos* were still Jewish even after

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[72] "Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo, 1449."
[73] In reality, most debtors in medieval Iberia owed money to Christian creditors rather than Jewish ones, which deconstructs the stereotype of Jews as moneylenders; Milton, "Jews and Finance in Medieval Iberia," 227-8, 235.
[74] "Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo, 1449."
[75] "Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo, 1449."
[76] "Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo, 1449."

receiving the sacrament of baptism. This stance taken by Sarmiento and the rebels implied their belief that there are sins inherent in the Jewish lineage which put up barriers that baptism, the sacrament designed to wash away all sins, could not overcome.[77] To "Old Christians," *conversos* would never be truly Christian under any circumstances.

While Jews and converts from Judaism had been othered and discriminated against for centuries throughout the Spanish Middle Ages, the prejudice was not based on racial ideas until the mid-fifteenth century. The hostile language used in the *Sentencia-Estatuto de Toledo* (1449), written during the Toledan anti-*converso* rebellion, demonstrated the shift toward the modern racialization of Jews, revealing a new, more sinister layer to antisemitism. While anti-Jewish and anti-*converso* sentiment had been growing since 1391 into the fifteenth century, "Old Christians" in Spain were more explicitly concerned about one's bloodline and whether or not it was "tainted" by Jewish ancestors after 1449. Christians began portraying Jews as a racial group rather than a religious one, as shown by their staunch belief that *conversos* and their descendants could never legitimately become Christian under any circumstances. By 1449, it was becoming clearer that assimilation to Christian society in Castile was no longer a possibility for Jews and *conversos* alike. The racialization of Jews in Toledo can be viewed in hindsight as a step on the road to the official Jewish expulsion of 1492 and the subsequent Spanish Inquisition, where Jews throughout Spain were forced to choose between conversion, exile, or death. Classifying Jews and *conversos* on the basis of race signaled a more hostile environment for Jews and *conversos* in Spain and subsequently non-Christians in the "New World."

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[77] Dissenters of the *Sentencia* included Alonso de Cartagena and Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, who unpopularly defended the *conversos* through their stance that *conversos* were true Christians; Thomas M. Izbicki, "Juan de Torquemada's Defense of the Conversos," *The Catholic Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (1999): 197, 202, https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.1999.0015; Tritle, "Anti-Judaism and a Hermeneutic of the Flesh," 200-1.

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## With Love and Fangs: The Radical Visual Activism of SisterSerpents in 1990s Chicago

*Shannon Mahoney*

Walking through Chicago in the early 1990s, you didn't need to enter a gallery to find feminist art. The street was the gallery. A lamppost, a telephone pole, a bus shelter, or the side of a newspaper box could confront you with a message that was impossible to ignore. It was one thing to see a bold pro-choice slogan, but nothing prepared people to see neon Day-Glo stickers calling out blatant sexism tied to abortion media: "Misogyny: as American as apple pie."[1] At a moment when a Time/CNN poll reported that 71 percent of Americans believed abortion should be a private decision between a woman and her doctor, the dialogue around reproductive rights solidified in increasingly hostile, moralizing, and politically charged ways.[2] The 1989 *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* decision, in which the United States Supreme Court upheld a Missouri law restricting access to abortion and therefore threatened the precedent set by the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling, sent a strong signal to both sides of the abortion debate. Both the pro-life and pro-choice movements quickly intensified their efforts, organizing rallies, fundraising, mobilizing supporters, and preparing new legal strategies, as each side saw the ruling as a turning point that could reshape the future of reproductive rights in America.[3] In this tense climate, even walking down the street made it clear that the country was bracing for the battles ahead.

These messages did not come from a political party, a nonprofit, or a polished feminist campaign with donors. They appeared stapled to Chicago's telephone poles at night, spread through bathrooms, buses, bar

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[1] Sarah Lascow, "The Forgotten History of the Controversial SisterSerpents," *Atlas Obscura*, March 14, 2018, https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/feminist-art-sister-serpents.

[2] "After a Setback, the Pro-Life Movement is Gaining Ground," *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1990, https://www.chicagotribune.com/1990/07/08/after-a-setback-the-pro-life-cause-is-gaining-ground/.

[3] *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, 492 U.S. 490 (1989); and *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

entrances, college hallways, and gallery walls. All bore the same signature: "with love and fangs, SisterSerpents."[4] Rather than using education, diplomacy, or reform, SisterSerpents focused on confronting misogyny publicly and unapologetically. By merging art, humor, obscenity, and social critique, SisterSerpents created a disruptive force within both Chicago's art scene and the broader feminist movement of the 1990s.

This paper argues that the Chicago-based feminist art collective SisterSerpents developed a distinct form of radical activism in the 1990s that used women's anger to raise consciousness, engage in civil disobedience, and disrupt culture. While often overshadowed by more institution-focused feminist art groups, SisterSerpents rejected respectability politics and embraced shock, humor, obscenity, and what they described as a strategy of "psychological warfare."[5] Rather than appealing to men or the mainstream for change, their work directly confronted the misogyny present in everyday American culture.

By turning consciousness-raising into street propaganda and civil disobedience into artistic practice, SisterSerpents brought a new approach of including different modalities to feminist activism. Their legacy lies in the combination of community, humor, and confrontation, a style they described best by their signature valediction, "love and fangs."[6] Historians must recognize their contributions beyond expressions of anger, and understand their work as deliberate, creative strategies that shaped feminism. While much scholarship has focused on legislative, institutional, or more traditional forms of feminism, the SisterSerpents remind us that cultural activism, through art, humor, and public performance, is equally central to understanding the movement's evolution and complexity. SisterSerpents expanded feminist activism into

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[4] Claire L. Kovacs, "Hiss on Passivity, Hiss on Patriarchy," 2022, https://www.clairekovacs.org/hiss-on-passivity.
[5] Bill Staments, "Art Facts: SisterSerpents' War Against Dickheads," *Chicago Reader*, February 21, 1991, https://chicagoreader.com/arts-culture/art-facts-sisterserpents-war-against-dickheads/.
[6] Kovacs, "Hiss on Passivity."

new spaces and forms, and their work continues to prove how art can function as resistance in everyday life.[7]

Using primary sources from the Loyola University Chicago Digital Collections, donated by the group's founder, Mary Ellen Croteau—including street posters, stickers, exhibitions, zines, and contemporary press coverage—this essay demonstrates how SisterSerpents expanded the modalities of feminism by transforming private emotions into public feminist expression. It first examines the group's origins, strategies, motivations, and tactics, before analyzing their material culture. Finally, by situating the SisterSerpents within the cultural context of the 1990s and alongside key feminist theories, this essay positions the group as a significant force in feminist cultural activism and argues for their rightful recognition within the field of women's history.

Often referred to as part of the "third wave," feminism in the 1990s took on new and inventive forms that challenged previous ideas of what feminist activism could look like. The decade opened with the televised Anita Hill hearings and closed with the scandal surrounding Monica Lewinsky, two events that largely shaped how American media and politics discussed gender, sexuality, and power. During this period, a new generation of women grew up hearing that they were living in a "post-feminist" world where activism seemed outdated or unnecessary because equality had already been achieved.[8] Because of this, feminist activists focused less on formal organizations and grand protests and more on cultural production, self-expression, and finding new ways to make political statements through everyday life. Rather than relying on large boycotts or structured membership groups, many feminists turned to art,

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[7] Historians of feminist activism in the late 20th century recognize the importance of new modes and methods of action and emphasize the uses of visual arts. See Nancy A. Hewitt, ed., *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (Rutgers University Press, 2010); Lisa Levenstein, *They Didn't See us Coming: The Hidden History of Feminism in the Nineties* (Basic Books, 2020); and Annelise Orleck, *Rethinking American Women's Activism*, 2nd ed. (Routledge Press, 2022).

[8] Dorothy Sue Cobble, Linda Gordon, and Astrid Henry, *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements* (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014), 222.

music, writing, and independent media to express their beliefs and defy mainstream politics.[9] Rebecca Walker's 1992 essay formally introduced the term "third wave," reflecting a continuation of earlier feminist movements and a shift away from what some viewed as the exclusionary and rigid practices of second-wave feminism. The new wave embraced humor, defiance, and an interest in personal identity, and sought to expand feminism beyond the largely white, middle-class spaces associated with the 1960s and 1970s.[10] While second-wave feminists built collective identity through consciousness-raising groups and public protest, 1990s feminists reimagined activism as something that could also exist in zines, other self-publishing products, galleries, punk music, and alternative media.[11]

Scholarship on the history of feminist activism in the United States during the late 20th century acknowledges these differences by situating 1990s activism within a broader context of transformation, fragmentation, and redefinition in feminist politics. The work of the SisterSerpents highlights new insights into the strategies and forms of feminist activism, offering valuable contributions to the evolving field of women's history. Recent scholarship has worked to better recognize the complexity of this period of feminist activism, such as Lisa Levenstein in *They Didn't See Us Coming: The Hidden History of Feminism in the Nineties,* who argues that feminist activism during this decade extended beyond traditional political spaces and into culture, technology, and grassroots organizing.[12] Levenstein reframes the 1990s as a vibrant and often overlooked era of feminist mobilization shaped by digital communication, multiculturalism, and intersectionalism. Similarly, historians like Annelise Orleck and Nancy Hewitt have rethought the wave metaphor, highlighting the continuities between earlier movements and the creative, nontraditional

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[9] Levenstein, *They Didn't See Us Coming*, 2-3.
[10] Leandra Zarnow, "From Sisterhood to Girlie Culture: Closing the Great Divide Between Second and Third Wave Agendas," in Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 274-275.
[11] A zine is a small, self-published, often handmade booklet or magazine created by individuals or small groups, typically produced in limited quantities and used to share personal expression, art, or political ideas outside mainstream publishing.
[12] Levenstein, *They Didn't See Us Coming*, 7-8.

tactics of the 1990s.[13] Anne Enke's *Finding the Movement* further expands the understanding of where feminist activism occurred, showing how it thrived in informal, everyday spaces such as community centers, bedrooms, zine circles, and artist collectives. Research on the SisterSerpents builds on this, demonstrating how traditionally private, intimate spaces were transformed into public spheres of activism. Along with this, the SisterSerpents brought private emotions, like humor, rage, and love, into these public arenas, not only challenging claims that feminism "went quiet," but also emphasizing how feminist voices became even more pronounced and visible in alternative ways. These works, along with the addition of SisterSerpents, challenge the misconception of stillness between the second wave and the early 2000s. Instead, activism shifted into cultural, artistic, and decentralized forms that were harder to track through traditional modes of histories.

This lack of attention is partly due to the explanations of feminist history, as much historical retelling focuses on institutional or easily documented activism. Movements that used shock, humor, or confrontational tactics have been less likely to appear in mainstream narratives. SisterSerpents worked outside traditional art institutions, embraced anonymity, and rejected respectability politics, pushing them outside the central focus of dominant feminist retellings. Other feminist scholars, including cultural historians and political scientists, have emphasized the importance of taking a closer look at the 1990s. Allison Yarrow, in *90s Bitch*, argues that feminism during this decade became increasingly tied to consumer culture. Although feminist ideas gained mainstream visibility, they were often softened, depoliticized, or repackaged into marketable "girl power" content that limited their potential.[14] This commercialization and compartmentalization largely erased feminist work happening outside privileged, media-friendly spaces. Artists, queer women, and regular working-class activists using alternative, confrontational, Do-It-Yourself, or non-commercial strategies did not fit into the polished feminist narrative, and historians often

[13] Orleck, *Rethinking American Women's Activism*, 274.
[14] Allison Yarrow, *90s Bitch*: *Media, Culture, and the Failed Promise of Gender Equality* (Harper Perennial, 2018), 17-18.

excluded them from their historical accounts and analyses. As a result, groups like SisterSerpents remain underrepresented in historical narratives on feminist activism and feminist art history. Political scientist Leela Fernandes further challenges simplified versions of this era through a critique of how the wave metaphor compartmentalizes feminist activity, arguing that generational labels overlook multicultural and intersectional work taking place across movements. The work of Yarrow and Fernandes calls for a reconsideration of 1990s feminism beyond the narrow definitions often used in textbooks or media narratives.[15] Together, these scholars demonstrate the need for a more nuanced understanding of the decade, one that recognizes the range of feminist expression, including radical activism like that of SisterSerpents.

Lastly, art historians help clarify how art history, feminism, and women's history intersected in the pivotal 1990s and why those intersections matter for understanding history and feminism today. Because both art history and women's history only recently emerged as academic fields, feminist art is frequently treated as a contemporary topic rather than recognized as a pioneer of history. Fields explains that feminist art history has changed dramatically over the last few decades, reshaping how scholars understand the relationship between artistic practice and the women's movement. Feminist artists challenged their exclusion from galleries and museums, experimented with new artistic strategies, and created work that expressed women's anger, frustrations, and everyday experiences. In response, scholars developed new theories of feminist aesthetics, using gender as a tool for reinterpreting artistic production, expanding archival work to uncover overlooked women artists, and focusing on a broader range of women's voices. To do so, Fields emphasizes that feminist art didn't only grow in major cultural centers, which is especially seen during earlier waves of feminism. Historians began to recognize that collective action, in varying formats, emerged in homes, classrooms, community spaces, and on neighborhood streets,

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[15] Leela Fernandes, "Unsettling 'Third Wave Feminism:' Feminist Waves, Intersectionality, and Identity Politics in Retrospect," in Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 99.

where women created networks and new visual languages for making and sharing art.[16]

Despite this connection, SisterSerpents or similar groups are rarely recognized as part of the consciousness-raising tradition because women's history often limits consciousness-raising to its early form, depicting women sitting in small circles in private spaces. By limiting forms of consciousness-raising to its beginning, it assumes that women 'found' a collective consciousness, and while much work has been done, the formation of groups like SisterSerpents makes it evident that women still struggled to recognize their personal problems as political. Since SisterSerpents used satire, confrontation, and shock, their work did not fit the conventional image of consciousness-raising and was therefore left out of that narrative. However, if consciousness-raising is defined by function rather than format, then SisterSerpents carried its legacy into the 1990s and adapted it to new cultural conditions. They expanded consciousness-raising from the living room to the street, turning it into a public, visual experience rather than a private discussion. Their work shows that consciousness-raising did not disappear after the 1970s, but changed form in response to new generations, new cultural climates, and new media.

SisterSerpents was a militant feminist art collective founded in Chicago in 1989 during a period of heightened conservative backlash against women's rights, especially around abortion and reproductive freedom. Women artists created the group, and many remained anonymous contributors, although founders Jeramy Turner and Croteau became known names and artists over time. While only a few founding members of SisterSerpents are publicly known, the available evidence shows that they were primarily young, white women. Photographs from exhibitions and events suggest that most attendees and participating members, despite their intentional anonymity, were white and relatively young. At the time of the collective's formation, both Croteau and Turner were enrolled in college and later completed master's degrees in art-related fields. This background shaped the group's early makeup and the

[16] Jill Fields, "Frontiers in Feminist Art History," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 33, no. 2 (2012): 1–21, https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.33.2.0001, 2-4.

networks from which it emerged. From the beginning, SisterSerpents viewed art as a weapon. Archival materials show this clearly, with members stating that "Sisterserpents are a group of women using art to combat misogyny" and that "SisterSerpents attack sexism in the culture."[17] Beyond confronting misogyny directly, the collective wanted women to feel entitled to their anger. As members explained, their aim was "to have a show for women using art as a way to express a reaction against the way women are mistreated," and their images were "about giving women a sense that their anger is righteous… and that together we can build a glorious army of resistance."[18]

Croteau described the motivation behind the collective's strategy, breaking it down even further by stating, "What I'm doing is reversing the visual assault that women experience every day in advertising, film, whatever. Because you can talk and talk, and even find men who agree with you, but until they feel it, men are not going to get it." She acknowledged that the shock of their work could unsettle men, "Sure, men may see a piece like *Men I've Known*, grab for their crotches and run out of the gallery," but emphasized that men still "leave with the same cultural privileges and power they had coming in. I just hope they leave with more awareness."[19] The collective rejected the traditional narrative that

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[17] Nina Burleigh, "Furious Art," *Chicago Tribune*, February 3, 1991, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/illinoisstate.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/chicagotribune/newspapers/furious-art/docview/283076909/sem-2?accountid=11578; and Barbara Brotman, "Art Apes Life From a Gallery of Success in New York, Guerrilla Girls Set Their Sight on the Past," *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1998, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/illinoisstate.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/chicagotribune/newspapers/art-apes-life-gallery-success-new-york-guerrilla/docview/418568143/sem-2?accountid=11578

[18] Kovacs, "Hiss on Passivity, Hiss on Patriarchy"; and "Art for the Sake of Argument," *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1992, https://go.openathens.net/redirector/illinoisstate.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/chicagotribune/newspapers/art-sake-argument/docview/283185872/sem-2?accountid=11578.

[19] Robin Barcus, "Good Girl or Bad?" *F Newsmagazine*, February 1995, 15, https://digitalcollections.saic.edu/islandora/object/islandora%3A32725.

feminism should be polite. As they put it, "Does being nice affect change? We are empowering women by using humor."[20]

SisterSerpents produced confrontational work that exposed every day and systemic sexism against women through various modalities, such as stickers, banners, posters, and zines. Their earlier work, producing stickers, confronted misogyny in places where the public couldn't avoid it – on the streets. Plastered against sexist ads, telephone poles, bus stops, and other spaces where Chicagoans frequent, SisterSerpents called out misogyny in plain sight. Humor was a key part of their strategy, as one member explained, "If you can use a sense of humor… You can get through to your audience on a different level. If you can make someone laugh, you get them on your side quicker."[21] Through shock, satire, and defiance, SisterSerpents made women's anger visible, targeted, and impossible to ignore. They distorted images of fetuses to challenge anti-abortion rhetoric, created "Wanted Misogynists" walls that named public figures associated with sexism, and used imagery of castration, menstruation, and male genitalia to question the cultural power of the patriarchy.[22] Their exhibitions, including *Rattle Your Rage* at Chicago Filmmakers and *Snakefest'91: Art Against Dickheads* at the Artemisia Gallery, combined artwork with performances, video screenings, and

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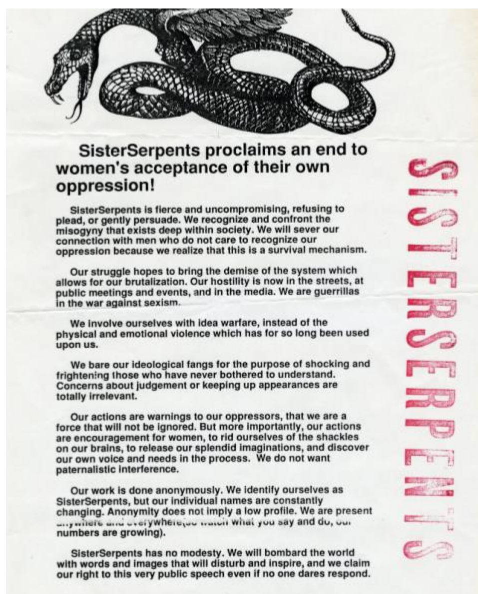
[20] Maritess Zurbano, "SisterSerpents Speaks… And They Have Fangs," *F Newsmagazine*, April 1992, 7, https://digitalcollections.saic.edu/islandora/object/islandora%3A31916.
[21] Deanna Wood, "Images of Feminist Activism," Texas Women's University, 1992, 109.
[22] John Stevenson, "Group Efforts: Women Who Hate Men Who Have Penises," *Chicago Reader*, March 15, 1990, https://chicagoreader.com/arts-culture/group-efforts-women-who-hate-men-who-have-penises/.

"Snakeouts," which were event nights that celebrated women's anger as fuel for collective resistance.[23]


SisterSerpents proclaims an end to women's acceptance of their own oppression!

SisterSerpents is fierce and uncompromising, refusing to plead, or gently persuade. We recognize and confront the misogyny that exists deep within society. We will sever our connection with men who do not care to recognize our oppression because we realize that this is a survival mechanism.

Our struggle hopes to bring the demise of the system which allows for our brutalization. Our hostility is now in the streets, at public meetings and events, and in the media. We are guerrillas in the war against sexism.

We involve ourselves with idea warfare, instead of the physical and emotional violence which has for so long been used upon us.

We bare our ideological fangs for the purpose of shocking and frightening those who have never bothered to understand. Concerns about judgement or keeping up appearances are totally irrelevant.

Our actions are warnings to our oppressors, that we are a force that will not be ignored. But more importantly, our actions are encouragement for women, to rid ourselves of the shackles on our brains, to release our splendid imaginations, and discover our own voice and needs in the process. We do not want paternalistic interference.

Our work is done anonymously. We identify ourselves as SisterSerpents, but our individual names are constantly changing. Anonymity does not imply a low profile. We are present [illegible] everywhere([illegible] what you say and do, [illegible] numbers are growing).

SisterSerpents has no modesty. We will bombard the world with words and images that will disturb and inspire, and we claim our right to this very public speech even if no one dares respond.

SISTERSERPENTS

SisterSerpents first made themselves known through the creation and distribution of their manifesto, laying out their goals as a warning sign for the actions to come. From the beginning, the collective associated their work with the imagery of a snake, using language such as "ideological fangs" to signal a sharp, unapologetic bite to their message.[24] While the manifesto did not outline the specific actions SisterSerpents would take, the collective quickly employed multiple steps, starting with street activism.

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[23] Steven C. Dubin, *Arresting Images: Impolitic Art and Uncivil Actions* (Routledge Press, 1991), 136.
[24] "SisterSerpents," Women and Leadership Archives, Special Collections, *Loyola University Chicago*.

SisterSerpents' earliest actions focused on countering everyday visual culture, refusing to let misogyny sit unchallenged on billboards, bar ads, transit posters, or other forms of media seen in everyday life. To do so, they turned to stickering and poster art, quickly creating a new collective consciousness. These were not subtle. Neon Dayglo stickers announced,

"Actually, women are not this stupid," "Dead men don't rape," "Watch your crotch, men, we've got fangs!", "This is sexist crap: Don't buy it!", "Get Angry… Piss on Patriarchy, "Old Snake Tales: When a woman masturbates, a man's penis falls off. P.S. Keep up the good work!", "Serpent General's Warning: Distorted ideas of female beauty are hazardous to your health," among many more.[25] The humor and shock value in these messages served multiple purposes, grabbing attention in a fast moving, visual culture, disrupting everyday routines, and reframing personal frustration into public, political expression. A reviewer noted that their collage-style graphics, "scrappy and crude," were a perfect match for the sexist imagery they targeted.[26] SisterSerpents understood that sexist media worked because it seeped into everyday life, and their goal was to disrupt that by making passerbys stop at a production of theirs. The simplicity of sexist media made it easy for SisterSerpents to respond with equally direct messages. Because the misogyny they challenged relied on

[25] Lascow, "The Forgotten History."
[26] Ginny Holbert, "Radical Feminist Artists' Show is Funky, Scrappy and Crude," *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 20, 1990, https://infoweb-newsbank-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/apps/news/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info%3Asid/infoweb-newsbank-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net&svc_dat=WORLDNEWS&req_dat=0D798DB9FEAC48A1A876449BD391EE21&rft_val_format=info%3Aofi/fmt%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=document_id%3Anews%252F0EB372F6CE1C5CCB.

quick, uncomplicated visuals, their own stickers and posters didn't require subtlety or layered meaning. A blunt call-out matched the bluntness of the culture they were fighting, meeting simplicity with simplicity. Helena Perkins, a member of SisterSerpents, explained the method clearly by stating, "I like to use things that people see all the time and point out how sickening, infuriating, or degrading the image is… It's such a heavy bombardment… and it's important we stop and look at it a little closer and realize what's being said."[27] The early days of the SisterSerpents and their use of stickers show that their activism was both strategic and performative. By utilizing personal emotions such as humor, shock, and rage, they transformed ordinary public spaces into places of feminist activism, demonstrating that activism could be emotionally and physically multifaceted, accessible, and deeply embedded in everyday life.

After experimenting with stickers, SisterSerpents expanded their visual activism into another accessible and widely visible form of print media: posters. Similar to the stickers, their posters were also designed to be showcased in the public sphere, making their work accessible to all audiences. The collective frequently relied on collage-style techniques, cutting and pasting images from magazines and combining them with bold text to create provocative visual statements. This aesthetic followed the

[27] Wood, "Images of Feminist Activism," 109.

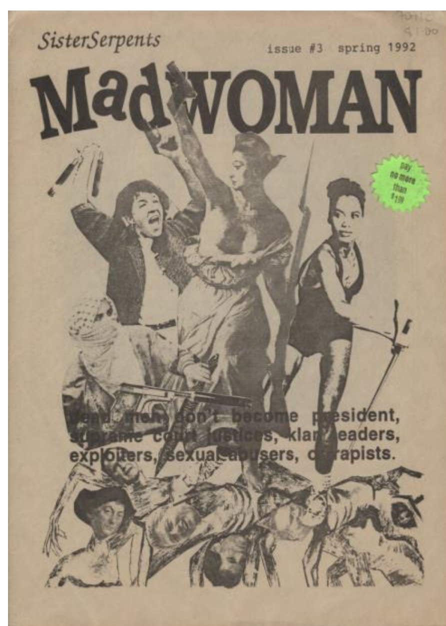
cultural context of feminist zines and Riot Grrrl culture that were prominent in the 1990s, emphasizing resistance through DIY modes.

