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# The American Papers

2024-2025  
Volume 43

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The artwork on the cover of this journal was designed by  
CSUF student and *American Papers* editor Sasha Westerfield.  
Below is the artist's statement:

Hello all, the artwork for this journal was made in the emotional  
state reflecting powerlessness and fear. We are the pawns on the  
USA chessboard. We are being manipulated. And there are only  
so many things we can do. Yet, we persist, publish, make our  
voices heard, move forward... one space at a time.

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## Letter from the Faculty Advisor

As faculty advisor for the 2024-2025 issues of *The American Papers*, I would like to thank all of the authors and student editors who worked diligently on the journal.

The journal you are reading (and perhaps even holding in your hands) is part of a departmental tradition that goes back to 1979. In line with that long-standing tradition, this journal is made by student work and student leadership. The papers published here all were written for American Studies classes, and they reflect the training and education imparted by AMST faculty. Submissions were solicited and received from all levels of coursework, introductory through graduate, including those from majors and non-majors alike. The faculty advisor provides the board with the papers early in the summer and “blind” readings are done by the entire editorial board. Through board meetings with thorough discussion and evaluation of each paper, final selections are made. The wide range and high caliber of submissions makes this an extremely difficult, yet rewarding, process. The editors then worked individually with the authors to further develop their essays. I would like to applaud all of the authors for the unique contributions they make in their papers, and for their willingness to incorporate feedback during the editorial process.

Sasha Westerfield deserves special recognition for her excellent and painstaking work on the layout design of this issue and for her powerful artwork on the cover of the journal. Thank you to the staff at The Printery for their work in printing the journal.

All of the editors exhibited hard work, camaraderie, professionalism, and perseverance while preparing this edition of *The American Papers*. The student-led editorial team of this journal carefully deliberated as a group about every decision, including how they wished to use their voices and platform in this historical moment, which is anything but ordinary. I particularly would like to thank Sky Randle and Markus Albihn for serving as this volume’s co-Editors in Chief. They demonstrated steady leadership, diligence, vision, and commitment to democratic decision making at every turn. What the board has produced here is a testament to their commitment to critical inquiry and to amplifying student voices. As a group, they were exceptionally thorough and conscientious; may we all take a note from them on how to make something meaningful even in dark times.

-Professor Alison Kanosky





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Welcome to the 2024–2025 issue of the American Papers!

We are happy to present the forty-third edition of the journal. In this interdisciplinary field of study, scholars learn to think critically about the world around them. By studying American institutions, popular culture, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and many other topics, American Studies scholars explore the meaning behind the culture we encounter every day. Through analysis of primary and secondary sources and engagement with cultural theory, our scholars attempt to understand how American history and culture reflect and shape our experiences, ideas, and identities. We invite you to explore the many insights into the American experience presented in this year's journal. The featured articles critically examine, analyze and argue about the cultural work of photographs, film, music, trends and other topics. This year's journal explores a heavy range of themes from makeup and fashion trends to issues of public memory, historical silences, and their political contexts.

Becoming an American Studies scholar is not a task any of us take lightly, because it means critically analyzing the institutions of American culture for their baggage, nuances, insights, and moments of connection. Nothing is simple, and for as many moments of horror we can identify, there are always threads of progress and change that draw us together as Americans. American Studies scholars explore the meaning behind the culture we encounter every day. The work here, done by both graduate and undergraduate students, is more meaningful now than ever before, in an American culture torn apart.

The editors would like to take a moment to acknowledge the crisis and genocide occurring in the Gaza Strip of Palestine and the ongoing violence from settlers in the region. We acknowledge the sovereignty of all nations threatened by the imperial regime of the current administration. American institutions have contributed to and encouraged the suppression of activism and freedom of speech. There have been many instances of blatant disregard for the Constitution, the rule of law, and separation of powers by the current administration. We believe that everyone deserves an equal opportunity to exercise intellectual freedom and has the right to education. No person should feel threatened or forcibly removed from our diverse country for exercising their First Amendment rights.

Additionally, women are seeing their rights restricted with the freedom of choice and bodily autonomy threatened daily. The queer community has received a continuous stream of backlash with the rights of gay and trans folk being constantly challenged or quelled. Immigrants, both undocumented and documented, continue to face surveillance and demonization that seeks to destroy their homes, lives, and souls. We, as Americans, have been made acutely aware how deeply our government is invested in perpetuating and supporting cruelty. There must be people willing to not turn away from these crucial discussions during this moment in American history. People who will continue to create insight for us in order to continue working towards a better world.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the authors who have generously shared their work in this edition of *The American Papers*. The publication of this issue would not have been achievable without their dedication in crafting and refining these essays. Our sincere thanks also go to the American Studies faculty at CSUF for their steadfast support of student scholarship and their dedication to nurturing academic growth and creativity. We are also deeply grateful to our faculty advisor, Professor Alison Kanosky, for her unwavering support, insightful guidance, and constant encouragement throughout the creation of this issue.

— The Editors

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# Course Descriptions

## **AMST 320: Women in American Society**

Socio-cultural history of women and women's movements in American society. Emphasis on 19th and 20th centuries. Cultural models of American womanhood -maternal, domestic, sexual, social -their development and recent changes.

## **AMST 324: American Immigrant Cultures**

Investigates American immigrant communities, both historical and contemporary, to better understand how their experiences helped shape the meaning of being American. Explores immigrant cultures through literature, music, film, oral history and photographs using interdisciplinary methods.

## **AMST 332: Science and Modern