Even with the shift in medium, the core characteristics of SisterSerpents' work stayed the same. Their posters were intentionally confrontational, using humor, sarcasm, and shock to allow for critical reflection about sexism and power. At the same time, many of these works engaged directly with the cultural context of the decade. During the 1990s, feminism was increasingly repackaged in mainstream culture through the language of "girl power," a phrase that shifted empowerment to focus on the younger generation. SisterSerpents strategically played with this cultural moment, creating visual imagery that was two-fold, embodying the goals of the wider feminist movement, while also subtly undermining patriarchal authority.

One poster illustrates this approach particularly well. The poster shows a young girl confidently playing baseball, but SisterSerpents altered this seemingly straightforward image by pasting a cut-out of a man's head over the baseball itself. The text below reads, "Every

Now and Again Someone Comes Up With A Really Great Idea."[28] By transforming the baseball into a symbol of male authority being literally struck by a girl's swing, the poster reframes "girl power" more than just as a marketable slogan making it a direct act of resistance.

From stickers and posters, their work grew into zines, collaborations, and coordinated disruptions. In the late 20th century, zines emerged as a central form of grassroots media within the feminist movement, providing women with an accessible way to circulate their ideas, critique patriarchal structures, and foster communities of self-expression beyond the rigidness of traditional publishing. While they looked different to each group creating them, zines typically functioned as small, self-published, often handmade magazines that expressed ideas, created and distributed outside of mainstream media. The production of zines was primarily utilized by organizations working outside of traditional, formal institutions, showing how SisterSerpents moved from quick, street-level interventions into more intentional, culturally appropriate ways of building community and sharing ideas. As the group continued to grow, they consistently used an approach that was deeply personal and protective, which some members described as "defensive psychological warfare."[29] Their zine, titled *MadWoman*, mimicked the same tactics and messaging, still scrappy and crude, relying on humor and anger, ultimately becoming




[28] SisterSerpents, "Every Now and Again Someone Comes Up With a Really Great Idea," *SisterSerpents: Art as a Weapon*, accessed 03/04/2026, https://ssfeministart.omeka.net/items/show/6.
[29] Kovacs, "Hiss on Passivity."

a space for essays, collage art, poetry, and cartoons in a format women could hold, share, and recreate. Like their posters, the zine was meant to circulate outside traditional art spaces, reinforcing their commitment to reach women in casual everyday settings. In an interview, Perkins described the magazine as "more alternative, underground, but a lot of people out there are picking it up. And there are a lot of other women who are doing feminist magazines like *MadWoman*."[30] Creating a new collective consciousness for women to stand up to misogyny was at the core of their values, an end they achieved throughout the 1990s. Through zines, SisterSerpents continued the same kind of activism they used in their posters and stickers, turning personal anger and lived experience into something shared and public. *MadWoman* allowed their ideas to travel beyond single street actions and reach more women in everyday spaces, showing that activism in the 1990s was not still, but shifted into new

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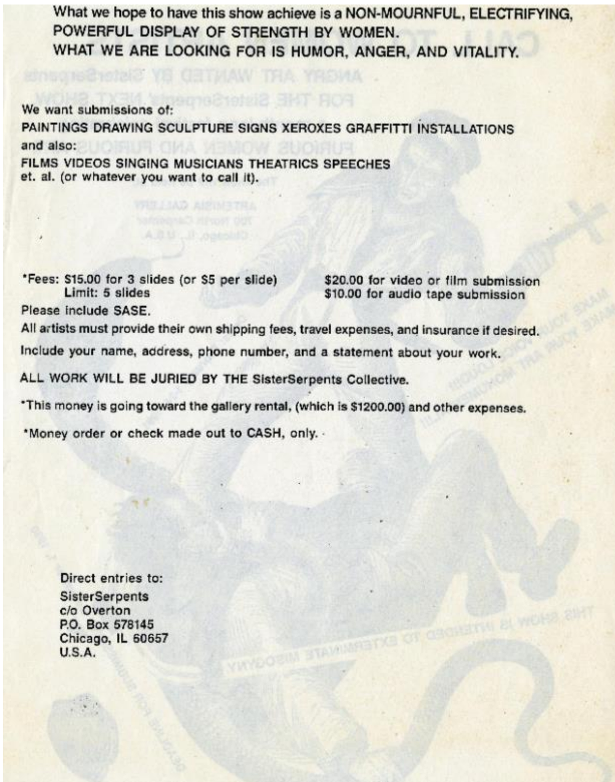
[30] *MadWoman*, Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection, *Art Institute of Chicago Library & Special Collections.*

forms that were just as confrontational, creative, and political, even when they operated outside traditional institutions.

To expand the movement, SisterSerpents regularly published advertisements calling for more women to publish their work. To be a SisterSerpent, someone simply had to be able to "slap together a collage," marking a shift from strict, structured membership traditionally seen in the women's movement to a more all-inclusive, Do-It-Yourself mentality.[31] Their gallery shows extended the same confrontational energy, now using physical objects and installations to attack misogyny more directly. They chose venues such as the Chopin Theatre and Artemisia and worked with independent organizations like Chicago Filmmakers.




Artemisia operated as a cooperative gallery, founded by women artists, to support women artists, and Chicago Filmmakers ran as a nonprofit media arts group committed to experimental, community-focused work.[32] By placing their exhibitions in these alternative spaces, SisterSerpents kept

[31] Wood, "Images of Feminist Activism," 106.
[32] "Art for the Sake of Argument," Chicago Tribune; Staments, "Art Facts,"; and Lascow, "The Forgotten History."

control of their message and avoided the pressure to soften their approach for traditional art institutions. One journalist described entering a show and immediately facing a "fetus wall," lined with altered fetal images bearing "spiky teeth and sinister eyes" beside the repeated poster text.[33] Gallery works such as *Men I Have Known*, a mason jar filled with preserved, severed penises, and *Her Way*, which displayed four pairs of Hanes "Her Way" briefs printed with ink sketches comparing "normal" and mutilated female sexual organs, relied heavily on shock value and psychological discomfort to make their arguments clear.[34] Photographs from various installations tell the story best, capturing pointed installations like the *Dart Game*. Inviting viewers to "take aim at misogynists, pillars of patriarchy, and obnoxious role models," the display is intentionally rough-edged and chaotic, with a collage of magazine cutouts and printed images covering the wall. Faces and bodies of public figures, pop-culture icons, and symbolic representations of mainstream gender norms, all sitting under a row of brightly colored balloons, give the piece a playful look of a carnival booth while countering that playfulness with sharp political intent. The dart game format transforms feminist frustration into literal

[33] Victor Margolin, "SisterSerpent: A Radical Feminist Art Collective," in ed. Steven Heller and ed. Marie Finnamore, *Design Culture: An Anthology of Writing From the AIGA Journal of Graphic Design* (Allworth Press, 1997), 269.
[34] Zurbano, "SisterSerpent Speaks," 7; and Barcus, "Good Girl or Bad?", 16.

action, inviting participants to target cultural forces that often feel untouchable. It captures SisterSerpents' blend of satire and confrontation, their Do-It-Yourself aesthetic, and their commitment to engaging the public in feminist critique through physical, accessible, community-based art. Their intent, as members repeatedly emphasized, was not real violence against individual men but a revolt against the patriarchal system itself, using art as the form of protest.

The use of newspapers gave SisterSerpents a broader platform to share their work and claim public space for their voices. The *Chicago Reader* frequently covered the collective's exhibitions, Snakeouts, and performances, documenting their work and the controversies surrounding them.[35] SisterSerpents also used the newspaper as another mode of activism, turning its pages into a battleground for public expression. In addition to being written about, they wrote back. When Chicago social worker Dan Kuhn published a letter titled "Fetus Abuse," condemning abortion and equating it with child abuse, SisterSerpents bit back with a fiery public response.[36] Their letter, filled with sharp wit and fury, flipped Kuhn's moral argument on its head, exposing what they deem as misogyny behind "pro-life" rhetoric.[37]

Soon enough, the SisterSerpents began receiving backlash from conservative groups like the Heritage Foundation, a prominent Washington, D.C.-based think tank, and the American Family Association, a Christian fundamentalist organization. SisterSerpents saw the reactions, like the calls of "reverse sexism" and "man-hating" as proof of impact.[38] One reviewer, Dan Kuhn, criticized their mixture of humor and serious trauma, saying that banners about rape and illegal abortion did

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[35] Stevenson, "Group Efforts," *Chicago Reader*, March 15, 1990.; and Eugene Bild, "Hip Sensitivity," *Chicago Reader*, March 7, 1991, https://chicagoreader.com/news/hip-sensitivity/.
[36] Dan Kuhn, "Fetus Abuse," *Chicago Reader*, September 28, 1989, https://chicagoreader.com/news/fetus-abuse/.
[37] SisterSerpents, "A Man Who Hates Women," *Chicago Reader*, October 26, 1989, https://chicagoreader.com/news/a-man-who-hates-women/.
[38] Zurbano, "SisterSerpents Speaks… And They Have Fangs," 7.

not sit well beside jokey collages.[39] Rather than undermining their work, these criticisms reveal the power of their approach, forcing us to ask, what does feminist activism look like when it refuses to be polite? They challenged expectations of activism itself, proving that feminist engagement can be irreverent, angry, and artful all at once. The SisterSerpents deliberately combined anger, humor, and artistic expression to transform private frustration into public feminist activism, demonstrating that challenging, even uncomfortable, modes of engagement are essential to understanding the breadth and power of feminist cultural work. It's equally important to note that their work reflected the cultural conditions they were responding to. The early 1990s, filled with post-Reagan cultural conservatism and a new attack on reproductive rights, created an environment where the extremes of humor and rage felt inseparable. As one member put it, they never aimed to reassure anyone, stating, "We wanted it to be threatening. We want people to be upset. Jolted. And to realize there's all kinds of hostility coming from women that's going to take all kinds of forms."[40]

In the end, their goal was not only to call out misogyny but to create a climate where men would think twice before harassing women. As Helena Perkins later reflected, men in Chicago began to second-guess street harassment because they "thought she might be a SisterSerpent… that's another woman that went unmolested thanks to the threat of SisterSerpents."[41] The collective also inspired women to express their own anger and creativity. In an interview, Perkins explained that SisterSerpents gave women courage to speak up, stating, "People have written to me and said, 'After receiving *MadWoman*, I got so inspired, I sat down and made my own zine, too.' So more women are making their voices heard."[42] Their impact worked to disrupt the silence that women have held for so long and to serve as a warning to men that women would no longer be passive victims of sexism. In the end, if their posters, stickers, galleries, or even their existence as a whole made men aware that women were not

[39] Holbert, "Radical Feminist Artists' Show."
[40] Stevenson, "Group Efforts."
[41] Wood, "Images of Feminist Activism," 110-111.
[42] Wood, "Images of Feminist Activism," 111.

only willing, but going to fight back when any injustices occur due to their sex, then their goal had been reached. Beyond that, although SisterSerpents began with only four or five members in Chicago, the collective quickly expanded. Chapters and supporters emerged in San Francisco, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Seattle, and eventually reached England, France, and Germany.[43] Their legacy lives on through replication, women continuing to make art, claim space, and refuse to be quiet.

To understand SisterSerpents is to understand the context of the environment in which they lived. Looking at the 1990s in a broader context, it becomes clear that the cultural climate of the decade helped shape the collective's approach, exerting a significant influence and enabling the success of SisterSerpents' work. In this decade, the media often portrayed women and the women's movement at large in contradictory ways. On one hand, women were told to believe that gender equality had already been achieved, and on the other, outspoken feminist voices were frequently labeled as humorless, "man-hating," or extreme.[44] This tension encouraged many feminist artists and activists to reclaim cultural space in different ways than previously seen. Riot Grrrl punk collectives, zine-makers, and independent feminist magazines such as *Ms.* and *BUST* used alternative media to spread ideas about gender, sexuality, and power.[45] Alongside the creation of new media to spread cultural messages, this decade turned feminism into a more collective, "girlhood" centered narrative. Through the production of new media and the shift to focus on girlhood, the women's movement grew to include more voices, outside of the white housewife norm. As a result, a Do-It-Yourself culture grew in which individuals and activist collectives used satire, shock, and direct confrontation to challenge mainstream ideas about women and feminism. SisterSerpents emerged within this environment; their art reflected the decade's contradictions, and they used confrontational

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[43] Hart Hill, "Violent Femmes," *Denver Westword*, February 2, 1993.
[44] Cobble, *Feminism Unfinished*, 213-214.
[45] Zarnow, "From Sisterhood to Girlie Culture," 280-281.

methods to resist patriarchal narratives, all thanks to the cultural climate in which they were perceived.

Groups like the Guerrilla Girls also help illustrate the environment SisterSerpents entered. Formed in 1985 in New York City, the Guerrilla Girls used humor, anonymity, and confrontational graphics to expose sexism in the art world, asking questions like, "How do you take a subject no one wants to be reminded of—and present it in a way that can't be ignored?"[46] Their "creative complaining," often dismissed as outrageous or humorous, reflects a strategy similar to SisterSerpents' embrace of women's anger as artistic fuel. Both groups relied on shock, satire, and bold visual language, but they targeted different arenas. The Guerrilla Girls challenged the institutional art world, while SisterSerpents applied those tactics to everyday misogyny in Chicago's streets, papers, and public spaces. Seeing them together highlights the broader movement of feminist visual activism in the late 1980s and 1990s, and shows that SisterSerpents belonged to a larger cultural shift that used art to confront gendered power directly.

SisterSerpents' approach to feminist expression can be understood as a continuation of earlier feminist strategies, particularly consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising was an important method of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, where small groups of women met in homes, community centers, and other spaces to share personal experiences about issues such as sexism, domestic violence, marriage, sexual harassment, and reproductive rights.[47] These discussions helped women recognize that they were not alone in the problems that they faced, and they were actually universally felt by women. Beyond that, women realized that the issues spoken about reflected broader systems of gender inequality. This practice led to the idea that "the personal is political," a driving slogan for the feminist movement dated to the 1960s and 1970s.[48] Consciousness-raising helped women identify shared experiences and build collective

[46]Anna C. Chave, "The Guerrilla Girls' Reckoning," *Art Journal* 70, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 102, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41430728.
[47] Kathie Sarachild, "Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon," in Redstockings, *Feminist Revolution*, January 1, 1978, 144-145.
[48] Orleck, *Rethinking Women's Activism*, 154.

understanding, which then drove all forms of indirect and direct action, whether political, social, or economic.

Although SisterSerpents used shocking visuals, humor, and anger in their artwork, much of their work shares similar goals to the consciousness-raising of the 1960s and 1970s. These small meetings, where women shared personal stories about their lives, aimed to help women understand that what felt individual was actually part of a larger system of sexism. As Anne Enke argues in *Finding the Movement*, consciousness-raising has often been remembered too narrowly as something white, middle-class women did in private rooms, when in reality women "talked, banded together, raised consciousness, played, loved, and fought" in many informal and everyday spaces.[49] SisterSerpents carried forward the same mission as early consciousness-raising groups, but they did it publicly. Their posters, exhibitions, and zines acted as consciousness-raising sessions that brought taboo subjects like rape, reproductive rights, harassment, and rage out of private conversation and into the streets. This strategy also reflected their identity. As mostly young, white, college-educated women, they knew traditional feminist discourse, whether books, meetings, or theory, often reached only people with similar backgrounds. As Turner explained, "art is the weapon that speaks all languages… for people who read and people who don't,"[50] and the collective leaned into that idea. Art became the bridge between who they were and the broader public they wanted to confront, allowing a form of consciousness-raising to reach a broader audience, no matter their personal identities.

SisterSerpents continued the practice of turning personal experience into a shared, collective awareness, but instead of private group discussion, they chose public art as their method. Their posters, zines, and public events brought individual, difficult subjects such as rape, reproductive rights, misogyny, and gender inequality into the open. For example, the "Wanted Misogynists" wall, an installation that mimicked

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[49] Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 19.

[50] Interference Archive, "Audio Interference 52: SisterSerpents" (podcast), August 26, 2022, produced by Interference Archive, https://interferencearchive.org/podcast/audio-interference-52-sisterserpents/.

the format of police wanted posters but replaced criminals with well-known men accused of sexism, harassment, or misogynistic behavior, and the "Men: Stop Raping Us, Stop Beating Us, Stop Killing Us" sticker expose how women are subject to harm, whether physical or verbally, in the same way that consciousness-raising groups once did through conversation. Their work forced viewers to confront uncomfortable topics directly, think about their own lived experiences, and experience a sense of collective identity. Works like such allowed women to recognize that they aren't alone facing certain issues, that other women are out there and experiencing and feeling the same things. In this way, their art functioned like a public consciousness-raising session that encouraged women to recognize shared experiences. Many women responded with relief or validation when they encountered SisterSerpents' art because it named feelings and experiences that they had been discouraged from expressing.

SisterSerpents' activism took many forms, each redefining what feminism can look like and what it could be understood as. Beginning with their street stickers and posters, each bright, vulgar, and impossible to ignore, transformed Chicago's walls, bathrooms, and bus stops into feminist billboards. Their zine, *MadWoman*, extended the boundaries into print, creating space for essays, collages, and letters that invited other women to join the resistance and create meaningful, DIY art. In galleries, their shows transformed traditional exhibition spaces into confrontational conversations, featuring works that compelled audiences to confront misogyny directly. Their live Snakeouts mixed art, ritual, and confrontation, bringing the same energy into public events, transforming rage into collective empowerment. Even their engagement with the media, like the *Chicago Reader*, became part of their activist strategy, using the press as another space for public confrontation. Through all of these modes of expression, SisterSerpents ensured that misogyny, sexism, and all other forms of harm towards women would not be silenced. Their work reached across class, geography, and medium, showing that feminist rebellion could exist anywhere: on a city wall, in a photocopied zine, or

inside a crowded gallery. Every sticker, show, and headline worked toward the same goal of making women's anger visible and legitimate.

SisterSerpents' work can also be understood as a form of civil disobedience, or a deliberate challenge to social rules or expectations to protest injustice.[51] This strategy has been central to feminist movements, from the 19th-century suffrage movement, which used tactics like picketing and hunger strikes, into the 1960s, like the 1968 Miss America protest demonstration, and modern-day protests. Key aspects include public disruption to raise awareness, dramatizing injustice, and pressuring institutions to change. It does not always require illegal actions, but it does require refusing to follow norms that maintain oppression. SisterSerpents rejected the social expectation that women should be calm, polite, or agreeable when discussing sexism. By using explicit imagery, confrontational language, and humor that many people considered inappropriate, they challenged the standards that limited women's political expression. Their public artwork, sticker campaigns, and performances disrupted everyday environments and demanded attention. These interventions acted as cultural civil disobedience because they challenged both the rules of public space and the norms of feminine behavior. By understanding civil disobedience, the work of SisterSerpents is clearer. They weren't violent or crude without reason; their art was successful because it directly interrupted the normalcy of society. Posting feminist messages in public places created an unavoidable confrontation with misogyny. Snakeouts, performances, and gallery events also reached audiences in ways that traditional meetings or protests might not. Instead of waiting for people to seek out feminist spaces, SisterSerpents brought feminism into the spaces people moved through every day. In doing so, they extended civil disobedience into the cultural sphere, showing that protest could be enacted through art as well as through marches, boycotts, sit-ins, or rallies.

SisterSerpents' work redefined what feminist activism could look like. By transforming private anger into public art, they blurred the lines between consciousness-raising, protest, and civil disobedience. Working

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[51] Orleck, *Rethinking Women's Activism*, 215.

alongside the popular feminist slogan “the personal is political,” they brought all personal problems tied to existing as a woman into the public sphere. Their posters, zines, and performances replaced polite and structured discussion circles with disorderly public confrontation, guaranteeing that all viewers see women’s rage and feel what it’s like to hold that rage. Their art was activism, and their activism was art.

Their refusal to be polite, to censor themselves, or to make their messages palatable was a direct act of defiance. Even though SisterSerpents remains lesser known than groups like the Guerrilla Girls or later Riot Grrrl collectives, their impact shows in the ways feminist expression continues to occupy public space. They showed that feminist resistance could be loud, funny, disturbing, and unapologetically angry, and that anger itself could build community. Their “defensive psychological warfare” was not about hate, but about survival and solidarity. Recognizing SisterSerpents today means reclaiming a part of feminist history that was loud, messy, and deeply human, a movement that proved that even small acts of resistance, pasted to a wall or printed in a zine, could bite back against the world that tried to silence them. SisterSerpents turned art into action, ensuring that feminist consciousness would not fade behind closed doors but continue to live, fight, and bite in all public and private spaces. Their fangs, sharpened in 1990s Chicago, still bite today.

Appendix: List of Images

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## Building a Broader Marxism: Feminist Thought from Alexandra Kollontai to Angela Davis

*Amanda Malone*

In September 2023, more than 1,000 childcare centers across the United States shut down for the "Day Without Child Care," as workers called in sick to protest poverty wages and unsafe conditions. These workers, who are majority women, earn a median wage of only $14.60 per hour. Many struggle to survive even while working full-time. When pandemic funding expired in 2023, many centers were pushed even closer to collapse.[1] This situation reveals something deeply broken in American society. The work that holds families and the economy together is still seen as underpaid and undervalued. This reality helps explain why some feminists have turned to Marxism. It offers a way to understand why women's labor continues to be exploited at the most basic level of daily life.

These conversations are not new. Questions about gender, work, and inequality continue to shape modern life. Women still face unequal pay, limited access to childcare, and expectations to take on most domestic responsibilities, even when they work full-time. Debates about reproductive rights and family policy often reveal how economic systems depend on women's unpaid or undervalued labor. These same issues have been part of feminist thought for more than a century, and they remain central to understanding how capitalism affects everyday life. The link between capitalism and gender has always been complex, but some feminist thinkers have turned to Marxism to explain it.

Marxism and feminism both challenge systems of power. Marxism exposes how economic structures exploit workers, while feminism examines how gender roles maintain social and political inequality. For many women, bringing these ideas together made sense. Rather than treating them as separate movements, feminist Marxists used Marxist

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[1] Kate Randall, "Child Care Providers across the US Protest Deplorable Wages and Conditions," *World Socialist Web Site*, May 13, 2024, https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/05/14/krji-m14.html.

ideas about labor, production, and class to analyze women's lives. This approach revealed that women's struggles were not only about access or representation, but about the deeper economic and social systems that shaped their position in society.

Feminist Marxists have long pointed out that capitalism depends on women's work. Whether it's unpaid labor in the home or low-wage jobs outside it, their work keeps the economy going. Thinkers such as Alexandra Kollontai and Angela Davis show that these questions cross national and historical boundaries. Even though they lived in different contexts, both argued that women's liberation was impossible without economic change. Kollontai wrote during the early twentieth century in Russia, when industrialization and socialist politics were reshaping society. Davis came decades later, writing and organizing during the civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. Both used Marxist theory to explain how women's oppression was tied to labor and class, while also expanding it to include issues like family life, race, and state power.

This paper examines how Kollontai and Davis used and adapted Marxist ideas to address women's experiences in their own times. It argues that feminist thinkers did more than simply apply Marxist theory to women's issues. Instead, they pushed Marxism in new directions by showing how women's labor, family life, and reproductive work were central to understanding how capitalism operates. More broadly, Marxism and feminism strengthened each other across different countries and time periods. Kollontai and Davis demonstrate that feminist thinkers used Marxist ideas to expand discussions of liberation, class, and power. Their work shows that the problems of capitalism and patriarchy did not disappear across time or geography but continued to shape women's lives in new forms. By looking at these two women together, this paper shows how feminist Marxism grew over time and how women helped shape Marxist ideas into a broader and lasting vision of social change.

Historians have long debated how Marxism and feminism intersect and whether the two movements can truly be united. Some argue that

Marxist theory focuses too much on class and overlooks women's specific experiences, while others believe it offers essential tools for understanding gender inequality within economic systems. Over the years, Marxist feminism has come to be seen as its own way of looking at inequality in society, not just an extension of other theories. There is a lot of research on Marxist feminism, but there is less of a focus on individual activists, especially when comparing two from different eras.

Some historians have examined the theoretical foundations of Marxist feminism. Valerie Bryson argues that traditional Marxism overlooked domestic and reproductive labor, and that feminist thought expanded the concept of production to include unpaid work at home. Similarly, Martha Gimenez emphasizes that capitalism relies on women's labor both in low-wage jobs and in the home, demonstrating how systemic inequality is built into economic structures. Scholars like Himani Bannerji add to this idea. Bannerji claims that race and class cannot be separated from gender when analyzing oppression. These works show how Marxist feminism helps us understand how different systems affect women's lives.

My research focuses on Alexandra Kollontai and Angela Davis. Alexandra Kollontai, writing in early Soviet Russia, linked class struggle to women's personal and political experiences, advocating for both economic reforms and changes in family life. Research on Kollontai, including work by Jinee Lokaneeta and Diana Planida, shows how she sought to give women a voice within the Communist Party while challenging patriarchal structures. Decades later, Angela Davis extended this approach to the United States, connecting Marxist theory to racial and gender oppression. Historians such as Manjeet Ramgotra emphasize that Davis used Marxism not only to critique capitalism but also to imagine a more inclusive system that addressed multiple forms of inequality.

While there is a lot of historiography on Marxist feminism, relatively little attention has been given to how it developed across different countries and time periods. Most historians discuss Alexandra Kollontai and Angela Davis within their own historical settings rather than connecting their Marxist-feminist thought. Looking at them together,

though, shows how Marxism and feminism have continued to shape and strengthen each other. Both women used Marxist ideas to explain how women's oppression was rooted in economic systems, while also expanding those ideas to include gender, family, and race. Studying them side by side highlights how feminist Marxism is not a fixed theory, but one that adapts to new realities and contexts. This paper fills that gap by tracing how Kollontai and Davis used Marxism to challenge both patriarchy and capitalism, showing that women thinkers helped broaden Marxist discussions of liberation, class, and power across time.

Marxist theory focuses on class, labor, and exploitation. It explains that under capitalism, workers produce value while a small group controls the profits. This relationship creates inequality, shaping people's economic and social lives. Work is not just a personal activity but a central part of how society is organized. Feminist thinkers added an important critique. They pointed out that much of women's labor, childcare, housework, and other forms of reproductive labor is unpaid and often invisible. Women also frequently work in low-wage jobs outside the home. This combination of paid and unpaid labor keeps the economy running but is rarely recognized as essential work. Feminists argued that ignoring this labor hides how gender shapes economic inequality.

Many women turned to Marxism because it offered tools to analyze exploitation and power. They adapted it to focus on gender, showing that women's oppression is tied not just to laws or culture but to economic structures that rely on their work while undervaluing it. Linking Marxism and feminism allows us to see how capitalism and patriarchy reinforce each other. Together, they provide a framework for understanding women's experiences across work, family, and social life. This combined perspective shaped the thinking of Alexandra Kollontai and Angela Davis, who used Marxist ideas to address both economic inequality and gendered oppression in their own times.

The early twentieth century in Russia was marked by rapid change, deep inequality, and growing unrest. As industrialization expanded rapidly, it drew thousands of peasants into crowded factories where low

wages, long hours, and unsafe conditions were the norm. Industrialization deepened the divide between the bourgeoisie, who were factory owners, managers, and the educated elite, and the proletariat, the mass of industrial workers. By the early 1900s, women made up an increasing share of this industrial workforce. This meant that women's oppression operated at both the class and gender levels.

Employers favored hiring women because they could pay them less and assumed they were more compliant, but women themselves faced unique pressures. They often juggled full-time factory labor with domestic responsibilities, and they had no formal protections regarding pregnancy and childcare. Women were also frequently subjected to sexual harassment and verbal abuse from foremen, and they had no electoral rights or political channels to address these problems.[2] Women's participation in the labor force brought new conflicts between their traditional domestic roles and the demands of industrial work. At the same time, public life in Russia restricted women's legal and political standing so they could not vote, were barred from many types of education, and were excluded from the professions. Because of this, women who protested or tried to get involved in politics were resisting both their treatment at work and the long-standing idea that their only role belonged in the home. These pressures created distinct issues for women workers that men were not facing. By 1910, women began engaging in increasingly militant actions, organizing strikes, challenging dismissals, and making demands that reflected their specific needs.[3]

Within the revolutionary movement, the Bolsheviks also imposed limits on women's political participation. The party presented itself as a socialist organization committed to remaking society along Marxist lines, yet it resisted addressing women's needs directly. Women activists, including Kollontai, were often dismissed when they raised gender-specific concerns to the party. As Stites notes, some party members even preferred a "complete division of labor between men and women,"

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[2] Anne Bobroff, "The Bolsheviks and Working Women, 1905–20," *Soviet Studies* 26, no. 4 (1974): 540, https://www.jstor.org/stable/150677.
[3] Bobroff, "The Bolsheviks and Working Women," 542.

revealing how deeply they viewed women's issues as unimportant.[4] Despite the growing number of women in the labor force, the party refused to prioritize their organizing until working women themselves forced attention through strikes, demonstrations, and independent political activism. A turning point came as women's militancy surged between 1910 and 1914 and again in 1917, including the February uprising that began when women textile workers walked out on International Women's Day.

This broader context is what really shaped Kollontai's approach to feminist Marxism. She realized that women's oppression wasn't just a class issue, because working women were dealing with pressures that went far beyond the factory floor, things like social expectations, family responsibilities, and gendered limits the party didn't want to confront. Her demand that the Bolsheviks take women's concerns seriously stemmed from watching how often the party brushed those issues aside and how persistently women kept organizing on their own. For Kollontai, socialism had to meet women where they were. Not the assumption that equality would magically appear after the revolution. Russia's industrial conditions, traditional gender norms, and the blind spots within the Bolshevik movement all helped shape her vision of what a genuinely feminist Marxism needed to look like.

Alexandra Kollontai's ideas came from a life shaped by constant political struggle and a commitment to social change. She was born in 1872 to a wealthy Russian family, but she became disappointed with the world she grew up in and joined the socialist movement at a young age. She married young but later left her husband and infant child to devote herself to Marxist politics. Her travels across Europe and her work with women factory laborers exposed her to the everyday realities of poverty, exploitation, and gender inequality. These experiences pushed her to think about how women's struggles were tied to the broader problems of class and work. Kollontai saw that the limits placed on women were not just personal or cultural but were deeply connected to the economic system

[4] Richard Stites, "Zhenotdel: Bolshevism and Russian Women, 1917–1930," *Russian History* 3, no. 2 (1976): 189, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24649711.

that depended on their labor. As she became involved in revolutionary organizing, she started writing to explain how gender and class were linked in ways many political thinkers had ignored. Her life as both an activist and a theorist helped her become one of the first voices to argue that women's liberation required transforming society as a whole.

Alexandra Kollontai argued that women's oppression could only be understood by looking at both capitalism and patriarchy together. For her, gender inequality was built into capitalism itself, which meant that women's liberation could not happen without a larger struggle against class exploitation. Alexandra Kollontai wrote "The Social Basis of the Woman Question" in 1909, in which she explained this idea. She claimed women could only be free in a society built on equality and collective labor. Kollontai's background as a revolutionary shaped her view of class and gender as inseparable. Her main idea is that women's liberation cannot exist apart class from the larger struggle of the working class.

Kollontai used Marxist ideas about labor and production to explain how women's oppression operated both at work and at home. She showed that women's dependence on men came from their dependence on wages and property controlled by men.[5] That's why she believed real equality required changing the economy and family structure together. Kollontai also focuses on family life as another source of inequality. She argues that the family system, supported by law and social custom, kept women tied to their husbands. Even after women gained certain rights, they still carried the burden of housework and childcare, leaving them with little independence. Women would only be equal when society shared the responsibility for domestic work and child raising. She saw this as a social problem, not an individual one. This idea expands Marx's theory of labor by showing how production and reproduction are connected.

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[5] Alexandra Kollontai, "The Social Basis of the Woman Question," *The Social Basis of the Woman Question* (1909), https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1909/social-basis.htm.

Her essay is important because it gives historical depth to the connection between feminism and Marxism. It challenges the idea that Marxism ignored women's issues. Instead, it shows how women used Marxist theory to widen the movement's vision of equality. Kollontai's focus on labor, class, and family helps explain how gender inequality is built into economic systems. Kollontai's writing shows that equality cannot exist without justice in both work and home life. This foundation shows how early socialist feminists were already connecting gender and economic systems, an idea that becomes central to later feminist Marxism.

Critique of bourgeois feminism: Kollontai divides women into two main groups: bourgeois feminists and working-class women. She explains that these two groups have different goals because they live under different conditions. Middle- and upper-class women were focused on education, political rights, and professionalism.[6] Working-class women were fighting for basic needs, like survival, fair pay, and better working conditions. Kollontai argues that the feminist movement led by bourgeois women could never achieve full liberation because it operated within capitalism. These feminists wanted equality with men in their own class, but ignored the systems that kept most women poor and dependent. Because of this, their version of feminism ended up centering their own advancement rather than the needs of all women. Kollontai points out that it felt shallow to working-class women, who were dealing with harsh jobs, low wages, and the constant pressure of survival. From their perspective, a movement that didn't deal with those basic realities wasn't really fighting for them. This is why she believed the movement was divided from the start. Bourgeois feminism tried to fix a few inequalities without challenging the system responsible for them, while working-class women needed changes that went far deeper than what middle-class reformers were willing to support.

Domestic labor, motherhood, and dependence: Kollontai argued that women's oppression was tied directly to the structure of family life under capitalism. In *Communism and the Family*, she shows how working women carried a "triple load" of wage labor, housework, and child care,

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[6] Kollontai, "The Social Basis of the Woman Question."

which left them exhausted and economically dependent. She writes that "Capitalism has placed a crushing burden on women's shoulders: it has made her a wage-worker without having reduced her cares as housekeeper or mother."[7] For Kollontai, this wasn't just a personal hardship but a structural feature of capitalism, which relied on women's unpaid domestic labor to support the male workforce. Marriage and motherhood kept women tied to private labor that produced no economic value, while also limiting their independence and political participation. She writes, "Communism liberates women from her domestic slavery and makes her life richer and happier."[8] By revealing how the family functioned as an economic institution that maintained women's subordination, Kollontai expanded Marxist theory to include reproductive labor and the daily realities of women's lives. Feminist Marxists pushed Marxism to confront forms of inequality it had overlooked, ultimately reshaping the tradition into a fuller and more lasting vision of social change.

Kollontai believed that real freedom for women required changing how society handled daily care work. She argued that tasks like cooking, cleaning, and raising children should not fall on individual women inside the home. Instead, they should be shared by the community through public services. In *Communism and the Family*, she explains that "the individual household is dying. It is giving way in our society to collective housekeeping."[9] For her, the point was not to break families apart. It was to give women time, support, and independence so they could take part in political life and enjoy fuller, less restricted lives. When society took responsibility for this work, women no longer had to carry it alone. She also believed that these economic changes would reshape personal relationships. For Kollontai, love and intimacy could only be equal when both partners were economically secure. She believed that personal freedom and "free love" could never exist without economic change.[10] As

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[7] Alexandra Kollontai, "Communism and the Family," *Communism and the Family* (1920), https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/communism-family.htm.
[8] Kollontai, "Communism and the Family."
[9] Kollontai, "Communism and the Family."
[10] Kollontai, "The Social Basis of the Woman Question."

long as women relied on marriage for financial survival, relationships would always carry some level of inequality. When the pressures of daily labor were shared by society, people could form relationships based on choice rather than need. She described this future as "a union of affection and comradeship, both of them free and both of them independent."[11] In this vision, transforming reproductive labor was not only about improving work or family life. It was also about creating new ways for people to connect, care for one another, and build a more equal society.

Kollontai pushed Marxist theory in new directions by insisting that class struggle could not be understood without looking closely at women's experiences. She argued that Marx's focus on wage labor and production explained part of the issue with society and capitalism. But it left out the forms of work that shaped women's lives. In her writing, she showed how domestic labor, child care, and emotional care supported the entire economic system, even though they were unpaid and often invisible. By treating these activities as socially necessary labor, she expanded Marxist analysis to include the everyday work done in the home. This helped reveal how capitalism relied on women's unpaid labor to sustain the working class. This meant that gender inequality was not separate from class oppression but built into it.

Kollontai also expanded Marxism by explaining how family structures helped maintain hierarchy. She argued that the traditional family kept women dependent, limited their independence, and reinforced economic inequality. Her call for collective child care, communal services, and new forms of relationships showed that liberation involved reorganizing social life itself, not only changing the workplace. She believed that socialist societies had to reshape both production and reproduction in order to create equality. She also pushed Marxism further by critiquing the limitations of bourgeois feminism. Kollontai also believed that bourgeois feminists focused too much on legal equality and individual advancement, which left the economic foundations of women's oppression untouched. In this way, Kollontai added a new layer to Marxist

[11] Kollontai, "Communism and the Family."

thought. She made gender, care work, and women's economic independence central to any real vision of social change. Her work helped create a version of Marxism that addressed women's needs directly and treated their liberation as a necessary part of building a new society.

While Alexandra Kollontai developed her ideas in the context of revolutionary Russia, Angela Davis wrote in a very different political and economic environment. Comparing these two thinkers shows how Marxist feminism developed across different systems and historical moments. In the United States, capitalism evolved alongside racial inequality, meaning that race played a large role in shaping labor systems and the experiences of working-class women. Professor Cedric Robinson describes this relationship as racial capitalism, arguing that racism was built into the development of capitalism rather than existing separately from it.[12] Because of this, Marxist feminism in the United States developed differently from earlier Soviet contexts, as thinkers like Davis had to address racial oppression alongside class exploitation and gender inequality.

The United States in the 1960s and 1970s underwent major changes that reshaped almost every aspect of American life. Even though the civil rights movement had won huge legal victories by the mid-1960s, everyday life for many Black Americans still involved segregated schools, discriminatory housing, police harassment, and limited job opportunities.[13] Cities were struggling with no budget and growing poverty, especially in Black neighborhoods. White families were moving to the suburbs and benefiting from homeownership and better-funded schools. The gap between what the law promised and what people actually experienced was huge, leaving many young activists feeling that the country had only scratched the surface of real equality.

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[12] Cedric J. Robinson, Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[13] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1240, https://doi.org/10.2307/3660172.

People often look back on the early 1960s as the time when they assumed the work was finished, but the movement continued well beyond the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act. Instead, organizing became more urgent and more expansive. Activists started focusing on problems the earlier movement hadn't solved, like racism in the North, economic injustice, police violence, and U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Black Power emerged from that environment, not as a rejection of civil rights but as a response to the limits of the system and the depth of the inequalities people still faced.[14] Angela Davis entered politics just as this broader, more radical wave was rising, and it shaped how she understood freedom and oppression.

For women, the era brought both new openings and new frustrations. Second-wave feminism was gaining strength, yet its mainstream leadership rarely addressed the racial and class inequalities that shaped the lives of Black women. Black women were dealing with a different reality because they were navigating racism in addition to sexism. Many of the issues they faced, like unequal pay and limited access to childcare, were ignored in mainstream feminist conversations. This disconnect made it clear that any meaningful feminism had to address race and class directly, because the struggles Black women faced looked nothing like the experiences white feminists were describing.

Another defining part of the era was the political climate created by Cold War anticommunism. The United States was anxious about radical politics, and anyone connected to socialist or communist ideas faced intense scrutiny. Hall notes that anticommunism shaped public debate, narrowed acceptable political positions, and weakened many organizations that tried to link civil rights to broader social and economic reforms.[15] These tensions were intensified by the fact that American capitalism had long developed through systems of racial inequality that structured labor and political power. As Cedric Robinson argues in his theory of racial capitalism, racial hierarchy shaped the development of the economic system itself.[16] For

[14] Hall, "Long Civil Rights Movement," 1254.
[15] Hall, "Long Civil Rights Movement," 1249.

[16] Robinson, *Black Marxism.*

Davis, as a Black woman, a scholar, and an outspoken Marxist, she became a target of surveillance, political attacks, and public fearmongering.

All of these conditions helped shape Davis's approach to feminist Marxism. She was living in a moment when racial inequality persisted despite legal victories and when working-class Black communities were still excluded from economic security. It was also a time when women, especially Black women, were navigating pressures that neither the civil rights movement nor mainstream feminism fully addressed. The political backlash of the 1970s, combined with Cold War repression, made it clear that racism, sexism, and capitalism operated together rather than separately. Davis's feminism emerged as a response to these overlapping structures. She argued that liberation required confronting economic exploitation, racial violence, and gender oppression at the same time.

Angela Davis's early life in Birmingham, Alabama, shaped the way she eventually understood oppression. Growing up as a young African American girl and dealing with Jim Crow meant living with constant reminders of segregation, racial hostility, and unequal treatment. Those experiences stayed with her, even after she moved to New York as a teenager. Her new school was unlike anything she had known. Many of the teachers had been blacklisted for their political views, and they encouraged students to question the society around them.[17] This was where she first seriously encountered Marxism, and it pushed her to think about racism and economic inequality as connected problems rather than separate issues.[18]

Reading *The Communist Manifesto* for the first time was a major moment in this process. While reading it, she immediately realized that it help made sense of her situation growing up. It made sense of the poverty, racial violence, and the daily limits placed on Black communities. The

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[17] Angela Y. Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (New York: International Publishers, 1988), p. 108, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ilstu/detail.action?docID=6767889.
[18] Davis, *Angela Davis*, 109.

idea that exploitation was built into the economic system helped her see Birmingham not just as a cruel place, but as part of something larger and structural.[19] These early experiences became the foundation of her feminist Marxism. They taught her to see race, class, and gender as intertwined forces shaped by the structure of capitalism.

Angela Davis wrote her book, In *Women, Race and Class,* which argues that race, class, and gender shape each other in ways that make it impossible to understand one without the others. She uses U.S. history to show that Black women's experiences reveal this clearly. Davis also shows that class position changes how women experience gendered oppression. Working-class women, immigrant women, and Black women often held jobs that were low-paid and physically demanding, and these economic pressures shaped their relationship to gender expectations. Their experiences demonstrate that gender inequality is tied to material conditions, not just cultural beliefs about women. Her analysis challenges traditional Marxism by showing that not all workers face the same conditions. Racial inequality placed Black workers, especially Black women, in the most exploitative positions, which means class and race must be understood together.

Davis argues that domestic labor is one of the clearest examples of how capitalism depends on women's unpaid and undervalued work. She explains that the chores women do every day, like cooking, cleaning, laundry, and child care, are treated as natural parts of womanhood instead of real labor. As she puts it, housework is "invisible, repetitive, exhausting, unproductive, uncreative."[20] Because it happens inside the home and produces no profit, society dismisses it as unskilled, even though it takes thousands of hours and keeps families running. Later, feminist scholars described this perspective as Social Reproduction

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[19] Davis, *Angela Davis*, 110.
[20] Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 128, https://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0601/82020266-t.html.

Theory,[21] which examines how unpaid domestic and care work sustain the workforce and keep capitalist economies running. In this sense, thinkers like Alexandra Kollontai and Angela Davis can be seen as early contributors to this line of thinking, especially since both emphasized how reproductive labor and family life supported the broader economic system.

Davis shows that this wasn't always true. Before industrial capitalism, women's domestic work produced food, clothing, medicine, and tools. It was respected because it was central to community survival. But when factories took over production, the work done inside the home lost its social value, and the figure of the "housewife" emerged.

She also stresses that race and class shape domestic labor in powerful ways. Black women were never allowed to be full-time housewives. Under slavery, they worked in the fields and the home, and long after emancipation, many Black women became domestic workers for white families, often caring for other people's children while their own were left at home. For her, the problem is deeper than who does the chores. The real issue is that domestic labor is structured as private, isolated, and undervalued. She states, "Child care should be socialized, meal preparation should be socialized, housework should be industrialized—and all these

services should be readily accessible to working-class people."[22] In this way, Davis extends Marxist analysis. She shows that capitalism does not function without the unpaid reproductive labor usually performed by women, and that any serious challenge to exploitation has to start with transforming the conditions of domestic life.

Angela Davis argues that many leaders of the early women's rights movement were limited by racism, especially when the question of Black male suffrage came to the center of national politics. In *Women, Race and Class*, she shows that white middle-class feminists often fought for their

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[21] Tithi Bhattacharya, Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression (London: Pluto Press, 2017).

[22] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 133.

own advancement in ways that ignored the struggles of Black communities. When it became clear that Black men might receive the vote before white women, some suffrage leaders reacted with open hostility. Susan B. Anthony even declared that she "would cut off this right arm of mine before I will ever work for or demand the ballot for the Negro and not the woman."[23] Davis uses moments like this to demonstrate how quickly racial privilege shaped the priorities of the movement.

Davis explains that when the nation began debating Black male suffrage after the Civil War, white suffragists treated it as a personal threat. Many chose to align themselves with racist politicians if it helped their focus on white womanhood. Davis writes that "their defense of their own interests as white middle-class women exposed the tenuous and superficial nature of their relationship to the postwar campaign for Black equality."[24] Their feminism, she argues, rested on racial privilege rather than solidarity. For Davis, this history shows why feminism cannot be separated from race and class. A movement built around white middle-class women will always leave Black women and poor women behind. Davis argues that real feminist politics must confront racism directly and must be rooted in the experiences of women who live at the intersection of gender, race, and economic inequality.

Angela Davis expands Marxism by showing that class oppression cannot be understood on its own. Davis argues that race and gender shape the working class in fundamental ways. Black women faced the harshest economic conditions because of racism and sexism, which means any analysis of capitalism that ignores these factors is incomplete. She also pushes Marxism further by highlighting reproductive labor, something earlier theorists barely addressed. Davis shows that capitalism depends on the unpaid work women do inside the home, such as childcare and housework, because this labor keeps the workforce functioning. By bringing this into the center of her analysis, Davis expands Marxism to include the parts of labor that happen outside traditional workplaces.

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[23] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 47.
[24] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 47.

Davis advances Marxist theory by insisting that liberation must confront all systems of oppression at once. Her work shows that race, class, and gender operate together, and that real social change requires addressing each one. In this way, Davis turns Marxism into a more inclusive framework for understanding how exploitation works in the United States.

Even though Alexandra Kollontai and Angela Davis lived in different countries and at different historical moments, their ideas show a clear continuity in the development of feminist Marxism across the twentieth century. Both women believed that oppression came from systems rather than from individual behavior. They argued that capitalism, patriarchy, and social inequality were deeply connected, and that real liberation required changing the structures that shaped daily life. Both thinkers also insisted that collective action was the only way to challenge these systems. For them, organizing in workplaces, communities, and political movements mattered more than individual success. Another shared idea is the importance of class. Neither Kollontai nor Davis treated gender in isolation. They both believed that women's experiences stemmed from the real conditions they faced every day. They also argued that class shaped the kinds of challenges women faced. These shared ideas became a starting point for later feminist Marxists, helping the theory grow while keeping its original purpose.

Both women also helped reshape Marxist theory in ways earlier thinkers never did. They pushed it to include parts of women's lives that traditional Marxism usually ignored. Kollontai argued that housework, child care, family roles, and reproductive labor were not just personal responsibilities but essential to how the economy worked. She stressed that if Marxists wanted to understand capitalism, they needed to take women's unpaid labor seriously instead of treating it as something outside the economic system. Davis took these ideas even further. She showed that race and gender shaped the working class in the United States in deep and lasting ways. Black women's experiences revealed gaps in older Marxist ideas because they faced exploitation on multiple fronts at the same time. By bringing this to the center of her analysis, Davis helped broaden and make Marxist theory more inclusive. Both women used their

day-to-day realities to challenge a tradition that had mostly focused on male industrial workers, and they pushed it to recognize the labor and lives of the women who kept society going.

Both thinkers also believed that real freedom required changing the structure of society, not just adjusting people's personal beliefs. The connection between their ideas becomes even clearer when looking at how Davis builds on what Kollontai wrote decades earlier. Kollontai pushed for shared child care, community kitchens, and collective approaches to domestic work. Davis echoed these ideas by calling for child care programs, accessible public services, and greater recognition of domestic labor as real work. She also extended Kollontai's critique of bourgeois feminism. Kollontai argued that middle-class feminists would never achieve true liberation because they refused to challenge capitalism itself. Davis showed that in the United States, there was an added problem: mainstream feminism often ignored or downplayed the experiences of Black women. She argued that any meaningful feminist movement had to confront racism and class inequality at the same time. Davis and Kollontai were making similar points, but each responded to the specific realities of her own time and place. While Kollontai showed how unpaid household labor supported capitalism in Russia, Davis explained that Black women's labor was central to building American capitalism. Their work shows that Marxism and feminism did not just run alongside each other; women thinkers actively reshaped Marxism to address the issues male theorists had overlooked.

Kollontai and Davis show how feminist thinkers used Marxist ideas to deepen discussions of liberation, class, and power. Their work makes it clear that capitalism and patriarchy continued to shape women's lives across different countries and time periods. Looking at them together shows how feminist Marxism grew as women pushed the theory to address the realities they were living through. Their ideas also show that Marxism and feminism strengthen each other. Neither perspective on its own can fully explain the kinds of inequality these thinkers were concerned with. Marxism helps reveal the economic systems that shape people's lives, but it often overlooks how gender and family structures

influence labor and power. Feminism highlights those experiences, yet without attention to political economy, it can miss the deeper economic forces that sustain inequality. Marxism helped explain the economic forces behind inequality, while feminism drew attention to the everyday labor, pressures, and expectations that shaped women's lives. When these ideas are brought together, they offer a fuller understanding of oppression and show that real liberation means changing the systems behind it.

Comparing these two thinkers matters because it highlights how feminist Marxism developed through lived experience. Each responded to the specific conditions of her own time, yet both used similar tools to explain why women's struggles were tied to larger systems. Their work provides a long view of a tradition shaped by women who refused to treat gender, race, and class as separate issues. Their insights remain relevant today. Debates about child care, reproductive rights, racism, workplace inequality, and the value of care work show that the systems they wrote about are still present. Their writing offers a way to understand these problems and reminds us that meaningful change requires addressing economic and social structures together. Some questions remain open. How can feminist Marxism respond to new global labor patterns or new forms of reproductive technology? How do today's movements build on or challenge earlier ideas? Returning to Kollontai and Davis gives us a foundation, but it also shows that the theory continues to evolve as long as inequality persists.

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**Britishness After Empire: The Battle for British National Identity Between the Far Right and New Left in Postwar Britain**

*Grace Zaleski*

On April 20th, 1968, Conservative British Parliament member Enoch Powell delivered his famous "*Rivers of Blood"* speech. In his speech, Powell argued that "To the immigrant, entry to this country was admission to privileges and opportunities eagerly sought; the impact upon the existing population was very different. For reasons which they could not comprehend, and in pursuance of a decision by default, on which they were never consulted, they found themselves made strangers in their own country."[1] Powell and other conservative Britons during the postwar era subscribed to the idea that due to the increased immigration to the U.K. during decolonization, white Britons had, against their wishes, become strangers in their own country. As shocking as this rhetoric may seem, the conversation between Britons with views such as Powell's and those who sought to make Britain a multicultural nation didn't emerge out of the blue in the late 60s, 70's, and 80's but rather, they emerged resulting from the build-up of Britain's changing sense of self in the 1950's.

In early postwar Britain, some of the core tenets of British national identity were called into question, and in the course of its collapse, the British Empire was most significant. Since its birth in the late 1500's, the British Empire had been the crowning achievement and source of pride for those deeply invested in British national identity. The famous motto "the sun never set on the British Empire" was central to Britain's domestic and international reputation and identity. Modern Britain had built its economy almost entirely on the success of its empire and on the exploitation of resources and labor in its colonies. In order to fuel its economy and position as a global hegemon, Britain relied on its empire for hundreds of years, and as a result, the strength, success, and reach of the empire became closely intertwined with Britain's sense of self.

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[1] Powell, Enoch. "Rivers of Blood." Presented at the meeting of the Conservative Political Centre, April 20, 1968.

After WWII, a crisis emerged that questioned the fabric of British identity and its position as a global leader. The conditions of postwar Britain during the 1950's created a period of monumental change in British Society. To start, Britain now had to turn its focus towards rebuilding at home after the destruction caused by the German Blitz, which required significant resources and reliance on assistance from countries like the United States. Along with this, Britain's global position of power was no longer what it once was. The United States emerged from WWII as a powerhouse and reduced Britain's global position to that of a junior partner. Finally, arguably the most significant crisis Britain faced was the decolonization of its empire. The collapse of the empire meant that Britain could no longer focus solely on its imperial ambitions but had to turn to the European community and the United States for the economic and international security that had previously been provided by the empire. It also meant that people who lived in former colonies now wanted to come to Britain for a better opportunity, to find good stable work, and to establish a life for themselves in postwar Britain. Decolonization triggered a national identity crisis that opened the door to new conversations about what it meant to be British without the empire and for Britain to re-examine its position in the international community.

As more people immigrated to the U.K. in the 1950s from former colonies in the West Indies and South Asia, the question of identity was further exacerbated, and out of this national reexamination, two answers emerged, based on competing ideologies. While some conservative Britons, such as M.P. Enoch Powell, saw this era of change as a threat to the British way of life that needed to be resisted, decolonization was seen as an exciting opportunity to redefine what it meant to be British to members of the New Left. The New Left challenged conservative desires to return to the good old days of "Little Britain" by suggesting that Britain's new identity should be a multicultural one, where all British citizens could benefit equally from the outcomes of empire, no longer just a select few. This British "national identity crisis" in the latter half of the 20$^{th}$ century laid the foundations for the current race relations and anti-immigrant sentiments that are ongoing in Britain today. Even as recently as September 2025, the 'Unite the Kingdom' rally in London drew crowds

of right-wing Britons by the thousands. It is clear that the aftermath of empire is still ongoing today, with uncanny similarities to the political and social climate of Britain during the 60's, 70's, and 80's, where this discourse emerged.

Historians examining the ideological debate about British identity tend to focus on in-depth analysis of each perspective separately, rather than comparing the conflicting viewpoints congruently. Along with this, much of the historiography focuses only on the years when the identity crisis was at its height and doesn't paint as strong a picture of the conditions leading up to this questioning of British identity as this paper aims to do. It is not possible to understand the full scope of the debates around British identity and its relationship with race relations in the late 20th century without taking a step back and interacting with all aspects of the contributors to the debate, as well as analyzing how the two sides of the conversation interacted with each other after the Powell speech. The national identity crisis and conversations about immigration and race in Britain didn't emerge out of thin air but rather resulted from the development of postwar domestic policies, experiences, and conditions in the United Kingdom. Without having a clear understanding of the social factors within the context of 1950's Britain that built up to the years following the Powell speech, it is hard to understand why these groups of Britons held the beliefs they had at the time, which is why the contextualization of the debate over British identity within this paper fills the historiographical gap other historical works have not accomplished when exploring at the context of the Powell-era debates.

With regard to conservative Britons in the postwar period, historians have heavily emphasized Enoch Powell and his place in British ideology, as well as his influence on the far right, rather than examining citizens themselves. Historians such as Camilla Schofield and Paul Corthorn offer the strongest, most valuable perspectives on conservative ideas and on how Enoch Powell fit into the ideological response to postcolonial Britain, which was somewhat typical for a person of his generation. Camilla Schofield argues that Enoch Powell was not a random outlier with his views of Britishness in postwar Britain but rather a "part

of a political generation,"[2] whose views were shaped by living through the height and decline of the British Empire. Schofield explains that when it comes to Enoch Powell, "When speaking in 1968, he did not speak to the realities of the twenty-first century but to those who witnessed or were affected by the hardships of the interwar years, the bombing of cities at war, the newness of the culture of consumption, as well as the last gasps of British imperial power."[3] The idea that Powell represented a generation of Britons is central to understanding the debate surrounding Britishness in the late 20th century. This is because it shows clear ideological differences between older and younger Britons, shaped by different social experiences as British society evolved in this century of shifting global power dynamics.

Paul Corthorn furthers this idea but more strongly focuses on the idea that views of Britons such as Powell's were a direct response to the decline of British global economic and military influence in the 1950s following the outcomes of the Second World War. Corthorn explains that Powell's ideas and "his diverse political campaigns can be understood coherently as part of a long-running and wide-ranging public debate over the 'decline' of the British nation."[4] Framing Powell within the broader shift in Britain's sense of self, as Corthorn explains, set the scene for debates about national identity. The conversations in the 60's, 70's, and 80's about how to define Britishness after empire came to the front of ideological politics because Britain now had at that point "adjusted to its reduced role in the world order,"[5] for the first time unlike the case during the 1950's where the British government was still trying to hold on to the final pieces of their former dominant global position.

When it came to defining "Britishness" in this period in Great Britain, it meant different things to different groups and was strongly contested. The conversation surrounding Britishness and what it actually

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[2] Schofield, Camilla. *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2013, 11.
[3] Schofield, 11.
[4] Corthorn, Paul. *Enoch Powell: Politics and Ideas in Modern Britain*. First edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 3.
[5] Corthorn, 4.

meant often surrounded the implications of race in a postwar Britain whose non-white racial demographics were on the rise more than ever before. For some Britons, often part of an older generation, who had similar definitions to that of Enoch Powell surrounding what it meant to be British, "Britishness" meant being ethnically British, which, for the majority of the time, meant that their "Britishness" correlated directly to their whiteness. Another aspect of this idea of Britishness was intense pride in their nation and the legacy of the Empire. The idea that "the sun never sets on the British Empire" created a strong sense of pride in one's country for those part of Powell's political generation, as Camilla Schofield argues, which often directly influenced how they understood their own sense of Britishness and whom they thought also fit within this definition.

This definition of Britishness, for a variety of reasons, didn't resonate with both non-white Britons and younger generations of British people who were too young to share that same nationalistic pride surrounding the British Empire as Powell's political generation. For these Britons left out of the Powellite definition of Britishness, they created their own personal interpretations of Britishness based on their identities, values, and experiences as British people, which gets to the core of the debate surrounding postwar British national identity. Because new interpretations of Britishness were entering mainstream conversations about national identity, it forced the populations of Powell's political generation to face the reality that their country was changing head-on in ways they hadn't before.

Other historians also point to Britain's global decline as a turning point that led to a redefinition of what it meant to be British, focusing on other factors. An example of looking at this shift from a different angle is Peter J. Taylor's article, "*Britain's Changing Role in the World-Economy.*" Taylor in this article illustrates the connection between, British economics and the decline of its empire. Taylor, in this source, points out the interconnectedness between Britain's colonies and the success of their economy, and how, as Britain lost more of its empire, the strength of its economy declined as well. Taylor also addresses how, as decolonization persisted, Britain's economy became less dominant globally. Taylor also

acknowledges the impact of this decline on British identity, explaining that "As Great Britain's politicians and state officials tried to match Great Britain's dwindling resources they were continually confronted with a self-image they could no longer sustain."[6] Because Britain for so long relied upon the resources coming out of its colonies, it had built the entire success or failure of their economy on the persistence of their empire. Once the empire started to slip away, Taylor argues that British global economic dominance and sense of self began to erode as well.

While there was a significant amount of historiography for topics surrounding the ideas of the right as well as the conditions contributing to the onset of the British identity crisis, there is a clear lack of historiographic works relating to the New Left. Aside from primary sources produced by intellectuals' part of the New Left themselves, historians such as Lin Chun, Keiran Connell, and Matthew Hilton have produced works looking at the New Left and their work towards a multicultural Britain. In her book *The British New Left,* Lin Chun[7] addresses the history of the New Left from an intellectual history approach, in three phases of its development of its ideology as well as its desires for a more multicultural and socialist Britain. Lin, like other historians addressing the late 20th century, frames the New Left within the context of postwar Britain and its conditions of decolonization, collapse of empire, economic decline, position of the welfare state, and rising right-wing ideology as a result.

While Lin Chun looked at the New Left from a more macro level, Kieran Connell and Matthew Hilton's article "The working practices of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies*,"* focused on the group of prolific New Left intellectuals at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Connell and Hilton in their article explore the multi-faceted aspects of the methodology and research practices that made the Centre what it was. Connell and Hilton recognize the Centre's ideological and intellectual influence was "strongly associated with New Left debates

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[6] Taylor, Peter J. "Britain's Changing Role in the World-Economy." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 13, no. 1 (1990): 33–48. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40241145, 35.
[7] Chun, Lin. *The British New Left*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993.

and thinking."[8] Along with recognizing the Centre's significance within the New Left intellectual movement, Connell and Hilton point out the influence that the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies had in the political discussions that came after Powell's infamous 1968 speech. Connell and Hilton address this impact and explain that "The history of the Centre in the post-1968 conjuncture, then, tells an important story that links the creation of the New Left Review to the emergence of identity politics in 1970s and 1980s Britain."[9] The Centre's influence on the both the New Left and the discussions in postwar Britain were foundational in introducing the idea and concept of a multicultural Britain into conversations in the mainstream left and Connell and Hilton do an exceptional job illustrating that impact.

The works of intellectuals' part of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies like Stuart Hall also appear in the historiographies of those researching the right and Enoch Powell which shows how influential the center actually was. Both Camilla Schofield and Paul Corthorn directly address the Centre and Stuart Hall in their own historiographies discussing reactions to Powell. Schofield addresses opinions of Powell from the New Left and explains that "As the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University argued, the 'organic crisis' brought about by Britain's global decline – this 'deep-seated structural crisis of British social formation' – came to be blamed through Powell's rhetoric on the 'new' presence of a black population in British political life."[10] Corthorn made an almost identical observation of the Centre's view of Powell's speech and he explains that "A succession of social scientists, increasingly associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University and the Jamaican-born cultural theorist Stuart Hall, gave credence to the charges of racism. They took issue with what they saw as Powell's encoded interpretation of race in

[8] Connell, Kieran, and Matthew Hilton. "The Working Practices of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies." *Social History (London)* 40, no. 3 (2015): 287–311. https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2015.1043191, 291.
[9] Connell and Hilton, 291.
[10] Schofield, 25.

absolute terms and in his equation of whiteness with Britishness."[11] The critique of Powell's views of Britishness when it came to his views on race were central to the push for a multicultural Britain by the New Left. Seeing that Schofield and Corthorn made use of the Centre and Stuart Hall in their historiographies and addressed their interpretations of Powell's racism is a testament to the influence that intellectuals like Stuart Hall at the Centre had in redefining Britishness within this era.

**Britain's Changing Sense of Self in the 1950's:**

Once the allies had finally defeated Germany on May 8th, 1945, a completely new era of world history had been ushered in and this was also the case for Britain. VE Day had ushered in a new postwar chapter of British history that completely reshaped British society, majority of which took place within the decade of the 1950's. After WWII, the 1950's became a decade of rebuilding in Britain, in a literal and metaphorical sense and people knew that was the case. Because of the outcomes of rebuilding postwar, rising decolonization of former colonies, and influx of immigration to the U.K. resulting from decolonization as well as the 1948 Nationality Act, the political, social, and international changes in British society laid the foundations to redefine Britishness in the following decades. As a column of the January 7th, 1949, issue of the Exeter and Plymouth Gazette describes, "Rome was not built in a day. Neither can the rebuilding of our cities be completed for many years. But just to be able to make a start is something to put new hope in our hearts."[12] As the British themselves realized, it was going to take Britain some time to adjust to the new reality it found itself and these conditions present during the 50's contributed immensely to a changing sense of self in Britain.

It was clear after the war that, "The transition from war to peace will be a much more complex and difficult process than it was last time."[13] Knowing that this postwar transition was to be a difficult one, the British

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[11] Corthorn, 5.
[12] "The Green Light." *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, January 7, 1949, 4. *British Library Newspapers* (accessed October 23, 2025
[13] "British Foreign Policy." *Times*, March 22, 1945, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 12, 2025).

Government took calculated action to get on the path of progress by prioritizing economic recovery and strengthening the welfare state through social welfare reforms. The British government began implementing policy to continue to boost the recovery of the British economy. Starting under Prime Minister Clement Atlee, British government implemented austerity, nationalized key industries, established the National Health Service, implemented social security provisions, and began building a network of council housing.

As Britain shifted out of a war economy towards a civilian market, austerity policies such as continued rationing, were used to help the economy recover. Because Britain needed to pay for the incredibly high reconstruction costs, the government shifted their focus to exporting goods to foreign markets to make the money needed for rebuilding at home. Along with austerity, Atlee's Labour government nationalized key industries such as coal, steel, and the railways in effort to create jobs and to make regulating these industries easier. The government saw the nationalization as a way of improving the opportunities for workers and as explained in January 1947, Clement Atlee explains that "The coal-mines now belong to the nation. This act offers great possibilities of social advance for the workers, and indeed the whole nation."[14] Nationalization was intended to advance workers but it also was critical to postwar industrial development in Britain allowing for the creation of new factories and jobs needed to rebuild.

While significant efforts were put into the physical rebuilding of the nation and economy by the British government, it also pushed to implement social welfare reforms to improve the lives of British citizens in the postwar era. The Labour government under Atlee also began passing social welfare reforms that lasted through conservative governments that would follow after his time in Downing Street. Some of the most significant welfare provisions that went through was the establishment of the National Health Service, social security benefits, and

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[14] Atlee, Clement. "A Message from the Prime Minister: Vesting Day Leaflet Announcing Nationalisation of Coal," January 1, 1947.

the expansion of council housing. The most significant of these welfare provisions would be the establishment of the National Health Service. The 1946 National Health Service Act outlined the creation of a "Comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people of England and Wales and the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of illness and for that purpose to provide or secure the effective provisions of this Act."[15] Though the National Health Service didn't officially come into effect until July 5th, 1948, the NHS was revolutionary in postwar Britain through uniting the country's health system into one centralized organization that was available to all Britons free of charge. The creation of the National Health Service was a crucial step in the formation of the British Welfare state and opened the door for the government to implement more robust welfare provisions in a variety of categories.

While rebuilding after the war proved to be a force for societal change in Britain, loss of empire and decolonization that took place throughout the 1950's was arguably the most poignant change that Britain had to come to terms. Because Britain's national identity was so intertwined with its empire, growing decolonization among its former colonies forced Britain to face its declining dominant role in the world head on, in a way that was hard to swallow. Two of the most significant instances of decolonization that took place during the 1950's was the situation in Kenya and the Suez Crisis of 1956. The events in Kenya and the Suez served as rude awakenings of Britain's slipping global influence and diminishing control of their beloved empire.

Despite Kenya not becoming an official Crown colony until 1920, Britain had been and colonizing Kenya since the 1890's. The British had developed an interest in Kenya due commercial interests, using Kenya to establish the British East Africa Company to facilitate trade in the region. Kenya was unique as it had become a partial settler colony due to the push by the British government to have lower-middle class British people to

[15] 1946 National Health Service Act, Chapter 81 § (1946). https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/coll-9-health1/health-01/.

move to Kenya, purchase land for a low price, and utilize Kenyan labor for farming pursuits. Along with this, the colonization of Kenya was framed in a way that led people to believe that the British were morally responsible for civilizing the people there under the values of British institutions and Christianity. Many lower-class British citizens were encouraged to move to Kenya because it was marketed as a way for them to build wealth, own their own land, and help the "uncivilized Kenyans" which appealed to these populations of Britons.

Once the 1950's rolled around, the populations of native Kenyans were fed up with British control and working for British settlers for exploitative wages on their own land, especially after a significant population of Kenyan men had risked their lives fighting for the British during WWII without receiving any recognition, basic rights, or political representation. As a result of these factors, Kenyans had enough, sparking the start of the Mau Mau Uprising in 1952. The Mau Mau were a resistance movement made up primarily of Kenyan WWII veterans' part of the Kikuyu ethnic group who took violent action against the British by killing livestock, damaging property, and murdering British settlers. The British were completely unprepared to deal with the Mau Mau uprising when it broke out and declared a state of emergency in 1952.

A turning point in the uprising came after the murder of the Ruck family on January 24th, 1953. The Rucks, Roger, Esme, and their six-year-old son Michael, were a family of British farmers that had settled in Kenya and had been murdered on their farm by a group of Mau Mau. The murder of this young family made headlines and sparked outrage back in Britain, many feeling that "The bestiality and savagery of the murders beggars the power of words,"[16] like described from this April 1953, issue of the London Times. The common feeling in Britain was that people were disturbed by the murders and felt, "Acute anxiety for the danger to their own relatives or old friends; all are perturbed by the outbreak of superstitious savagery menacing those of their own stock who have gone

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[16] FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT. "Nairobi Declared A Special Area." *Times*, April 25, 1953, 5. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 15, 2025).

out to seek a livelihood in a primitive and distant land."[17] The British response to the murder of the Rucks was a violent military action intended to weaken the uprising itself as well as the image of Kenyans fighting for their own freedom to self-determination and governance. The severity of the reactions to the Ruck family murder foreshadowed and contributed to some populations of white Britons in the wake of *Rivers of Blood,* to blame the postwar societal changes in Britain on immigrants of color, by letting their prejudices against immigrants of color and the fear of an unknown future dictate how they viewed the role of race when it comes to defining Britishness itself.

The British military responded with a system of Kenyan internment, "re-education", and torture. An example of this action was explained in the London Times in April 1953, where "Many Mau Mau adherents and suspects were detained. The population of the overcrowded slum of mud and wattle houses has grown rapidly recently to 12,000, but more than half, warned by earlier operations, had left their homes. Kariobangi is now to be razed, and thousands of Africans are searching for accommodation in the already crowded Nairobi locations."[18] The murder of the Ruck family and the Kenyan uprising showed the fragility of Britain's control in its colonial nations as more people living within colonies pushed for independence. The murder of the Ruck family and the following reactions by the British public ultimately fueled the increase of public anxieties viewing people of color from former colonies being dangerous. The murder of the Ruck family was also perpetuated in the British media in a way that led much of the white British public to believe that brown and black immigrants were dangerous, savages, and a threat to traditional British values and way of life. This fear of immigrants of color seen in the situation with Kenya directly foreshadowed and influenced the various discrimination against immigrants of color in Britain during the 1950's and 1960's as well as the fear of the newly developing definitions of "Britishness" among immigrant populations of color by white followers

[17] "Kenya Under Strain." *Times*, January 30, 1953, 7. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 15, 2025).
[18] FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT. "Nairobi Declared A Special Area." *Times*, April 25, 1953, 5. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 15, 2025).

of Powell's ideology in the years to come after the *Rivers of Blood* speech in 1968.

Another event in British decolonization that forced Britain to face the reality of its declining role in the world was the 1956 Suez Crisis. The events of the Suez Crisis came from the combination of Pan-Arabist nationalism in Egypt, British Decolonization, and Cold War politics. The Suez conflict came after Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal on July 26th, 1956. This nationalization didn't come out of nowhere; Nasser used the nationalization of the Suez Canal as retaliation for Britain and the United States withdrawing promised funding for the construction of the Aswan High Dam which began in 1952. Britain and the U.S. pulled funding from Nasser once they realized he was playing both sides during the Cold War by accepting an arms deal with the USSR. Britain had been in control of the Suez Canal for years and this nationalization was seen as a direct attack on British trade, economics, and influence in the Middle East. Because of Britain's perceived dependence on the canal for these pursuits, Prime Minister Anthony Eden was going to stop at nothing to protect the British Empire's final economic stronghold in the Middle East.

Despite clear directions from U.S. President Eisenhower not to get involved in the Suez, Britain, France, and Israel came up with a plan to try and take back the Suez Canal. October 29, 1956, Israeli forces invaded the Sinai Peninsula as a cover for the British and the French to then get involved militarily with a bombing campaign followed by landing at Port Said to occupy the canal, under the guise of "peacekeeping." The invasion by the British and France over the Suez was condemned internationally and was catastrophic for Britain's reputation and destroyed their international credibility as this action made it seem to the world Britain and France were still power-hungry colonizers. Even though the British and French agreed to the November 6th, 1956, ceasefire demanded by the United Nations, the complete failure on behalf of the British in the Suez Crisis marked a moment of bitter realization among the British government and public that Britain was no longer the international hegemon it once was.

Before the Suez Crisis, the United States had given Britain a pass to do what it wanted internationally due to the legacy of the British Empire but after Suez, the U.S. realized that it needed to tighten the leash and could no longer give Britain unquestioned power to do whatever it wanted in regions it used to have imperial power over. The Suez Crisis also effectively concluded the period of British control over the Middle East and transitioned much of outside influence in the region over to the United States from 1956 until the present day. The outcomes of the Suez Crisis were the final blow to the British Empire and effectively destroyed Eden's political career. The aftermath of Suez forced Britain to come to terms with its new, lesser role in global affairs, triggering a period of self-reflection over the loss of one of the biggest pieces of Britain's national identity up to that point, its empire.

While influences of rebuilding, implementation of the welfare state, and loss of its beloved empire greatly contributed to a changing sense of self in Britain, the influence of increased immigration to the United Kingdom throughout the 1950's led to a redefinition of what it meant to be British by British citizens in the decades to follow. Increased immigration to the United Kingdom resulted from decolonization and legislation like the 1948 Nationality Act. In 1948, the British government passed the 1948 British Nationality act which as explained by a 1953 issue of the London Times, outlined that "Every person who is a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies or of the Dominions, 'shall by virtue of that citizenship have the status of a British subject."[19] This meant that any British subject from Commonwealth nations or colonies were also entitled to British citizenship and allowed them to work in the United Kingdom. The British government at the time needed replacement labor to support the new welfare state and to combat postwar labor shortages at home in jobs. Because of these factors, the passing of the Nationality Act and resulting immigration to the United Kingdom was the solution to this issue.

[19] "High Court Of Justice." *Times*, April 25, 1953, 11. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 12, 2025).

The passing of the Nationality Act led to an influx of immigration from former colonies and Commonwealth nations to the U.K. who looked to access the rights promised to them and to reap the outcomes of empire as well. These Britons came to the United Kingdom in search of work and better economic opportunities than in their home countries. Immigrants were excited by the belief they were also entitled to the rights of a British citizen because they had the impression that, “The people of each of the self-governing countries within the Commonwealth had the particular status of citizens of their own country and a common status as members of the wider association of peoples comprising the Commonwealth.”[20] Many of the immigrants who came to the United Kingdom after the Nationality Act came from the West Indies and South Asia. Both regions were facing high unemployment, economic, and domestic issues such as the Indian partition and Hurricane destruction in the Caribbean, which made prospects of increased wages, job openings, and access to the social safety net in the U.K.  appealing to migrants.

Between 1948 and 1958, around 125,000 immigrants from the West Indies and around 55,000 Indian and Pakistani immigrants came to the United Kingdom, making up a part of what has come to be known as the Windrush Generation. The generation derived its name from the boat named the Empire Windrush which, “As economic conditions deteriorated and wartime savings were consumed, so the movement grew. The arrival of ss. Empire Windrush in June 1948, marked the beginning of a steady influx of passenger immigrants.”[21] As Michael Banton explained this 1954 issue of the London Times, this massive wave of migration to the U.K. starting with the original 492 Caribbean passengers of the Empire Windrush reshaped Britain in the postwar era. Those part of the Windrush Generation despite facing discrimination, played a key role in rebuilding and creating a modern, multicultural Britain.

While the new immigrants of color that arrived in Britain during the 1950’s anticipated an improvement in their quality of life, existing

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[20] "Born in India." *Times*, May 23, 1949, 5. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 12, 2025).

[21] Banton,, Michael. "Britain's Negro Minority." *Times*, May 31, 1954, 7. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 15, 2025).

prejudices and discrimination enforced by preexisting social hierarchies and laws came to prevent these immigrant populations from receiving the life that was promised to them when they decided to immigrate to the United Kingdom. Immigrants of color in 1950's Britain faced systematic discrimination that touched almost all aspects of their lives including housing discrimination, "colour bars", employment discrimination, minimal or complete absence of legal protections, and prejudice inflicted by white Britons. Prior to the 1965 Race Relations Act, there was no legal protections preventing racial discrimination or housing authorities and landlords refusing to rent homes to families of color which often limited these populations overcrowded neighborhoods and poor housing quality.

In addition to this, people of color faced limited employment opportunities due to receiving significantly lower wages than white counterparts as well as having very limited opportunities to get hired into skilled labor positions. Often times, even if immigrants of color had a skilled labor position in their home countries, they would still be pushed to work in unskilled or manual labor industries because employers and certain industries refused to hire people of color for public facing roles and positions. Along with this, there was a significant amount of social prejudice and segregation that these populations of Britons had to endure, specifically "colour bars" as they were referred to. If an establishment like restaurants clubs, pubs, barber shops, and other public places had a colour bar, that meant that people of color were often denied service or access to these public establishments simply based off the color of their skin or race. Despite being promised an improved quality of life, immigrants of color were never truly able to experience the quality of life that was marketed to them due to the systems already put in place meant to make sure they would never be on equal footing with white Britons.

The immense changes that took place within British society during the 1950's created a changing sense of self from a country whose identity was shaped by its Empire and dominant role in the international community, to a nation entering a modern world now focused on domestic conditions at home. The challenges of decolonization and the increasing diverse immigrant populations in the United Kingdom eventually gave way to an identity crisis in the following decades as Britons grappled with

redefining Britishness in a time that no longer resembled the country they were familiar with just a few decades earlier. People after the changes of postwar Britain that defined the 1950's asked what it now meant to be British after Empire. For some on the right, this change echoed the views of Enoch Powell and was viewed as a direct, dangerous attack against domestic nostalgia and threatened the traditions of British culture and society itself. However, for other Britons like Stuart Hall and part of the New Left, this change in British society was an exciting, new opportunity that opened the doors for new possibilities to create a Britain that embraced multiculturalism and welcomed all into a new British identity.

**A "Very British" National Identity Crisis:**

In his famous 1968 Rivers of Blood speech, Enoch Powell explained that he noticed, "The sense of being a persecuted minority which is growing among ordinary English people in the areas of the country which are affected is something that those without direct experience can hardly imagine."[22] When thinking about the affected areas, Powell meant the areas where immigrants had moved into that were mostly working class English neighborhoods in the cities. What Powell was doing was appealing to the populations of Britons who felt left behind and gave them the perfect scapegoat to target their grievances at, immigrants. For Britons like Enoch Powell, the changes in Britain that shaped the 1950's destroyed what they thought Britain to be, the little island with the greatest empire in history, a place that prospered, and a country that equated Britishness to whiteness. With the increase of immigrants to "little Britain" in the 1950's, Enoch Powell and populations of the working class and Britons of the same generation as Powell, longed to go back to the nostalgia of the Britain of the 1920's, at the peak of Empire.

Powell in 1965 once said, "I shall go to the grave with a conviction at the back of my mind that Her Majesty's ships still sweep the oceans of

[22] Powell, Enoch. "Rivers of Blood." Presented at the meeting of the Conservative Political Centre, April 20, 1968.

the world…That hallucination will be there when the mind stops.”[23] Powell longed to go back to a time where the Empire was prospering and white Britons were benefiting from it exclusively and according to this logic, the Race Relations Act of 1968 was a direct threat to this state of affairs. Powell’s speech was given in direct opposition to the proposal of the Race Relations Act of 1968 which aimed to criminalize discrimination in housing, employment, or public services on the grounds of race or national origin, adding to the protections already outlined in the 1965 Race Relations Act. The provisions of the act meant that immigrants could no longer be discriminated against in these categories, wouldn’t be limited to poor working-class areas anymore, and could no longer be barred from moving into middle class white areas. Because of this, the Rivers of Blood speech appealed to populations of white Britons who didn’t want the status of their neighborhoods to be diminished by non-white immigrants becoming their neighbors.

The Rivers of Blood speech was met with a variety of reactions from average British citizens on both sides of the political spectrum. For some of the working class and traditional Britons that Powell intentionally appealed to, the concerns Powell raised about the supposed consequences immigrants had on their daily lives garnered a significant amount of support, especially after his dismissal from Parliament by then party leader, Edward Heath. Mass protests and strikes in support of Powell broke out among London dockers in massive numbers, “At the royal group of docks where 1,000 men supported the strike, cheers greeted Mr. H. Pennington, a docker, when he said ‘Bring your wives and friends. This isn't a dock issue. We want to stop all immigration, whether they be coloured or from the Commonwealth.”[24] More group of protesters like, “At Bermondsey, 400 dockers voted to march on the Commons in support of Mr. Powell. Mingling with rush-hour crowds, the men chanted ‘Enoch,

[23] Powell, Enoch. ‘The Consequences of the General Election,’ *Swinton College Journal* (Summer 1965).
[24] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "Mr Brown 'Horrified' By Powell: Dockers To March." *Times*, April 26, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).

Enoch."[25] Demonstrations like these continued to grow among populations of working-class Britons wanting to share their views.

The men who organized in support of Powell overwhelmingly shared perspectives like that of Mr. Dennis Herbert Harmston, known as "Big Dan," who told reporters, "Call me a fascist if you like,…. If wanting to see England back on its feet is being fascist, then I stand indicted. I love England,"[26] and that, "Mr. Powell said what almost everybody is thinking."[27] A similar perspective to Big Dan's was echoed also in Mr. Harry Pennington from the protests at the royal group of docks when he explained that "When Powell made this speech he seemed to me to be talking a lot of sense. I told some of my mates and before you could blink everyone was agreeing with everyone else."[28] The echoed opinions shared by those who organized in support of Powell like Big Dan and Harry Penington, fueled anti-immigration sentiments in the working class who then rationalized their experiences and personal hardships by blaming immigrants, Powell had succeeded in appealing to some populations of the working class with his claims.

Those in support of Powell shared their support of his ideas though different avenues as well. Enoch Powell began to receive mass amounts of letters from supporters that by April 25th, had "Reached an estimated total of 40,000,"[29] and by the next day according to Powell included in an issue of the London Times, "Another sack of mail… containing 3,000 letters… 'brings the total to 65,000 since Monday.' Mr. Powell said, 'and I still have not opened 15,000 from the previous days. Only 30 disagree with

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[25] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "40,000 Powell postbag." *Times*, April 25, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[26] MARSHALL, RITA. "The men who head the marchers." *Times*, April 27, 1968, 8. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[27] MARSHALL, RITA. "The men who head the marchers." *Times*, April 27, 1968, 8. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[28] MARSHALL, RITA. "The men who head the marchers." *Times*, April 27, 1968, 8. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[29] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "40,000 Powell postbag." *Times*, April 25, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).

what I said."[30] Letters weren't just sent by individuals but also, by groups such as the "More than 100 E.T.U. members in Norwich [who] have sent a letter to Mr. Powell supporting his speech. The letter suggesting a referendum, congratulated Mr. Powell on speaking 'for the people and for England."[31] While its likely some of these numbers could have been exaggerated, the numbers of letters received by Powell were hugely significant and illustrated how Rivers of Blood had resonated with a large portion of the British working-class population.

Supporters also acted in support of Powell through continuing to uphold already existing discrimination against non-white immigrants like the "Seven hundred members of a Midlands working men's club today [who] agreed unanimously to continue a 10-year-old colour bar. The rule forbids coloured visitors and entertainers to enter the North Wolverhampton Working Men's Club in Oxley Street, Wolverhampton."[32] Along with this, support for Powell wasn't just limited to dockworkers but it was widespread among a multitude of types of industries like the "More than 500 workers at the Dunlop Rubber Company factory, on Tean Valley Trading Estate at Gateshead, [who] staged a token demonstration in support of Mr. Powell,"[33] as well as the "Transport and General Workers' Union stewards at London's upper pool [who] said in a statement that they agreed and that immigration should be stopped immediately an completely."[34] As seen from these examples, Powell was not short of support from some individuals part of the working class which contributed to the significance and prominence of Powell's Rivers of Blood speech within the mainstream political discussion at the time.

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[30] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "Mr Brown 'Horrified' By Powell: Dockers To March." *Times*, April 26, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[31] MARSHALL, RITA. "The men who head the marchers." *Times*, April 27, 1968, 8. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[32] FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT-Wolverhampton, April 21. "Club Reaffirms Colour Bar." *Times*, April 22, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[33] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "Mr Brown 'Horrified' By Powell: Dockers To March." *Times*, April 26, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[34] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "Mr Brown 'Horrified' By Powell: Dockers To March." *Times*, April 26, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).

Powell also surprisingly received support from populations that are somewhat unexpected considering the rhetoric of his speech such as "African support [from] one of black Africa's most widely read newspaper columnists, 'Candido,' [who] has defended Mr. Powell. Writing in the *New Nigerian*, he said: 'I could not agree with Mr. Powell more. There are too many coloured immigrants in those tiny islands. The more they come the more acute racialism is bound to become."[35] Candido's agreement with Powell's stance was furthered when he added, "I think there is something morally revolting about people who leave their backward home countries and flock to the developed ones."[36] Takes on Powell's speech from individuals of similar backgrounds as Candido illustrate just how far reaching Powell's message had spread and impacted average people in Britain to think about the question of immigration and what it meant to be British in a country where diversity in its citizens was rising in ways it previously hadn't seen before in its history during the British Empire.

Powell's speech also became a catalyst that emboldened far-right groups in Britain like the British National Party and the National Front. The British National Party was a neo-Nazi political party formed in 1960 when the National Labour Party and the White Defense League merged into one party. The National Labour Pary and White Defense League were two splinter groups originating from the neo-Nazi pressure group, League of Empire Loyalists that was founded by A. K. Chesterton in 1954 which aimed to stop the collapse of the British Empire. The League believed that the Empire was the greatest source of national pride and essentially blamed Jews for being behind the fall of the British Empire, which was a sentiment carried forward into the British National Party when it formed in 1960. While the original focus for far-right parties in Britain was on saving the empire, by the time the British National Party formed, they realized decolonization was inevitable and turned their focus towards immigration in response to the increase of immigrants in Britain like the Windrush Generation in the 1950's.

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[35] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "Mr Brown 'Horrified' By Powell: Dockers To March." *Times*, April 26, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[36] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "Mr Brown 'Horrified' By Powell: Dockers To March." *Times*, April 26, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).

The British National Front was founded also by A. K. Chesterton on February 7th, 1967, as the last remnants of the League of Empire Loyalists combined with the British National Party into one larger organization in order to gain more political influence, making it Britain's largest far-right party in the postwar era. Powell's speech was the perfect opportunity for The National Front who had "Been trying to drum up support in the poorer working-class areas, chiefly on the issue of coloured immigrants."[37] Because of this, the National Front was able to use Powell's speech to push their anti-immigration agenda which boosted their following and support in 1968. The Front became incredibly active and gained a massive following in the wake of Rivers of Blood throughout the 1970's like with the September 29th, 1968, march where "Nearly 300 people carrying placards and Union Jacks marched through London… as a protest against coloured immigration."[38] In this march, "Members of the right-wing National Front party…carried banners saying 'Powell speaks for us', 'Forever white England' and 'Jobs and housing – Britons first."[39] Though the National Front declined in prominence through the early 2000's, other far-right groups and movements that built upon similar immigration stances survived. Groups that rose to prominence in the 2010's include the English Defense League, Britain First, The UK Independence Party, and recently the 2025 campaign of "Operation Raise the Colours" which has promoted flying the Union Jack and St. George's Cross to boost pride and nationalism among Britons who hold anti-immigration sentiments.

Whether it was groups of individual dockworkers or large far-right, neo-Nazi groups like the National Front, Powell's speech resonated with and reached a significant amount of British civilians who made their support for Powell's ideas heard. The rise of early far-right groups such as the National Front laid the foundations for modern anti-immigration

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[37] BY A STAFF REPORTER. "Labour Hope For Brighter Days." *Times*, March 27, 1968, 3. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 18, 2025).

[38] By a Staff Reporter. "Immigrant control march." *Times*, September 30, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 18, 2025).

[39] By a Staff Reporter. "Immigrant control march." *Times*, September 30, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed November 18, 2025).

movements still active today in Britain. While support for Powell's views on the far-right was incredibly loud, there was also a large portion of the British public who vehemently disagreed with the views Powell held about immigration and Britain after Empire. The response to Powell's speech on the right had also motivated those part of the New Left to counter the anti-immigration rhetoric and to spin the conversation about multiculturalism in Britain in a positive light. New Left academics such as Stuart Hall at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, heavily criticized Powell and his supporters in order to strengthen their proposals for a more welcoming, multicultural Britain and for Stuart Hall specifically, through his interpretations of Marx.

When it comes to the opinions of Enoch Powell to those part of the New Left, in chapter one of *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70's Britain,* John Solomos, Bob Findlay, Simon Jones, and Paul Gilroy explained that "Powell's idea of an 'ultimate cause' intersects with popular racist notions at the level of everyday experience and becomes a central means of explaining why the country is 'going to the dogs."[40] As expressed by these academics from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, many Britons part of the New Left looked at Powell's and his supporter's views as appalling and being flat out racist. It was a common belief among the New Left that "The extreme racialist views' expounded by Mr. Powell were further evidence of the willingness of the Government and Opposition to use Afro-Asian and Caribbean immigrants as scapegoats to cover up their political inadequacies,"[41] like Maurice Ludmer, the chairman of the Birmingham Coordinating Committee Against Racial Discrimination, explained. Along with this, some opposers of Powell's speech like Parliament Member, Paul Rose, thought that what Enoch Powell had sad was so deplorable that, "Mr. Powell's words had damaged race relations in Britain as much as the

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[40] University of Birmingham. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*. London: Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1982, 33.
[41] FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT-Wolverhampton, April 21. "Club Reaffirms Colour Bar." *Times*, April 22, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).

killing of Dr. King."[42] Opinions that Powell's speech was immensely damaging to race relations in Britain such as Mr. Ludmer and Mr. Rose's where echoed among the responses opposing Powell seen in varying issues of the London Times from more than just left leaning Britons.

Despite a large amount of criticism for Powell's speech having come from those on the left, many moderate conservatives and members of the working class agreed with the reactions on the left and opposed Powell's rhetoric such as Conservative M.P. David Lane who explained, "I support the Race Relations Bill because I believe on balance it will do good. But, whatever views M.P.s hold, I hope we can debate the Bill on Tuesday in less extravagant language than Mr. Enoch Powell chose to use in his deplorable Birmingham speech."[43] Along with this, different industries and service sectors also condemned Powell and the actions of his supporters such as the National Union of Insurance Workers who "At their conference at Eastbourne approved a resolution repudiating 'the highly prejudiced, exaggerated and inflammatory speech by Mr. Enoch Powell' and recorded deep regret at the 'behaviour of the small section of trade unionists who, in supporting the speech, were indirectly attacking colleagues whose work plays such an important and necessary role in this nation."[44] Opinions opposing the support for Powell like that of the National Union of Insurance Workers showed that those who were emboldened after Rivers of Blood were negatively impacting their immigrant coworkers, who also were greatly contributing to the growth of postwar Britain they were actively benefitting from themselves. It also shows that there was variation in opinions of Powell's speech among the working class. While a significant amount of support for Powell came from the working class, not all people part of that social class agreed with the rhetoric which is important to remember.

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[42] "Mr. Powell filled with foreboding on immigrants." *Times*, April 22, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[43] Lane, David. "Deplorable speech." *Times*, April 22, 1968, 11. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[44] BY STAFF REPORTERS. "Mr Brown 'Horrified' By Powell: Dockers To March." *Times*, April 26, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).

Even though some unions and conservatives like Lane condemned Powell's speech and the demonstrations by the far-right, individuals part of the New Left did not think that the government was doing enough to dispel racist, anti-immigrant rhetoric. According to Dr. David Pitt, who was the "Chairman of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination,"[45] Powell's speech was a "Shameful example of how political leaders, in a situation in which Britain had been forced to accept that racial prejudice existed, were failing to set out to rid people of their prejudices."[46] The view that the government was not doing enough to combat racist rhetoric among the British public in the wake of the Powell speech was a strong motivating factor that drove members of the New Left, primarily academics like Stuart Hall at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, to dedicate their work towards redefining Britishness through advocating for a multicultural Britain.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was founded by Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart in 1964 at the University of Birmingham who through their work in the field and through the establishment of the Centre, have been credited with founding the field of Cultural Studies. The primary focus of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was establishing the field of Cultural Studies to explore the way culture, race, class, and identity interact with each other through the lived experiences of individual citizens living in a postwar society through the interdisciplinary lenses of feminism, race, structuralism, and Marxism. The ways in which these aspects of society interacted with one another drove how academics at the Centre understood and themselves defined the concept of multiculturalism. Stuart Hall explained that multiculturalism "Is substantive. It references the strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multicultural societies throw up."[47] The work by the academics at the Centre for

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[45] FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT-Wolverhampton, April 21. "Club Reaffirms Colour Bar." *Times*, April 22, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[46] FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT-Wolverhampton, April 21. "Club Reaffirms Colour Bar." *Times*, April 22, 1968, 2. *The Times Digital Archive* (accessed October 31, 2025).
[47] Hall, Stuart *Essential Essays, Volume II: Identity and Diaspora.* Edited by David Morley. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, 95-133.

Contemporary Cultural Studies attempted to make sense of the problems in society that were thrown up as a result of Britain being a multicultural society, whether average citizens knew it was one or not.

Stuart Hall himself aimed to challenge the perception by those on the far-right that Britain had become multicultural only after the fall of the British Empire and subsequent immigration, he instead pointed out the fact that Britain had actually been multicultural for majority of its history before, during, and after the Empire. He explained that "The national story assumes that Britain was a unified and homogenous culture until the postwar migrations from the Caribbean and Asian subcontinent. This is a highly simplistic version of a complex history. Britain is not a sceptered isle which arose, fully formed and separate, as an integral nation-state, from the North Sea. Though 'assumed to be fixed and eternal,' it was in fact constituted out of a series of conquests, invasions, and settlements."[48] Not only was Britain actually multicultural prior to empire like Hall addressed, he also pointed out that immigration from the former colonies was inevitable and that multiculturalism was a consequence that was present and built up through the entirety of the British Empire's existence.

Stuart Hall pointed out that "The old relations of colonization, slavery, and colonial rule, linking Britain with the Empire for over four hundred years, marked out the pathways which these migrants followed. But these historic relations of dependency and subordination were reconfigured – in the now-classic postcolonial way – when reconvened on domestic British soil."[49] Hall continued this notion and called out the fallacy and misunderstanding on the right popularized by Powell's speech that immigration came out of nowhere and undermined classic British culture and society. Hall explained that this misinterpretation came about, "In the wake of decolonization, and [was] masked by a collective amnesia about, and systematic disavowal of, empire, this encounter was interpreted

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[48] Hall, Stuart *Essential Essays, Volume II: Identity and Diaspora.* Edited by David Morley. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, 95-133.
[49] Hall, Stuart *Essential Essays, Volume II: Identity and Diaspora.* Edited by David Morley. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, 95-133.

as ‘a new beginning.”[50] With his understanding of Britishness, it’s clear Stuart Hall’s purpose in adding to the conversation redefining British identity was advocating for Britons whose identities were unfairly under attack, like his own.

Stuart Hall’s definition of multiculturalism and vison for redefining what it meant to be British was also influenced by his relationship with and interpretations of Marxism. Stuart Hall viewed Marx through the perspective of domestic British race relations and his personal lived experience as a Jamaican immigrant which guided his work on multiculturalism and the Cultural Studies field. Hall saw similarities between the ideas of Karl Marx and Marxist theorists like Antonio Gramsci as well as Louis Althusser and the ways labor of black and colonized Britons was exploited. Stuart Hall in his writings on Marxism explored the idea of a ‘Black Proletariat’ through re-examining “The criminalised part of the black labour force in relation to the black working class as a whole, and the relations which govern and determine its position – above all, in terms of its fundamental position in the present stage of the capitalist mode of production, the social division of labour, and its role in the appropriation and realisation of surplus labour.”[51] Stuart Hall made the connection that the white population and Britain for hundreds of years had been acting as the bourgeoise that was exploiting the labor of the proletariat workers living among its many colonies, and later immigrant workforce at home.

When addressing postwar Britain specifically, Hall explained that “As a result of a complex set of factors… including the growing strength of the labour movement itself. – capitalism, in order to survive, had to aim for continuous productive expansion and ‘full employment’ for the native workforce. This ran counter to the need for a ‘reserve army.’ A substitute ‘reserve army’ was therefore needed: one neither costly nor politically

[50] Hall, Stuart *Essential Essays, Volume II: Identity and Diaspora.* Edited by David Morley. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, 95-133.
[51] Hall, Stuart. *Selected Writings on Marxism*. Edited by Gregor McLennan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021, 199-223.

unacceptable."[52] This dilemma of needing to maintain the means of production in postwar Britain as Hall explains, led to the need to look elsewhere to for labor since there was shortages among Britain's existing population. Because of this need for a replacement labor force, Stuart Hall explained that the solution in Britain, "Has been the employment of immigrant workers from under-developed areas of Southern Europe or from the Third World.' These had always played a part; but in post-war conditions they became a permanent feature of the economic structure…Migrant workers now form the permanent basis of the modern industrial reserve army. In the period of productive expansion, labour was sucked into production from the Caribbean and Asian sub-continent."[53] In other words, Stuart Hall essentially explained that the same exploitative labor dynamics that were present during the British Empire were still prevalent but had instead replicated themselves within the United Kingdom as a result of the changes in post-colonial British society.

With his understanding of these societal dynamics that shaped the experience of British immigrants from formerly colonized nations and that of his own, Stuart Hall's definition of what it meant to be British didn't equate Britishness to whiteness but rather, being British to him encompassed so much more. Being British for him meant that everyone part of the story of the British Empire should be able to buy into the benefits presented to all citizens of British society. Stuart Hall, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies, and those part of the New Left with their study of multiculturalism aimed to show British citizens that they didn't need to make their neighbors and fellow Britons a scapegoat, and aimed to show them that immigrants to the United Kingdom played just as an active role in contributing to the British postwar project just as much as the Britons whose ethnic origins were from the island itself. The concept of a multicultural Britain that they used to combat the Powellite rhetoric from the far-right offered a positive new opportunity to redefine what it meant to be British and to at the same time, celebrate all who called

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[52] Hall, Stuart. *Selected Writings on Marxism*. Edited by Gregor McLennan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021, 199-223.
[53] Hall, Stuart. *Selected Writings on Marxism*. Edited by Gregor McLennan. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021, 199-223.

themselves British after empire from every country, background, and creed.

This debate surrounding the redefinition of the British identity while at its inception and height in the mainstream political discussion in the 60's, 70's, and 80's did not end then, but instead, has stretched into the twenty first century today. The conversation surrounding Britishness and anti-immigration rhetoric are still very alive today through the rise of new, conservative movements to make their opinions heard about their feeling that Britain is still losing its sense of self. Just on September 13th, 2025, this year, Britain saw the largest conservative demonstration of the century in London with the 'Unite the Kingdom' rally. Organized by far-right, anti-immigration and Islam activist Tommy Robinson, nearly 100,000 demonstrators carrying Union Jacks, St. George Crosses, and some even wearing the notorious, 'Make America Great Again' hats associated with U.S. President Trump, organized to make a statement about immigration and British nationalism. The demonstration also was mobilized as a reaction to the murder of American Conservative activist, Charlie Kirk just three days earlier at Utah Valley University as Kirk engaged in political conversations with students, part of his American Comeback Tour. Symbols of memorial and images with Charlie Kirk on them were seen among the crowds of protestors and even billionaire tech mogul and entrepreneur Elon Musk, had given a speech through a video call, encouraging the protestors and calling for the controversial dissolution of Parliament. The feeling of brotherhood between the American right and the protestors was evidently clear throughout the rally, setting a symbolic precedent for immigration and race relations internationally.

It is clear through the events of the 'Unite the Kingdom' rally that the conversations surrounding what it means to be British in the modern world are alive, well, and here to stay for the foreseeable future in Britain. Though there was around 100,000 right-wing demonstrators furthering the prevalence of rhetoric initially popularized by Enoch Powell fifty-seven years ago, there was also a smaller group of around 5,000 counter protestors part of what they called, 'The March Against Fascism,' which was organized by the organization, Stand Up to Racism to make a statement against the anti-immigration rhetoric among the British far-

right. While the conversations surrounding immigration in the twenty-first century sound eerily familiar to the conversations during the Powell era, these contemporary conversations regarding race relations and immigration to the UK can be better defined as an echo of the debate succeeding the *Rivers of Blood* speech rather than an exact replication.

The co-existence of these two different demonstrations in September 2025 draw clear, undeniable parallels to the debates between the far-right and New Left in the wake of the Rivers of Blood speech that cannot be ignored however, this echo of the Powell era debates is much more complex considering the current developments are the result of fifty-seven years of British history that took place after *Rivers of Blood* as well as contemporary conversations regarding the role of race in Britain that focuses more on the increase of immigration from Muslim majority countries. The fear of Islam infiltrating the core tenets of British society and identity was not the main focus during the Powell era as it is now, which is why defining today's race relations in Britain as an exact replication of 1968 would be false. While it would be false to call the events of September 2025 an exact duplication of the *Rivers of* Blood era, it is fair to say that there is a strong connection between these conversations surrounding what is means to be British without Empire that has now influenced multiple generations of Britons. Not only does the connection between the events of September 2025 and the events of the late twentieth century illustrate that the post-colonial British identity crisis is still ongoing, it also reiterates the need for consensus on what that identity is to come sooner rather than later.

Stuart Hall once made the statement that "The very notion of Britain's 'greatness' is bound up with empire…Euro-scepticism and Little Englander nationalism could hardly survive if people understood whose sugar flowed through English blood and rotted English teeth."[54] Hall gets to the heart of that there really is no difference between immigrant Britons and those who are from England as both parties have had their lives

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[54] Hall, Stuart in, Levy, Andrea. "Back to My Own Country." In *Six Stories & an Essay*. Hachette UK, 2014.

shaped by the rise and fall of the British Empire, whether they were aware of that or not. The conversations and concerns surrounding race and perceived loss of collective national identity caused by immigration present in postwar Britain serve as a strong case study for understanding the shifts in national identity in other post-imperial European societies in the late twentieth century. The structural changes in postwar European society had provided opportunities for populations of Europeans who longed to go back to previous eras of their country's collective memory to use non-white immigrant populations as scapegoats to blame for their feelings of uncertainty about a future they were not familiar with following immense change and continental instability caused by war. Seeing that Britain's experience with this feeling of post-war and empire uncertainty was so pronounced, it serves as a strong example of how the national identities can be so influenced by the fear of the unknown and the perception that one's country was better off as it was in earlier eras of prosperity and stability.

The debate about the British national identity in the postwar era was shaped by the question of race when it shouldn't have even been a question at all. What really shaped the evolving national identity in the postwar era was a fear of the unknown among a population of Britons who were trying to figure out what it meant to be British in a Britain that was no longer familiar to them. Had Britons who subscribed to Powell's rhetoric realized this notion instead of blaming immigrants that the version of Britain they wanted to go back to created, much of the conflict surrounding race relations in Britain could have been avoided. What Powell and the far-right failed to realize then and now, is that their precious empire brought about the immigrants that they were so strongly against and afraid of. They forgot that it was their beloved empire that went out and inserted itself into the countless countries that it made colonies to exploit for its own economic gain. It is a natural consequence of empire for those who once were exploited by it, to want to receive some of the fruits of their and their ancestor's labor. This notion is what Powell and his followers failed to recognize, but New Left intellectuals like Stuart Hall pushed to make crystal clear with the redefinition of British identity in the postwar era

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## Lemkinian Gendercide: Gendered Violence in Genocide

*Kylie Black*

Raphael Lemkin, the father of genocide studies, first introduced the concept of genocide in his 1944 book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*—a six-hundred-page volume that contains a general overview on Nazi policies of occupation, specific laws and policies, and analyses to specific countries.[1] This book is known as it is the first place that Lemkin outlined his conceptualization of genocide, but it also provides more insights into various aspects of the process of genocide, such as gendered violence. In the preface, Lemkin expressed his disgust with the German military's "access to women in occupied countries" as "facilitated for German manhood by fiat of law."[2] Moreover, Lemkin cited provisions which provided for children of the unions between German soldiers and "non-Aryan."[3] In doing so, he demonstrated that not only were there sexual encounters that violated Nazi laws against racial mixing but also that the Nazi leadership acknowledged this happened enough to create policies for the children and their mothers. These examples, while few, demonstrate that Lemkin understood gendered violence to play a significant and central role in genocide, one important enough to include in the introduction of the term.[4]

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[1] Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944).

[2] Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe,* xiv.

[3] Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe,* 86, 89, 92, 213, 316.

[4] Douglas Irvin-Erickson has written on how Lemkin framed sexual violence in genocide, demonstrating that it was a prominent feature in Lemkin's understanding of genocide. However, Irvin-Erickson's work does not provide in-depth analysis of how sexual and gender-based violence function in Lemkin's case studies. Additionally, Irvin-Erickson focuses solely on sexual violence, ignoring other aspects of gender analysis present in Lemkin's writings. Here, I build on Irvin-Erickson's discussion on Lemkin's emphasis on sexual violence on genocide and extend the discussion to other aspects of gendered violence in his case studies. For more, see Douglas Irvin-Erickson, "Sixty Years of Failing to Prosecute Sexual Crimes: From Raphaël Lemkin at Nuremberg to *Lugana* at

On August 26, 1946, Raphael Lemkin sent a letter to David Maxwell Fyfe, the head British prosecutor for the Nuremberg trials about a potential genocide charge in the trials. More specifically, Lemkin wrote about the Nazis' use of sexual violence against women as part of genocide. In the letter, Lemkin condemned the use of rape to "compel…women to bear children for [the perpetrator's] country."[5] This not only explicitly connected rape and sexual violence to genocide but also acknowledged the blatant gendered violence perpetrators frequently use in genocide. Like the examples from *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, this letter demonstrates Lemkin understood acts of sexual violence, such as rape, to be an act of genocide—one important enough to address with one of the most influential individuals in the Nuremberg trials. The trials did not yield the condemnation of genocide that Lemkin hoped for, as there was not yet legislation on the crime, but this was just the beginning of understanding genocide and the role of sexual violence in genocide.[6]

This letter, alongside his other writings, showcases the significance Lemkin placed on sexual violence in genocide since the coining of the term; however, gendered violence did not truly enter historiographical discussions until the 1990s. Then, news coverage of the genocides in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia highlighted the blatant use of sexual violence in genocidal policy, and prompted scholars to reflect on how issues of gender and sexual violence had been discussed in the historiography.[7] These events also demonstrated that sexual violence was

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the International Criminal Court," in *A Gendered Lens for Genocide Prevention*, eds. Mary Michel Connellan and Christiane Fröhlich (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 83-107; Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphaël Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 47, 90, 149, 154-155, 216.

[5] Raphael Lemkin, "Correspondence to the Right Honorable David Maxwell Fyfe, 1946," AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 1, Folder 18.

[6] For more on Lemkin and his views on sexual violence and rape in Nuremberg, see Douglas Irvin-Erickson, "Sixty Years of Failing to Prosecute Sexual Crimes: From Raphaël Lemkin at Nuremberg to *Lugana* at the International Criminal Court," in *A Gendered Lens for Genocide Prevention*, eds. Mary Michel Connellan and Christiane Fröhlich (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 83-107.

[7] Regina Mühlhäuser, "Understanding Sexual Violence during the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research and Sources," *German History* 39, no. 1 (2021): 22, http://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghaa037.

only one form of “gendered patterns of attack” directed at both men *and* women to attack their gender identities in organized and systematic ways, bringing in a “new moment” in genocide studies that emphasized the gendered nature of the crime.[8]

In the late 1990s, gendered analyses in genocide studies began to focus on exploring instances of sexual violence and rape in genocide, including re-exploring previous instances of genocide, such as the Holocaust. While previously, topics of sexual violence and rape had been considered taboo or an “open secret” in Holocaust and genocide research, after Rwanda and Yugoslavia, scholars viewed sexual violence as a necessary topic of inquiry, allowing for understanding of the process in which a genocide is enacted, how people experienced genocide, and the many motivations of perpetrators.[9] Subsequently, scholars demonstrate that both women *and* men were victims of sexual violence, and perpetrators often used sexual violence to further demoralize and dehumanize victims in genocide.[10] Rape and sexual violence were not mere “by-products” of war and conflict but the result of explicit and conscious decisions of the perpetrator(s).[11] Many scholars have posed several explanations as to why it took the field so long to consider sexual violence and rape in times of genocide including laws or policies against sexual interactions, fears of creating a hierarchy of victims, discomfort broaching these topics with survivors, and victims’ feelings of shame and

[8] Elisa von Joedon-Forgey, “Gender and Genocide,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, eds. Donald Bloxham and A. Drik Moses (Oxford University Press, 2010), 61.
[9] Monika J. Flaschka, “Sexual Violence: Recovering a Suppressed History,” in *A Companion to the Holocaust,* eds. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2020), 469, 470.
[10] For example, Olivera Simić, “Wartime Rape and Its Shunned Victims,” in *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Survey*, 2nd ed., ed. Amy Randall (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 268-288.
[11] Annette Timm, “The Costs of Silencing Holocaust Victims: Why We Must Add Sexual Violence to Our Definition of Genocide,” in *Genocide: The Power and Problems of a Concept*, eds. Andrea Graziosi and Frank E. Sysyn (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022), 46; Regina Mühlhäuser, *Sex and the Nazi Soldier: Violent, Commercial and Consensual Encounters during the War in the Soviet Union*, trans. Jessica Spengler, rev. and ext. ed. (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 31.

guilt.[12] However, scholarly consensus of sexual violence in genocide began to change with the events in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, and continued to change as scholars continued to investigate and re-explore documents and evidence. While this shift in historiographical discussion is significant, Lemkin's writings highlight that he applied similar methods of gendered analysis in his writings on genocide roughly forty years prior. As such, investigating how Lemkin's understanding of how gender influences genocide creates a new foundation for studies of gender in genocide as well as provides insights into the role Lemkin's conceptualization of processes of genocide.

In 1985, Mary Anne Warren introduced the term "gendercide" to describe "forms of sexual discrimination which reduce the relative number of females or males, whether through direct killing or in more indirect ways."[13] Through that definition, Warren established a link between the concept of genocide and gender-selective killing. At this time, concepts of "gynocide" or "femicide" already existed to refer to the killing of women because they were women or possessed traits associated with

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[12] In Holocaust historiography, the common reasoning for not discussing sexual violence are the *Rassenschande* laws. For more on *Rassenschande*, see Stacy Banwell, "Rassenschande, Genocide and the Reproductive Jewish Body: examining the use of rape and sexualized violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust?" *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 15, no. 2 (2016): 208-227, https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2015.1049853. For more on creating a hierarchy of victims, see Lawrence L. Langer, "Gendered Suffering? Women in Holocaust Testimonies," in *Women in the Holocaust*, edited by Lenore J. Weitzman and Dalia Ofer (Yale University Press, 1998), 351-363. An example of scholars not being comfortable with discussing sexual violence in interviews with survivors is Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (W. W. Morton & Company, 2010), 185. For more about broaching these topics in interviews, see Joan Ringelheim, "The Split Between Gender and the Holocaust," in *Women in the Holocaust*, edited by Lenore J. Weitzman and Dalia Ofer (Yale University Press, 1998), 340-350. For more on victims feeling ashamed, see Monika J. Flaschka, "Sexual Violence: Recovering a Suppressed History," in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, eds. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2020), 474-477.

[13] Mary Anne Warren, *Gendercide: The Implications of Sex Selection* (Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), 1.

femaleness.[14] While acknowledging how women are targeted due to their gender identity, Warren's approach expands the concepts of gynocide and femicide to also include how men are also affected by gender-discriminatory practices in instances of mass violence.[15] Unlike femicide, which addresses the murder of women, gendercide takes into account other methods of violence such as sexual violence and rape as weapons of war and genocide. After the initial introduction of the concept, gendercide did not gain much popularity; it was not until Adam Jones reintroduced the term to historiography in 2001 that gendercide began to be explored in genocide research. Then, Jones highlighted how gendercide could be used as a framework to investigate gender distinctions in genocide and relationality between individuals.[16] Whereas Warren defines gendercide in sex-selective terms, Øystein Gullvåg Holter argues that conflicts that result in discriminatory killings emerge from tensions surrounding social constructions of gender and gender identities, not merely one's biological sex.[17] Additionally, since its reintroduction, scholars have expanded the concept of gendercide to include practices of mass rape and sexual

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[14] The term "gynocide" was first introduced in 1974 by Andrea Dworkin to discuss witch trials and Chinese footbinding of women to refer to the wrongful killing of and violence against girls and women. For more, see Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (E.P. Dutton, 1974). Since its coining, it has not been largely applied in relation to genocide. Comparatively, "femicide" has been deployed to discuss genocides in Latin America and East Asia. Femicide was first introduced by John Corry as an alternative to homicide that specifically looked at the intentional killing of a woman. Feminist activists in Latin America have pushed for legislation to prevent femicide and provide avenues for prosecution of the crime. For more on femicide in Latin America, see Brenda G. Werth and Katherine Zien, eds., *Bodies on the Front Lines: Performance, Gender, and Sexuality in Latin America and the Caribbean* (University of Michigan Press, 2024).

[15] Warren, *Gendercide*, 22.

[16] Adam Jones, "Gendercide and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): 185-211, https://doi.org/10.1080/713677599. This article was followed by an edited volume exploring the nuances of the theory of gendercide: Adam Jones, ed., *Gendercide and Genocide* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2004).

[17] Øystein Gullvåg Holter, "A Theory of Gendercide," in *Gendercide and Genocide,* ed. Adam Jones (Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 63.

violence to attack a specific gender in the definition.[18] This expanded concept of gendercide, then, allows for careful exploration of the gender-informed policy decisions of perpetrators and recognizes how notions of gender influence decisions and motivations of perpetrators in genocide.[19]

This article explores gendered violence in genocide as depicted in Raphael Lemkin's case study research he conducted after the adoption of the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC). To demonstrate the utility of the framework of genocide established in the UNGC, Lemkin set out to write a three-volume history of genocide that explored examples of genocide from ancient and biblical times through to the Holocaust. He died before he could finish the volumes, but he still wrote several chapters towards the project.[20] By looking at his case studies, I am able to see how Lemkin constructed narratives of genocide and identify the aspects of the violence he saw as most important to include. Here, I focus on three sets of case studies to examine how Lemkin portrayed sex- and gender-based violence in genocide: his manuscripts on the Armenian genocide, his case studies on German colonization of Africa, and his chapters on Mongol genocides.[21] While these are not the only case studies in which Lemkin

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[18] For example, Anthony Marino, "Mass Rape of Women Can Be a Form of Genocide," in *Gendercide*, ed. Noah Berlatsky (Greenhaven Press, 2014), 127-141; Will Storr, "Rape of Men is Often Unacknowledged," in *Gendercide*, ed. Noah Berlatsky (Greenhaven Press, 2014), 142-151.

[19] Jones, "Gendercide and Genocide," 186.

[20] Steven Leonard Jacobs, "Lemkin on Genocide: An Introduction," in *Lemkin on Genocide*, ed. Steven Leonard Jacobs (Lexington Books, 2012), x. These case studies are located in the American Jewish Archives [hereafter AJA] in Cincinnati, OH, the American Jewish Historical Society [hereafter AJHS] in New York, NY, and the New York Public Library [NYPL] in New York, NY. I was unable to access the case studies at the NYPL, so this article pulls from those housed at the AJA and the AJHS. Lemkin's case studies offer a lot for comparative studies of genocide. For more, see A. Dirk Moses, "The Holocaust and World History: Raphael Lemkin and Comparative Methodology," in *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, ed. Dan Stone (Berghahn Books, 2012), 272-289.

[21] The case studies I am pulling from are Raphael Lemkin, "The Mongols," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6; Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of Hungary," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6; Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of Asia under Tamerlane," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 8,

includes gendered violence, focusing on these three cases allows for deeper exploration into *how* Lemkin frames these acts within his larger narratives. Throughout my investigation, I examine Lemkin's writings through the framework of gendercide to investigate Lemkin's perspective of gender and gendered violence in genocide to demonstrate one method of examining gendered violence in genocide and connect Lemkin's writings from the 1940s and 50s to more recent historiographical discussions. I adopt the expanded concept of gendercide to recognize discriminatory killings based on one's perceived gender identity as well as the incorporation of gendered violence. In these three case studies, Lemkin highlighted acts of violence that specifically targeted men *and* women and argued that everyone is at risk of gendered violence in genocide. Lemkin's case studies show that his letter to David Maxwell Fyfe was representative of a much deeper effort to understand gender-based violence in genocide. This demonstrates that, despite its relatively late inclusion in the scholarship of genocide studies, gender has been present from the very start.

Lemkin's framework of gender is that of the gender binary of men and women. However, while writing in this limiting perspective of gender, Lemkin still emphasized power imbalances and relational aspects of gender as seen in gender scholarship. To him, one's gender is directly connected to the sex they were assigned at birth, but it also represents a range of social relations and power hierarchies that influence one's behavior and thinking. I propose Lemkin's framework not as a template for thinking of gender solely through men and women, but instead to demonstrate how, from his initial coining of the term, Lemkin always understood gender as a product of society that carries beliefs about one's

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Folder 12; Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of Poland," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6; Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of the Kwaresmian Empire under the Mongols," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6; Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14; Raphael Lemkin, "Short Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 15; Raphael Lemkin, "Hereros," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 12; Raphael Lemkin, "The Germans in Africa," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 9.

role and behavior. As such, when I use gender, I refer to Joan Scott's theorization of gender that demonstrated "the particular and contextually specific ways in which politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics."[22] According to Scott's theorization, and reflected in Lemkin's writings, genocidal politics and ideologies existed in relation to gender: gender influenced and shaped genocidal policies just as these policies influenced individuals' gender identities and experiences.

In the following sections, I focus on various methods of gendered violence that Lemkin depicted in his case studies, including sex-selective killings or enslavement, sexual violence or rape, differing methods of physical violence, and various methods of psychological violence centered on targeting one's gender identity. I argue that gender was always central to Lemkin's concept of genocide and that he viewed gendered violence as a prominent feature of genocide. Additionally, I demonstrate that gendered violence, to Lemkin, expanded beyond sexual violence and rape, and also included the many ways perpetrators seek to attack and manipulate one's identity to inflict additional pain and suffering.

**Sexual Violence and Sexualized Violence**

The most common method of gendered violence that Lemkin portrayed in his case studies was instances of sexual violence and rape. Some instances Lemkin included took place *during* the genocide, while others demonstrated how perpetrators would sometimes sexually enslave women, taking these women to their homes against their will. This section explores accounts of non-consensual sexual acts in Lemkin's case studies.[23] As seen through the prevalence in examples of sexual violence

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[22] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1070, http://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/91.5.1053.

[23] I frame all sexual encounters between perpetrator as non-consensual to demonstrate the inherent power imbalance and recognize the lack of choice the victims had. Still, that is not to say that victims of sexual violence here had no agency. As the examples will show, victims resisted and fought back against the attack, strategically working to prevent attacks whenever possible. While some scholars will argue about degree of consent in cases of sexual barter, Lemkin did not feature examples of sexual barter where the lines between consent and non-consent blur. For more on sexual barter and blurred lines of

and rape in Lemkin's case studies, sexual violence played a prominent role in Lemkin's conceptualization of genocide as perpetrators frequently used sexual violence as a method of genocide. Furthermore, Lemkin's most detailed and explicit language regarding genocidal violence comes from his depictions of sexual violence, highlighting the importance of sexual violence and rape to Lemkin's idea of genocide. That Lemkin used the word "rape" at all is significant, explicitly addressing the violence and brutality of the act. In other words, for Lemkin, sexual violence was essential to the concept of genocide.

Lemkin's writings on the Armenian genocide contain the most examples of sexual violence and rape as a part of genocide.[24] This is not necessarily surprising; Lemkin wrote a manuscript-length overview on the Turkish violence against the Armenians that allowed him to go into greater detail on the methods of violence used by the Turks and include specific anecdotes of victims' experiences.[25] In addition, the Armenian genocide provides one of the clearest examples of genocide in which rape, sexual violence, and sex-discriminatory practices dictated genocidal policy and impacted the outcome of the events.[26] Aspects of sexual violence in the Armenian genocide, including the rape of women, featured not only in survivor and witness accounts, but also in popular culture as part of the

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consent, see Anna Hájková, "Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto," *Signs* 38, no. 3 (2013): 503-533, http://doi.org/10.1086/668607; Katya Gusarov, "Sexual Barter and Jewish Women's Effort to Save their Lives: Accounts from the Righteous Among the Nations Archives," *German History* 39, no. 1 (2021): 100-111, https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghaa034.

[24] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14. It is not necessarily surprising that the most examples of sexual violence are found in this chapter. Lemkin wrote a manuscript-length overview on the Turkish violence against the Armenians that allowed him to go into greater detail on the methods of violence used by the Turks and include specific anecdotes of victims' experiences.

[25] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14.

[26] Sanasarian, "Gender Distinction in the Genocidal Process."

public memory of the events.[27] As such, given the prominence of sexual violence during the genocide, Lemkin's writings connect to a larger historiography on the Armenian genocide and sexual violence.

Throughout his writings on Armenia, Lemkin frequently highlighted the Turks' use of rape to demoralize and assault the Armenian women. In some instances, he wrote of the Turks "violating the women."[28] Other times, he specifically used the word "rape" to describe and define the act.[29] By not softening his language, Lemkin left no room for misinterpreting the events, explicitly portraying the violence as it happened. Still, both demonstrate how Lemkin clearly and explicitly prioritized the role of sexual violence and rape in the genocide in Armenia. Furthermore, he specified that it was not just young women whom the Turks assaulted, but instead "all females from little girls to old women," speaking to the fact that this sexual violence did not merely arise out of "lust" or sexual attraction, but a deliberate attack meant to demoralize and subjugate the Armenians.[30] As such, he demonstrated the purpose and intent behind the violence, responding to a key aspect of the UNGC. Lemkin argued that the Turks "carried on a systematic rape of Armenian women."[31] In portraying the sexual violence against the Armenian women as a "systematic rape," Lemkin attributed the widespread rape and sexual assault of women as a part of the Turkish genocidal policy in Armenia. He spoke to the deliberate intent behind these acts and fought against the idea that these assaults were the result of mere sexual attraction or the actions individual undisciplined soldiers.

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[27] Donna-Lee Frieze, "Arshaluys Mardigian/Aurora Mardiganian: Absorption, Stardom, Exploitation, and Empowerment," in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators*, eds. Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren (Indiana University Press, 2018), 58-76.

[28] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, pages 25, 30, 38, 42.

[29] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, pages 36, 52, 54, 60, 62, 69.

[30] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 38.

[31] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 38.

Instead, Lemkin portrayed the sexual violence and rape in the Armenian genocide as a deliberate and intentional effort by the Turks to use rape as a weapon.

Moreover, Lemkin described the Turks' genocidal policy as involving four methods for "exterminat[ing]" the Armenians: "starvation, rape, disease and exhaustion."[32] Here, Lemkin attributed the rape of Armenians to being just as central to the genocide as other acts specifically designed to destroy the group. For Lemkin, rape was not merely a by-product or secondary aspect of the genocide, but a key act closely tied to the Turk's elimination of Armenians. As such, this demonstrates that Lemkin viewed the use of rape and sexual violence to be a method of genocide in and of itself, not tied to another method.

Lemkin likewise depicted the ways Armenian women attempted to avoid or escape being raped, testifying to the prevalent nature of sexual assault and how knowledge of the attacks spread. In doing so, he also highlighted the agency of these women as they worked to avoid sexual assault. He shared one story of a mother in the town of Missis who "tied her eight daughters together by the[ir] hair so that they could not escape from the house to be raped and tortured by the Turks, preferring to have them burn to death in the house with her."[33] Lemkin also wrote that "mothers threw their children into the rivers to end their sufferings" hoping to prevent their children from being raped as they had been.[34] These graphic anecdotes of mothers trying to protect their children, knowing the potential fate of sexual assault, speak to the brutality of the Turks. Lemkin likened the Turkish soldiers to dogs, describing their animalistic behavior as they repeatedly raped women "until [the women were] released by death."[35]

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[32] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 65.
[33] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 58.
[34] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 67.
[35] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 67.

Another form of sexual violence Lemkin described in his writings on Armenia was the kidnapping of Armenian girls and women and subsequent enslavement in Turkish harems.[36] Lemkin demonstrated how Armenian women were not just seen as conquests during the genocide, but that the Turks also considered them for their sexual use after the genocide. As such, Lemkin wrote that many "young women were collected as spoils of war."[37] This violence, then, served to further dehumanize and attack the Armenian population as the Turkish perpetrators viewed Armenian women not as humans, but instead understood their value in terms of their sexuality.

Lemkin also frequently portrayed instances of sexual violence and rape in his chapters on various Mongol conquests. In fact, Lemkin ascribed the "raping and maltreating of women" to be a method of physical genocide in the case of the Mongols.[38] By linking rape and sexual violence to physical genocide, Lemkin prioritized gendered violence in genocide and explicitly connected the violence to the physical continuation of a group. In his writing on the Mongol conquest of Hungary, Lemkin wrote that the "women were tortured and ravaged in ways which had better remained untold."[39] In describing the sexual assault of women in this way, Lemkin emphasized the brutality and horrific nature of the act. His use of the word "ravaged," similar to his use of the word "violate" in his discussion of Armenia, testified to the demeaning and demoralizing purpose of the act. As such, his language argued that these acts worked to attack more than the bodies of the women, but the group itself.

Similarly, Lemkin demonstrated the prevalence of sexual violence in German colonization in Africa. He argued that, as the German soldiers

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[36] Raphael Lemkin, "Short Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 15.
[37] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 34.
[38] Raphael Lemkin, "The Mongols," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6.
[39] Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of Hungary," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6.

"were allowed to loot, rape, and torture," German leadership understood these acts of sexual violence to be part of African conquest and purposefully allowed the acts to take place, thereby demonstrating intent. Lemkin also emphasized the lasting effects of these assaults. He stressed that many women "were generally infected with syphilis," which, in turn, further endangered them and their families through the spread of disease.[40] By identifying sexual violence as an understood and frequent component of German colonization, Lemkin thereby demonstrated how it led to genocide. In the case of the Herero genocide, Lemkin included a statement by a Herero man who spoke of how venereal disease spread due to German soldiers raping Herero women and resulted the sterilization of many women. Upon the women returning to their communities, this then led to the spread of disease to the women's husbands and the sterilization of Herero men.[41] With this anecdote, Lemkin further argued that sexual violence and rape of women should be understood as an act of genocide as it could change or eliminate a group's ability to physically reproduce. In other words, he connected sexual violence to processes of biological genocide.[42] As such, rape and sexual violence could serve as a weapon against family and reproduction, but could also be used as a weapon to target individuals' identity and dignity as a form of physical torture.

Sexual violence and rape clearly played a prominent role in Lemkin's case studies.[43] However, some instances of violence, while sexual, do not explicitly fall in the category of sexual assault or rape. Regina Mühlhäuser refers to these acts as "sexualized violence"—actions

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[40] Raphael Lemkin, "The Germans in Africa," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 9.
[41] Raphael Lemkin, "Hereros," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 12.
[42] Fein, "Genocide and Gender," 43; Joedon-Forgey, "Gender and Genocide," 61, 78.
[43] These three cases were not the only cases to include sexual violence. Others include, Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of the Yucatan," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 11; Raphael Lemkin, "Spanish Colonial Genocide," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 11; Raphael Lemkin, "Chios," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 5; Raphael Lemkin, "Incas," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 1; Raphael Lemkin, "Bulgarian Massacre–1876," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 16.

that do not explicitly include sexual acts but are sexual in nature such as forced disrobement, forced inspection of genitalia, or mutilation of genitalia.[44] Each of these acts is rooted in ideas and concepts deemed sexual in society even if they do not feature a sexual encounter. Here, I adopt this framework to highlight acts of sexualized violence in Lemkin's case studies, demonstrating a spectrum of violence that is fully rooted in concepts of gender and sexuality.

The most common form of sexualized violence Lemkin depicted was the mutilation of genitalia. In his manuscript on Armenia, he wrote of bodies flowing in the Euphrates River, "hideously mutilated, the males having their sexual organs cut off."[45] While Lemkin's depiction remains unclear if this mutilation took place before or after death, it demonstrated the sexual and gendered influences of Turkish perpetrators and connected to ideas of reproduction through castration.[46] Additionally, this violence served to directly attack one's masculinity and strip men of it. As such, this violence against Armenian men is a direct attack on their gender identities through physical mutilation.

Similar examples come from his discussion of German colonization in Africa. Here, Lemkin included a statement from Hendrik Witbooi, a chief of the Ikhowesin people and leader of the Nama revolt against the Germans. Witbooi described how "'[the Germans] stretche[d] persons on their back and flog[ged] them on the stomach and between the

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[44] Regina Mühlhäuser, "Sex, Race, Violence: German Soldiers' Sexual Encounters with Local Women and Men during the War and the Occupation in the Soviet Union, 1941-1945," in *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany,* eds. David O. Pendas, Mark Roseman, Richard F. Wetzell (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 468-469; Regina Mühlhäuser, "Sexual Violence and the Holocaust," in *Gender: War*, ed. Andrea Petö (Macmillan, 2017), 101. See also, Edward B. Westermann, "Crossing the Threshold of Sexual Violence: Sexual Humiliation and the Practice of Performative Masculinity," *Journal of Holocaust Research* 38, no. 3 (2004), 337-8, https://doi.org/10.1080/25785648.2024.2363681.
[45] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 66.
[46] Castration was also depicted as a method of genocide in Raphael Lemkin, "Moors and Moriscos," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 9.

legs be they male or female.'"[47] While not his direct words, Lemkin's inclusion of this quote clearly demonstrates the significance Lemkin placed on this act and the violence African men and women suffered. Similarly, later in the chapter, Lemkin highlighted the fact that, to ease trouble of taking the heads of African people, soldiers chose to bring the genitals of the people they killed, both as a trophy and to demonstrate the number of eliminated "enemies."[48] As such, this serves as another example of sexualized violence.

Explicit sexual violence consistently played a critical role in Lemkin's case studies; Lemkin did not shy away from discussing these topics and often used descriptive language to highlight the brutality individuals suffered during genocide. Instead, Lemkin argued that rape and sexual violence was a frequent method of genocide that worked to inflict physical violence against individuals of a group as well as attack their gender identities. To Lemkin, perpetrators intentionally and systematically employed rape and sexual violence to destroy victims through humiliation, shame, and physical torture. Moreover, Lemkin's case studies also included examples of sexualized violence in genocide, which in turn provides an alternative framework to understand the role of sexual violence in genocide.

## Psychological Violence

Lemkin also frequently featured psychological violence in his narratives of genocide. Societal gender roles shape how victims perceive the events around them just as much as perpetrators shape genocidal policy around these understood gender roles. As such, acts of gendered violence in genocide often also served as acts of psychological violence in which the perpetrator directly attacks aspects of the victims' gender

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[47] Raphael Lemkin, "The Germans in Africa," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 9. Hendrik Witbooi is a notable figure in the Herero genocide, known for his role in leading resistance against the German colonizers. For more on Witbooi, see Matthias Goldmann, "The Ambiguity of Colonial International Law: Three Approaches to the Namibian Genocide," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 37, no. 3 (2024): 580-607, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0922156523000742.
[48] Raphael Lemkin, "The Germans in Africa," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 9.

identity to demoralize and dehumanize members of the victim group. For example, Achille Mbembe argues that when a perpetrator rapes and assaults a man's wife in front of him, the perpetrator symbolically castrates the husband who watches, helpless, unable to fulfill the society-prescribed role of protector of their family. Mbembe also explores how the husband or witness can then feel responsible or guilty for their wife's trauma as they were unable to stop or prevent the assault.[49] Similarly, Elisa von Joedon-Forgey writes that "women and girls are tortured specifically as mothers, daughters, and sisters; similarly, men and boys are targeted as fathers, sons, and brothers," emphasizing how perpetrators specifically target individuals based on their gender identity, often linked to family.[50] This section explores Lemkin's portrayal of the psychological attacks perpetrators use against victim groups to specifically target gender identity and familial roles tied to gender. While not present in every case study that depicts gendered violence, Lemkin's writings highlighted the impact of these acts on victims and demonstrated how gendered violence not only led to physical consequences but also simultaneously worked to demoralize and dehumanize the victim group.

In his case study on the Mongol conquest in Hungary, Lemkin wrote that the "Mongols found it particularly to their taste to violate these women in front of the eyes of their relatives."[51] Here, he provided a clear example of how acts of sexual violence worked to target men *and* women, albeit in different ways: the women were targeted through the physical act of rape, while the men suffered as the Mongols forced them to witness the act. Lemkin placed this discussion in his section of cultural genocide, emphasizing his view of how these acts worked to affect culture through the psychological impact on individuals. Incidentally, Lemkin originally

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[49] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (Duke University Press), 148, 150.

[50] Joedon-Forgey, "Gender and Genocide," 73. For more see Elisa von Joedon-Forgey, "The Devil in the Details: 'Life Force Atrocities' and the Assault on the Family in Times of Conflict," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 5, no. 2 (2010): 1-19, http://doi.org/10.1353/gsp.0.0042. Further discussion of this idea of the reproductive root of genocide and family will take place in chapter 3.

[51] Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of Hungary," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6.

titled this subsection "Rape," although he crossed out that title on the typescript draft and replaced it with "Demoralization."[52] The fact that he assigned an entire section to discussing rape demonstrates that Lemkin understood rape and sexual violence to be a key feature in the genocide in Hungary. Therefore, when he titled the subsection "Rape," Lemkin explicitly demonstrated to the reader that rape was a central aspect in the process of genocide. However, by replacing the original title with "demoralization," he also addressed the psychological effects from the trauma of rape and drew a connection between this chapter and acts of sexual violence to his discussions of demoralization in his other case studies. The content of the subsection remained unchanged; however, the new title assigns a different meaning and weight to the psychological impact the rape of women had on Hungarian society.

Lemkin depicted similar acts of violence in his discussion of the Mongol conquest of the Kwaresmian Empire in central Asia. Lemkin highlighted witnesses' feelings of helplessness as they were unable to prevent the assault. In fact, Lemkin wrote that "many preferred death" than watching the Mongols rape their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters, which further emphasized the psychological trauma and shame that came from being forced to witness the assault. Additionally, Lemkin described the Mongols as "barbarians" who took pleasure in "dishonor[ing] the women before the eyes of their relations, who had in their helplessness nothing but their tears to give them," demonstrating that this was a core strategy in their conquests.[53]

Lemkin also used this imagery in his discussion of massacres of Armenians in the 1890s. "To increase the degradation of the Armenians," Lemkin wrote, "the men of the families were tied to posts" to watch as the

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[52] Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of Hungary," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6. In the published collection of some of Lemkin's case studies, the fact that "Demoralization" was not the original title of the subsection is not noted whereas in other places in the edited collection, Lemkin's notations are mentioned in footnotes. This takes place on Raphael Lemkin, *Lemkin on Genocide*, ed. Steven Leonard Jacobs (Lexington Books, 2012), 328.
[53] Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of the Kwaresmian Empire under the Mongols," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6.

Turks raped the women.[54] Lemkin demonstrated the explicit intent of the Turks to create a situation specifically to degrade and attack the psyches of the men. Lemkin highlighted how the men had no choice but to watch—"if they protested it meant death by torture."[55] Lemkin's language not only created a connection to the example in the Kwaresmian Empire, but also expressed the intentionality of these acts. The psychological trauma of witnessing one's wife, sister, mother, or daughter being raped was not an unplanned side-effect, but purposeful and carefully thought out by the Turkish perpetrators, speaking to how perpetrators specifically seek to attack gender and family roles in genocide.

In his discussion of German colonization in Africa, Lemkin included a subsection titled "Abasement of Chiefs." The section focused on the Germans' disrespectful treatment of the tribes' leaders and portrayed this as an attack against their masculinity and authority. Lemkin explicitly that the leaders' "dignity" came under attack. Lemkin commonly referred to the conquests of the German military as the taking of ownership and "appropriation" of the Africans' women and land.[56] Lemkin thereby emphasized the psychological toll of these acts, as their disregard of the Africans' authority stripped them of their power. Lemkin wrote in a section titled "Genocide" that the African men "lost all claim on their women."[57] Here, Lemkin situated this abasement and demoralization through the gender roles that dictate the man holds the authority and is the protector and provider for others. Therefore, when the Germans claimed the women and seized African land, the African men understood this as they failed to protect and provide, leading to their debasement and resulting in psychological pain. Through Lemkin's words, such as his choice to depict the acts of the Germans as "appropriat[ing]" what

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[54] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 38.
[55] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 38.
[56] Raphael Lemkin, "The Germans in Africa," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 9.
[57] Raphael Lemkin, "Hereros," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 12.

belonged to the African men, he acknowledged the psychological toll of these acts as an attack against the men's gender identity.

Lemkin's writings demonstrate the ways that perpetrators shape and create methods of violence to attack the gender identities of individuals. While the men discussed in his writings on Armenia were not the victims of sexual violence themselves, the Turkish perpetrators created scenarios that inflicted violence against them all the same, playing on concepts of gender and masculinity to do so. However, as seen through the anecdotes of mothers sacrificing their children to protect them from a worse fate, it was not only men that were affected by this psychological violence. The gender roles at play in creating these violent scenarios directly connect to ideas of family which, through processes of reproduction, are inherently connected to concepts of gender. As such, Lemkin's case studies demonstrate how gender informed and shaped genocidal policy.

**Gendered Experiences, Gendered Reactions**

Thus far, this article has examined Lemkin's case studies to demonstrate the role he assigned gendered violence in genocide, largely focusing on how Lemkin connected ideas of gender to the formation of genocidal policy and the actions of perpetrators. However, Lemkin's writings also demonstrate how ideas of gender influenced how individuals responded to the violence of the perpetrators.

Previously, I shared an anecdote from Lemkin's manuscript on Armenia in which a mother tied her daughters' hair together so that they would burn down with their house instead of escaping and being caught by Turkish soldiers and raped.[58] This horrific story is one example of how individuals' gender identities shaped the ways in which they reacted to genocide. This woman was a mother, a gendered role based in providing care for one's children, creating a safe environment, and protecting them. In the mind of this woman, she was caring for her children and protecting them by controlling the manner in which they would die. She recognized

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[58] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 58.

that she would not be able to ensure their safety and so she constructed a scenario in which they would die together. This mother was not the only one to do so. Lemkin also included several other anecdotes of mothers sacrificing their children in one way or another or giving their children away in hopes that it would save them from a worse fate.[59] Here, Lemkin explicitly demonstrated how gendered familial roles influenced the ways individuals reacted to genocidal violence.

Lemkin's writings on Armenia contain more examples of instances in which gender informed individuals' reactions to the events than his other case studies.[60] However, the example of the "Debasement of Chiefs" has similar characteristics.[61] While Lemkin did not include specific examples of individuals and their reactions, the gender roles that shaped the genocidal policy in attacking the masculinity and authority of the African leaders also shaped how these men understood and perceived these attacks. Similarly, in his writings on Mongols raping women in front of their families, Lemkin wrote that many family members forced to witness the act "preferred death to the revolting spectacle."[62] In doing so, Lemkin demonstrated how these men's gender identities, based in ideas of protection attached to masculinity, were attacked, and it shaped and informed their reactions and heightening the suffering of the attack.

There has been a significant amount of research about how gender informs the ways that individuals understand and react to genocide.[63] Still,

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[59] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 67.

[60] This is likely due, in part, to the fact that Lemkin wrote a manuscript-length case study on Armenia of 125 pages while most of his typescript drafts were around 30 pages means he was able to go into greater detail on the events. Furthermore, given the recency of the Armenian genocide in comparison to some of the other case studies he explored, Lemkin likely had more access to records of witness and survivor testimony.

[61] Raphael Lemkin, "The Germans in Africa," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 9.

[62] Raphael Lemkin, "The Case of the Kwaresmian Empire under the Mongols," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6.

[63] For example, see Elisa von Joedon-Forgey, "Beyond the Binaries: Gender and the Future of Genocide Studies and Prevention," in *Genocide and Gender in the Twentieth*

Lemkin's inclusion of examples in his case studies is significant, as it shows that he viewed gender in genocide not only through shaping genocidal policy and violence. Instead, his writings demonstrate that Lemkin understood and actively depicted how gender roles influenced individuals' reactions as early as the 1950s, decades before these ideas are seen in historiographical discussions.

**Sex- and Gender-Selective Methods of Violence**

While this chapter has largely focused on sexual or sexualized violence as parts of gendercide, this final section returns to the original meaning of gendercide: sex-selective killings and methods of violence.[64] Throughout Lemkin's case studies, he explicitly noted when men were killed while women lived and vice versa. In doing so, Lemkin emphasized how genocidal policy actively responds to concepts of gender and sex and is often shaped around these concepts to account for gender roles.

Oftentimes, instances of sex-selective killings took place in conversation with ideas of labor and slavery. In the case of the Mongols, Lemkin specified that Mongol perpetrators often captured victims with the intent to use them for slave labor. More significantly, however, Lemkin noted that "victims [were] used for varying purposes and services," highlighting the varied nature of labor that enslaved individuals performed. Lemkin argued that the Mongols most commonly enslaved men to serve in the military, while murdering women and children, as the Mongols viewed the men as most useful for military work.[65] In other words, Lemkin demonstrated how gender actively shaped the processes of enslavement in Mongol conquests. Due to gendered conceptions of

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*Century: A Comparative Survey*, 2nd ed., ed. Amy Randall (Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 375-403; Marian Kaplan, "Gender: A Crucial Tool in Holocaust Research," in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators*, eds. Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren (Indiana University Press, 2018), 97-110; Michelle Kelso, "No Shelter to Cry In: Romani Girls and Responsibility during the Holocaust," in *Women and Genocide: Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators*, eds. Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren (Indiana University Press, 2018), 137-158.

[64] Warren, *Gendercide*, 1.

[65] Raphael Lemkin, "The Mongols," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 6.

violence, brutality, and physical labor, the Mongols understood and viewed the men as more useful, leading to the elimination of those deemed not useful.[66]

In his discussion of the Herero genocide, Lemkin emphasized the number of Herero women the Germans enslaved to work in brothels. Here, too, concepts of gender—and gendered labor—informed and shaped processes of enslavement during genocide. Just as the men in the case of the Mongols were valued for their potential in the military, German colonizers understood Herero women for their sexuality, finding use and value in physically exerting their dominance over the Herero women and the sexual pleasure the soldiers received. Through his depiction of German soldiers enslaving Herero women, Lemkin highlighted how this act was understood as violent by the Herero women *and* men as they were separated. Furthermore, Lemkin dedicated an entire subsection to this discussion of sexual enslavement entitled "Immorality and Degradation." This clearly indicated that Lemkin saw these acts as the degradation of these individuals through the physical and psychological violence these acts caused. The women suffered sexual assault and rape, many contracting venereal diseases that left them sterile. The men, on the other hand, were powerless to stop this, leading to feelings of failure and emasculation.[67]

In his discussion of sexual slavery in his chapter on the Herero genocide, Lemkin also showed that the Germans enslaved Herero men to work in the mines.[68] This highlighted the gendered differences between men and women and what was seen as valuable to the German colonizers: the Germans valued the women for their sexuality, connecting to concepts of gender and femininity, and the Herero men for the physical labor they could offer. Men and women were enslaved for a specific gendered

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[66] Lemkin depicts a similar instance in which the men were enslaved for military purposes while women and children were killed in Raphael Lemkin, "Moors and Moriscos," n.d., n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 9.
[67] Raphael Lemkin, "Hereros," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 12.
[68] Raphael Lemkin, "Hereros," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 6, Folder 12.

purpose. As such, gender-selective violence is not restricted to gender-selective killings. German colonizers reduced women to their sexuality just as they reduced men to their physical labor, reproducing a colonial gendered concept of labor that distinguished between men and women in acceptable forms of work. When Lemkin wrote separately of the methods of enslavement of men and women, he demonstrated how perpetrators understood and enacted violence by basing it in concepts of gender. This, in turn, resulted in different treatment that reduced people to their understood bodily use. In short, Lemkin described gendercide.

Lemkin provided other examples of gender-selective violence in his writings on Armenia. Lemkin depicted a long history of how, while the Turkish perpetrators murdered Armenian men, the women were spared and sold into slavery, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century under Ottoman violence.[69] By establishing this background, Lemkin connected Ottoman violence in the 1840s to aspects of the genocide in 1915. Discussing the genocide in 1915, Lemkin wrote that the "men and boys were killed, and the women and girls driven in caravans," dying in alternative ways, such as the sexual violence discussed earlier in this chapter.[70] While Lemkin demonstrated that the initial sparing of women and children did not necessarily mean that they would not die later at the hands of the Turks, he established a difference in the process of genocide that was explicitly linked to gender. The women were likely to die during the deportations, but the men had no opportunity of survival. They could not convert to Islam and join a Turkish family. Either through enslavement or conversion, women had a higher likelihood of surviving the genocide. Indeed, Lemkin connected Turkish leadership and explicit government instructions to the abduction of women and children. Put definitively, Lemkin demonstrated and established the Turkish government's intent in

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[69] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 3.

[70] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 74. Similar distinctions can be seen in Raphael Lemkin, "The Persecution of the Catholics in Japan in the 16th and 17th Centuries," n.d., AJA, MS 60, Raphael Lemkin Papers, Box 7, Folder 4.

the Armenian genocide.[71] By explicitly referencing the Turkish government's role in the gender-selective forms of violence, Lemkin also emphasized that gender-selective treatment was an intentional aspect of the genocide policy.[72]

Alongside gender-selective killings and enslavements, Lemkin's writings on Armenia also highlighted other forms of violence impacted by gender, such as the treatment of Armenian bodies. As discussed earlier regarding sexualized violence, there were reports of Turkish soldier's removing Armenian men's genitalia around the time of death.[73] Similar to how Lemkin depicted the mutilation of men's bodies, Lemkin also referenced to the fact that many Armenian women's bodies were found naked.[74] Like in the case of the mutilation of men's genitalia, it is unclear from Lemkin's writings if the disrobement took place before or after Turkish soldiers murdered the women. However, the fact that Lemkin included that detail signifies that he viewed this fact to be important to the violence that took place during the genocide. Finding women's naked bodies connects to other aspects of the Armenian genocide that are based in gender and sexualized violence, providing another aspect of violence that differed in accordance with ideas of gender.

Mary Anne Warren created the concept of gendercide to account for instances in which one gender suffered higher fatalities than another. However, Lemkin's writings provide examples of gender-selective violence other than killings, such as enslavement on account of ideas of gender. By recognizing the many forms of violence that are influenced by gender, Lemkin's writings highlight the many ways that perpetrators of genocide are influenced by societal conceptions of gender.

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[71] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 40.
[72] Similar examples can be found in Raphael Lemkin, "British Treatment of Ireland," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, AJHS, Box 8, Folder 5.
[73] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 66.
[74] Raphael Lemkin, "Manuscript on the Turkish Massacre of Armenians," n.d., AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 8, Folder 14, page 86.

## A Long History of Gender and Genocide

As demonstrated through Raphael Lemkin's writings, concepts of gender and gendered violence have been tied to the idea of genocide since the very beginnings of the term. From the coining of the term in *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Lemkin understood gender to play a significant role in genocide.[75] His letter to Matthew Fyfe quoted at the beginning of this article highlights that he advocated for the role of sexual violence in the Holocaust to be recognized at the Nuremberg, and explicitly connected sexual violence to the concept of genocide.[76]

Lemkin understood gender and gendered violence as a critical component of his conception of genocide, and many women agreed with him at the time. Sara Kimble shows that many women and women's organizations viewed the ratification of the UNGC as a women's issue, citing the specific vulnerabilities of women in times of war and conflict.[77] Lemkin himself acknowledged the help and support of many women's organizations and individual women in his autobiography.[78] However, as Lemkin's writings show, genocide is not merely a women's issue, and gender shapes genocidal policy not only to target women, but also to target women *and* men through various attacks based on ideas and concepts of gender.

The framework of gendered violence in Lemkin's case studies provides us with a way to further explore gender and its connection to genocide. Lemkin's case studies place the act of sexual violence and rape as a method of genocide, working to physically attack a group as well as demoralize individuals within it. As such, Lemkin's writings demonstrate that gender has *always* played a role in genocide. His case studies demonstrate that gender has a much greater impact in the process of

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[75] Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe,* xiv, 86, 89, 92, 213, 316.
[76] Raphael Lemkin, "Correspondence to the Right Honorable David Maxwell Fyfe, 1946," AJHS, P-154 Raphel Lemkin Collection, Box 1, Folder 18.
[77] Sara L. Kimble, "The Genocide Convention is '*Our* Cause': International Women's Advocacy for the Criminalization of Genocide, 1945–1952," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 38, no. 3 (2024): 323-339, https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/dcae045.
[78] Raphael Lemkin, *Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin,* ed. Donna-Lee Frieze (Yale University Press, 2013), 124-5, 188, 192, 222.

genocide, from perpetrators' intentions behind methods of violence to the reactions of individuals.

Returning to Lemkin's writings demonstrates that the same questions scholars discuss today are questions Lemkin wrestled with in the 1940s and 50s. Using Lemkin's framework of gendered violence in genocide, then, highlights how scholars can tackle similar questions in research today. Lemkin did not question *if* gender is significant in gender but *how* gender influences processes of genocide and what that tells scholars about the perpetrators' motivations and the experiences of victims. His narratives of genocide serve as examples that demonstrate the many ways that gender influences and shapes genocide and genocidal policy including sexual and sexualized violence, psychological violence, gendered reactions, and sex-selective violence. Gender and genocide are not new trends in historiography; they trace back to Lemkin's original conception of genocide. It just took us longer to recognize it.

## Marxism Among Latine-Americans: Invisible Actors in the Historiographical Record

*Alicia Rubio*

### Introduction

The historiography of Marxist thought within Latine communities in the United States remains surprisingly underdeveloped compared to adjacent fields such as Chicanx studies, labor history, Cold War studies, or even global Marxist intellectual history.[1] Although the last decade has witnessed a marked expansion of interest in Latine American Marxist history, the long arc of the field reveals unevenness, fragmentation, and long periods of silence punctuated by moments of sudden scholarly activity. Historically, research on Latine Marxist traditions did not emerge as a coherent field but was instead dispersed across various disciplines, including political science, ethnic studies, diplomatic history, sociology, and movement-generated writing. This diffusion created significant intellectual gaps, including an overreliance on regional case studies, limited attention to gender and sexuality, and a general absence of holistic syntheses that trace the development of Marxist thought across U.S. Latine communities.

At the same time, recent scholarship, particularly the work of Jennifer R. Uhlmann, Enrique M. Buelna, and Johanna Fernández, has begun to reorient the field. Their contributions offer new methodological models and deep archival excavations that challenge long-standing assumptions about Latine political history. Understanding the historiographical trajectory of this field, therefore, requires situating it

[1] For an explanation on my usage of Latine rather than Latino or Latinx, see the following: "Hispanic, Latin@, Latinx or Latine?," Cambio Center, accessed March 14, 2026, https://cambio.missouri.edu/about/hispanic-latin-latinx-or-latine/.

within broader transformations in U.S. historical writing, academic politics, and the shifting fortunes of the global left.

This historiographical essay traces the development of this literature from the 1950s to the 2020s, analyzing how shifting political climates, methodological trends, and disciplinary formations shaped the scholarly production of knowledge about Latine Marxist traditions. It argues that the field developed not through alternating phases of narrow focus, political repression, disciplinary fragmentation, and eventual reconstruction. The relative absence of Latine Marxism in historical writing was not simply the result of limited archival sources or scholarly oversight. Rather, it was structurally produced by Cold War political pressures, disciplinary boundaries within the academy, and shifting intellectual priorities that shaped what historians considered legitimate subjects of inquiry. During the mid-twentieth century, anti-communist academic environments discouraged research into radical traditions, while later historiographical trends often privileged cultural identity over class analysis.

As scholars such as Andrew Hartman have suggested, the study of Marxism in the United States has moved through cyclical "booms" and "busts," closely tied to broader political and institutional transformations.[2] By situating Latine Marxist historiography within this broader pattern, a pattern of marginalization appears, reflecting the ways in which historians have prioritized certain aspects of the American past. Although still underdeveloped, the most influential works of recent decades have begun moving the field toward deeper archival excavation, intersectional analysis, and transnational frameworks. These changes align with Andrew Hartman's observations about a renewed academic interest in Marxist history.[3] Given this moment of opportunity, scholars should pursue new directions—holistic syntheses that connect disparate Latine Marxist traditions, more intersectional approaches, comparative work linking

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[2] Andrew Hartman, *Karl Marx in America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025.
[3] Ibid.

Latine movements to other radical traditions, and conceptual frameworks that position Latine Marxist activism within a broader hemispheric left.

Historians such as Michel-Rolph Trouillot have asserted that historical silences are produced by the archival process and by historians' power to determine what history is worth telling.[4] Thus far, the story of Latine American Marxism has been neglected, not because it is insignificant, but because of lingering Cold War epistemologies in academia. It is the historian's duty, then, to point out and address areas that require further study, ensuring that historical silence does not become historical privation. Latine American Marxism is a field rich in potential for historical study. The suggested directions of study that follow would not simply fill existing gaps, but fundamentally reshape how we understand the history of U.S. radicalism.

## Early Cold War Works: State Anxiety and the Invisibility of Latine Marxism

Early writing on Marxism and Latin American communities in the United States was sparse and profoundly shaped by Cold War anxieties. In the United States of the late 1940s and 1950s, Marxism primarily appeared as an external threat—a geopolitical ideology emanating from the Soviet bloc or, increasingly after 1959, from revolutionary Cuba. Any discussion of Latine Marxism centered on Latin America itself, never as a lived intellectual tradition within U.S. Latine communities. Even then, scholarship tended to treat Marxist Latin American populations as politically foreign adversaries, reinforcing the idea that Marxism among Latines was inherently suspect, un-American, or externally imposed.[5]

Given the precarious social and political position of most U.S. Latines at the time, exemplified by the Bracero Program, the mass deportations of

[4] Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Shaun Scott, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (New York: Beacon Press Audio, 2024).
[5] Enrique M. Buelna, *Chicanx Communists and the Struggle for Social Justice* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019).

"Operation Wetback" in 1954, and acts such as the McCarran-Walter Act made engaging in "subversive activities" an enormous risk.[6] The Red Paranoia that swept through the U.S. constrained archival records, discouraged academic writings on Marx, and reinforced state surveillance as the primary means of documenting Latine activism.

In the context of the Cold War, anti-communist politics discouraged sustained investigation into radical traditions, especially within minority communities, and such Cold War epistemologies were reproduced by historians at the time. Early labor histories, such as Ernesto Galarza's foundational work on Mexican agricultural workers, discussed Chicanx workers largely in economic or social terms, rarely addressing ideological or revolutionary dimensions of their activism.[7]

An article that exemplifies the kind of academic non-discussion of the time is Fredrick B. Pike's "Guatemala, the United States, and Communism in the Americas." Writing from a position of U.S. geopolitical orthodoxy, Pike provided a narrative of Guatemalan political development centered on "intransigence of the country's economic leaders" who, to Pike, "had helped goad the new administration into commencing its ill-fated flirtation with Communism."[8] He quite blatantly condemns Guatemala's first democratically elected president as a communist, and defends the U.S.'s involvement in the 1954 Guatemalan coup d'état by U.S.-backed Castillo Armas, in an attempt to quash communist leanings in Guatemala. Pike's paternalistic tone toward Guatemala, his condemnation of the "troubled Central American republics," and his depiction of the U.S. as a wholly united anti-communist force are typical of 50s-era academic writings on the topic of

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[6] Juan Ramon García, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980). Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story* (McNally and Loftin, 1964).

[7] Galarza, *Marchants of Labor*

[8] Fredrick B. Pike, "Guatemala, the United States, and Communism in the Americas," *The Review of Politics* 17, no. 2 (April 1955), 235.

Latin Americans.[9] While he does not address the U.S. Latine population directly, he does exemplify the fervent condemnation American Latine Marxists would've faced.

Historians such as Pike demonstrate the complacent, if potentially unconscious, role that historians played in the disappearance of Chicanx Marxists from the historical record. Studies of U.S. politics frequently reproduced liberal anti-communist assumptions, framing Marxism as a foreign threat rather than a part of the domestic political tradition. Academia itself was not a stranger to such stringent anti-communism, and the significance of incidents such as the Chafee-Sutherland letter cannot be understated. Academia was prone to the same rampant liberal anticommunism as the rest of the country, thereby aiding in the suppression of Latine Marxist study.[10]

Thus, in early U.S. Marxist historiography, Latine communities remained invisible. Marxism was treated as an extension of Soviet or Cuban influence, or as a radical idea to be hidden lest one face social or political consequences. Any potential radicalism amongst the U.S. Latine community, then, has gone unrecorded.

**The Chicanx Movement Era: Radical (lack of) Historiography**

The rise of the Chicanx Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s created new opportunities for documenting Latine radicalism. Yet paradoxically, even during the height of youth, labor, and community organizing, the academic study of Marxism within these movements remained minimal. The limited historiographical attention to Marxist analysis within the Chicano Movement also reflected a broader pattern in the study of racialized radical traditions in the United States, where historians frequently prioritized nationalism, cultural identity, or civil rights reform over the socialist and Marxist frameworks that many

[9] Pike, "Guatemala," 239.
[10] Ellen Schrecker, "Academic Freedom and the Cold War." *The Antioch Review* 38, no. 3 (1980): 313–27.

activists used to interpret racial and economic inequality. Documentation of Chicanx Marxism thus came not from academic investigation but from three other sources: movement-generated writings, such as the Palante newspaper of the Young Lords; political analyses by activists, such as Tatcho Mindiola's "Marxism and the Chicanx Movement: Preliminary Remarks"; and burgeoning ethnic studies scholarship.

The Chicanx movement gave birth to several influential Latine organizations with Marxist leanings, such as La Raza Unida, the Young Lords, and the August 29th Movement.[11] Each movement left substantial documentation for future historians, such as the Palante magazine published by the Young Lords. One academic account written concurrently with the Chicanx movement was "Marxism and the Chicanx Movement: Preliminary Remarks" by Tatchto Mindiola. Unlike the Cold War policy analysts and diplomatic historians whose works dominated earlier scholarship on "Latin American communism," Mindiola approached Marxism not as an external threat or geopolitical abstraction but as a tool for explaining the structural conditions shaping Chicanx life.[12] His article represents one of the earliest attempts by a scholar-activist to theorize the relationship between Chicanx oppression and capitalism in explicitly Marxist terms. It thus stands as a formative text in the historiography of Latine radicalism. Mindiola argued that the Chicanx Movement's diverse grievances and goals could not be understood without a materialist analysis of racialized labor exploitation in the United States. Crucially, he insisted that Marxism offered not a foreign ideology imposed upon Chicanos but an analytical method arising organically from their historical experiences as a colonized and proletarianized population.

Mindiola's intervention was both ambitious and constrained. On the one hand, he challenged the dominant narrative of the early Chicanx

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[11] Antonio José Ríos-Bustamante, *A General Survey of Chicanx(a) Historiography* (East Lansing: Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1997).
[12] Rosales, Francisco A. *Chicanx! : The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. 2nd rev. ed. (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1997).

Movement, which tended to foreground cultural nationalism while sidelining class analysis. He criticized movement leaders who dismissed Marxism as inapplicable or "too white," arguing instead that historical materialism illuminated the systemic roots of poverty, segregation, and political disenfranchisement in Mexican American communities. His essay sought to reposition Marxist analysis at the center of Chicanx political theory, asserting that the movement could not achieve genuine liberation without confronting the capitalist structure that shaped racial subordination.[13]

At the same time, the article reflected the limitations of its moment. His analysis primarily operated at the level of abstract class formation, failing to ground itself in real-life examples or provide concrete solutions to how Marxism could achieve Chicanx political aims. Yet these limitations also highlight the essay's significance: it captured a moment of theoretical experimentation within the Chicanx Movement, when activists were grappling with the relationship between nationalism and socialism, and when Marxism served as both a political framework and an intellectual provocation.

Books like Minidola's, however, were the minority. Most of the histories produced about Chicanx or American Latine groups in the 60s and 70s focused on cultural nationalism, political activism, or civil rights mobilization. One such book is Stan Steiner's *La Raza: The Mexican Americans*. Steiner's book, widely read and influential, focused on cultural nationalism and civil rights, treating radicalism as rhetorical rather than structural.[14] Thus, while there were minimal attempts to properly historicize the Chicanx movement's radical elements contemporaneously, the significant source material created by the movement would provide later historians with a wealth of archival resources, if only they'd use it.[15]

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[13] Tatcho Mindiola, "Marxism and the Chicanx Movement: Preliminary Remarks," *NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings* 6 (1975).
[14] Stan Steiner, *La Raza: The Mexican Americans* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).
[15] Antonio José Ríos-Bustamante, *A General Survey.*

## The 1980s–1990s: Decline, Silence, and the Impact of the "Bust"

The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed a dramatic decline in research connected to Marxist Latine politics. Andrew Hartman and others have characterized this period as part of a broader ideological "bust" in Marxist scholarship, following the decline in faith in socialist projects globally and the ascendance of neoliberalism in academic and political life. Historian Geoff Eley argues in *A Crooked Line* that the social-history tradition that had flourished in the 1960s and 1970s—often deeply influenced by Marxist frameworks—gradually lost intellectual dominance as historians increasingly turned toward cultural analysis, poststructural theory, and identity-based frameworks.[16] Scholars produced important work on Latine identity, migration, and community formation, but little of this scholarship utilized Marxist methodology. As Marxism lost its global prestige and the Cold War drew to a close, universities increasingly distanced themselves from class analysis.[17]

While these methodological shifts produced important insights into language, representation, and subjectivity, they also displaced earlier emphases on class formation, political economy, and organized labor. Within Latine studies, this transition encouraged scholars to focus on migration, identity, cultural nationalism, and community formation while leaving questions of socialist ideology, labor radicalism, and Marxist political organizing comparatively underexplored.[18] As a result, historians not only produced fewer studies of Latine Marxist activism during the 1980s and 1990s but also ceased asking many of the questions that had previously animated radical labor history—questions about communist organizing, class-consciousness, and the theoretical debates that shaped left-wing movements. The intellectual space for examining Marxist traditions within Latine political life narrowed considerably.

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[16] Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).
[17] Hartman, *Karl Marx in America.*
[18] Ríos-Bustamante, *A General Survey,* 4-6.

The consequences were significant. Activists passed away without providing oral histories, organizational documents were lost, and memories of mid-century Latine communist networks faded. This absence of historiographical production created structural barriers for later historians and contributed to the impression that Latine Marxist traditions were marginal or nonexistent. The "bust" era left substantial silences in the archival and scholarly record that subsequent scholars would need to reconstruct with care and creative methodological approaches.

**The 2000s: A Turn of the Century Resurgence**

The early 2000s witnessed a significant resurgence in the historical study of Latine Marxism, reflecting both global and disciplinary shifts. The successful rise of left governments throughout Latin America and the growing institutional strength of Chicanx and Latine Studies programs created an environment in which materialist analysis regained intellectual traction. Historians and social scientists have turned toward transnational frameworks, postcolonial narratives, and the structural dynamics of racial capitalism, creating new opportunities to interpret Latine political histories through Marxist lenses.

One of the earlier works signaling this renewed attention was Erasmo Gamboa's *Mexican Labor and World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942–1947*. Although not explicitly Marxist, Gamboa's study exemplified a methodological shift that would prove foundational for later Marxist historiography: the centering of labor extraction, state management of racialized bodies, and the political economy of migration.[19] Gamboa demonstrated how wartime labor programs constituted a system of proletarianization that tied Mexican workers to U.S. capitalism under coercive and transnational conditions. By foregrounding the structural exploitation of Mexican workers and treating migration not as an isolated labor issue but as a global phenomenon

[19] Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor & World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942–1947* (University of Washington Press, 2000)

embedded in imperial relations, Gamboa helped reopen historiographical space for materialist interpretations of Latine history after decades of culturalist dominance.

A second significant contribution shaping the intellectual climate of this era was Lilia Fernández's *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*. Although published slightly later, Fernández's work became central to the 2000s-era methodological turn toward urban political economy, racialized labor markets, and interethnic working-class formation. Her study situates Latine communities within the broader restructuring of postwar Chicago, examining deindustrialization, public housing policy, policing, and municipal governance through a framework deeply informed by the political economy of race and class.[20] While Fernández does not explicitly foreground Marxism, her analysis provides a foundational model for understanding how material conditions shaped the political consciousness of Mexican and Puerto Rican migrants. This structural approach, emphasizing the capitalist city as a crucible of racial formation and labor exploitation, created a strong foundation for the subsequent revival of interest in explicitly Marxist Latine political histories.

It was in this context that Jennifer R. Uhlmann's "Communists and the Early Movement for Mexican-American Civil Rights" emerged as the most influential historiographical contribution of the period.[21] Uhlmann's meticulous reconstruction of Mexican American communist networks from the 1920s onward marked a methodological breakthrough. Using FBI surveillance files as sources of activist memory rather than exclusively as evidence of state repression, she revealed a long-standing tradition of Marxist political organizing among Mexican Americans—a tradition largely erased by both Cold War anti-communism and subsequent

[20] Lilia Fernandez, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[21] Jennifer R. Uhlmann, "Communists and the Early Movement for Mexican-American Civil Rights: The Benjamin Moreno Inquiry and Its Aftermath," *American Communist History* 9, no. 2 (August 1, 2010): 111–39.

historical scholarship. Her research demonstrated that communist organizing was integral, not peripheral, to early Mexican American labor and civil rights struggles. Uhlmann's methodological innovation set a precedent for later scholars and decisively reinserted Marxist activism into the narrative of Latine political history.[22] As the 2000s progressed, transnational and materialist frameworks became increasingly common, laying the foundation for the explosion of monographic work that would define the following decade.

**The 2020s – A Strange New Marxist World**

The 2020s represent the most ambitious, coherent, and theoretically sophisticated phase of Latine Marxist historiography to date. The decade has witnessed not only a surge in publications but also the emergence of sustained theoretical and methodological innovation that approaches Marxism not only as an organizational affiliation or ideological label but also as a methodological framework for analyzing racial capitalism, migration, and labor exploitation within Latine political life. Historians, political theorists, and public intellectuals have thus begun to conceptualize Latine Marxism as a distinct intellectual tradition shaped by migration, racial capitalism, and hemispheric political movements.

The most representative work of this era, one that both synthesizes and advances the field, is Enrique M. Buelna's *Chicanx Communists and the Struggle for Social Justice*. Although technically published at the end of

[22] Within the historiography presented, "Marxism" can refer to a methodological framework for analyzing political economy, class relations, and capitalism or a political and intellectual tradition. The historiography of Latine radicalism engages both meanings unevenly: some studies employ materialist analysis without explicitly identifying it as Marxist, while others recover Marxist activists and organizations but pay less attention to the theoretical frameworks they developed. Recognizing this distinction clarifies that the scholarship examined here seeks not only to document Latine participation in Marxist organizations but also to analyze how Latine activists and intellectuals interpreted capitalism, race, and colonial power through Marxist theoretical frameworks.

the previous decade, its influence has been most acutely felt throughout the 2020s. Buelna's monograph provides the first comprehensive narrative of Chicanx communist activism from the 1930s to the 1970s. Drawing on party records, oral histories, labor archives, and personal papers, Buelna reconstructs a multigenerational lineage of Chicanx radicalism.[23] His core intervention is to demonstrate that Marxism was not an aberration within Chicanx political life but a recurring framework through which activists understood labor exploitation, racial oppression, and international solidarity. By refusing to treat communist affiliation as peripheral or embarrassing, Buelna normalizes Marxism as a central component of Chicanx political development. His work has thus become a touchstone for the field's twenty-first-century renaissance.

Building upon this foundation, Justin Akers Chacón's *Radicals in the Barrio* offers a sweeping narrative of Latine radicalism from the era of the Magonistas to the Cold War. Chacón's use of Wobbly archives, mutualista records, and union documents provides a comprehensive account of Marxist and socialist organization amongst U.S. Latine communities that reframes Latine labor history as fundamentally revolutionary rather than assimilationist.[24] His work is particularly notable for illuminating how diasporic Mexican communities maintained political ties to revolutionary movements in Mexico, thereby shaping the development of working-class politics in the United States. Other historians in the 2020s have adopted similarly expansive frameworks. Edgardo Meléndez's *"The Puerto Rican Problem" in Postwar New York City* likewise demonstrates how Puerto Rican communities navigated

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[23] Buelna, *Chicano Communists.*

[24] Justin Akers Chacón, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2018).

Mutualista records are historical documents from Mexican American mutual aid societies that functioned like community-run insurance and social clubs, providing members with burial aid, health support, loans, legal help, and cultural activities.

policing, public housing, and political exclusion, often through frameworks resonant with Marxist critiques of the racial state.[25] Johanna Fernández's *The Young Lords* also provides a monumental reconstruction of Puerto Rican Marxist-nationalist activism, weaving together gender, race, and urban history to show the movement's complexity.[26]

Public intellectual work has further enriched the historiography of the decade. Eddie Bonilla's "The Intersections of Black and Latina/o/x Radical Traditions" articulates a conceptual approach that insists on viewing Latine Marxism through a multiracial and relational framework.[27] Gilberto García and Rodolfo D. Torres's "Latine Politics and Marxism" extends this work by offering new political-economic frameworks for understanding Latine life within global capitalism.[28]

Finally, essays by contemporary activists, such as David Trujillo's 2024 CPUSA article on Mexican American radicalism, signal the reemergence of Marxist analysis within grassroots political discourse.[29] Although not academic, these writings underscore the ongoing relevance of Marxist frameworks for interpreting contemporary struggles over labor, immigration, and racial justice. Taken together, the works of this decade have expanded the field's methodological, geographical, and theoretical horizons. They have moved Latine Marxist historiography beyond recovery toward conceptualization, beyond local case studies toward hemispheric analysis, and beyond organizational histories toward intersectional and multiracial frameworks. The 2020s thus stand not only as a productive period but as a transformative one—perhaps the first

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[25] Edgardo Meléndez, *Puerto Rican Problem in Postwar New York City* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2023).
[26] Johanna Fernández, *The Young Lords: A Radical History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022).
[27] Eddie Bonilla, "The Intersections of Black and Latina/o/x Radical Traditions," *Latinx Talk*, November 16, 2020.
[28] Gilberto Garcia and Rodolfo D. Torres, "Latine Politics and Marxism," *Encyclopedia of Critical Political Science*, March 19, 2024, 74–81.
[29] David Trujillo, "Mexican-American/Chicanx(a) Identity and the Fight for Equality," *Communist Party USA*, May 21, 2024.

moment when Latine Marxist studies can be recognized as a coherent, evolving field.

**Directions for the Future**

Despite these important developments, significant historiographical gaps remain. Much of the scholarship remains regionally concentrated, producing rich but isolated case studies of Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York, while leaving major Latine regions comparatively understudied. Gender remains insufficiently integrated into the field. Although some works foreground women's roles, no full-length monograph focuses specifically on gender or sexuality within Latine Marxist movements, and existing studies often reproduce masculinist assumptions about political leadership. Paying more attention to the roles of Latina women and queer individuals in American Marxism would not only enrich the field's understanding of Latine Marxism in the United States, it could also completely restructure it, challenging the notion of the Marxist tradition as a white male-only movement.

Furthermore, the field continues to privilege party-based activism, paying less attention to informal forms of radicalism, such as mutual aid networks, feminist collectives, and undocumented workers' groups, which frequently operated outside formal organizational structures. The field also remains insufficiently connected to broader currents in global Marxist history; few analyses explore how Latine Marxists engaged with Maoism, Trotskyism, Black Marxism, or Indigenous anti-capitalist frameworks. These omissions prevent scholars from fully situating Latine radicalism within the broader intellectual history of the left.[30]

Future research could address these gaps by developing more holistic syntheses, expanding geographic scope, and foregrounding intersectional analysis. A national history of Latine Marxism, tracing

[30] Gilberto Garcia and Rodolfo D. Torres, "Latine Politics and Marxism," *Encyclopedia of Critical Political Science*, March 19, 2024, 74–81.

ideological development across Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan diasporas, would reveal connections obscured by regional specialization. Such a synthesis would likely reveal ideological convergences forged through shared labor struggles in agriculture, railroads, canneries, and service industries, as well as the role of migrant networks in disseminating Marxist ideas. A dedicated study of gender and sexuality in Latine Marxist movements could uncover the foundational but often invisible labor performed by women and queer activists—organizing food programs, editing newspapers, conducting political education, and sustaining community defense efforts. Recognizing these contributions would not merely "add" women to existing narratives but would reshape our understanding of how Marxist movements functioned at the everyday level.

Adopting a hemispheric perspective would also transform the field. Treating Latine Marxism as part of a broader American left that includes the Mexican Revolution, Puerto Rican independence struggles, and Central American revolutionary movements would reveal how migrants, exiles, and diaspora activists substantially shaped both U.S. and Latin American radical politics. Such an approach would show, for instance, how organizers in Los Angeles and Chicago drew upon revolutionary traditions from Mexico and El Salvador, or how Puerto Rican socialists in New York influenced independence debates on the island. Comparative studies examining Latine, Black, Indigenous, and Asian American Marxist traditions could further illuminate the multiracial character of U.S. radicalism and deepen our understanding of how racial capitalism structured solidarity and conflict across groups.

Finally, historians should work toward developing conceptual frameworks suited to Latine experiences of class formation, migration, racialization, and settler colonialism. Such frameworks would allow scholars to move beyond descriptive recovery toward synthesizing the theoretical contributions of Latine Marxists themselves—contributions that have too

often been overlooked in favor of analyses centered on organizational histories. By reading movement writings, speeches, and newspapers as sites of theoretical production rather than mere documentation, scholars could foreground the intellectual labor of Latine activists as central to American Marxist thought.

## Conclusion

The historiography of Latine Marxism in the United States reveals a field shaped as much by absence as by presence. Cold War anxieties rendered early Latine Marxists invisible, while mid-century scholarship isolated Latine politics within frameworks of nationalism, labor rights, or cultural identity. The result was a fragmented landscape in which Marxist traditions were rarely acknowledged, let alone analyzed as part of a coherent intellectual history. These silences were reinforced by disciplinary boundaries, political pressures, and the uneven preservation of archives, resulting in gaps that persisted well into the late twentieth century.

Recent scholarship, however, has begun to reconstruct what earlier eras obscured. Works by Uhlmann, Buelna, Fernández, Chacón, and others have demonstrated that Latine engagement with Marxism was neither peripheral nor exceptional, but an enduring component of political life shaped by poor labor conditions, racialized capitalism, and transnational revolutionary currents. By foregrounding class alongside race, gender, and colonialism, this new wave of research has demonstrated that Latines actively participated in Marxist movements, providing distinctive theoretical insights into labor exploitation, state power, and colonial modernity. Their contributions challenge older narratives that cast Marxism as foreign to Latine-American communities and reposition Latine radicalism as a vital part of U.S. intellectual history.

Yet the field remains incomplete. As argued throughout this essay, significant gaps persist, particularly the need for a national synthesis that

connects regional case studies, for deeper intersectional analysis that accounts for the intellectual labor of women's and queer activists, and for a holistic framework that situates U.S. Latine Marxists within the wider American left. Pursuing these directions would allow future historians to move beyond descriptive recovery and toward a more comprehensive theorization of how Latine communities interpreted, adapted, and reshaped Marxist ideas across multiple generations and political contexts.

If scholars continue to expand their scope and methodologies, the study of Latine Marxism promises not merely to fill longstanding historiographical gaps but to fundamentally reframe the history of U.S. radicalism and perhaps challenge the notion of American Marxism as an outdated, majority-white institution. Such work would reveal Latine Marxists as central to the nation's struggles over labor, race, and capitalism, and would help produce a richer, more interconnected narrative of American political thought. In recognizing the depth and breadth of Latine Marxist traditions, historians can illuminate new pathways for understanding both the past and the political possibilities of the present.

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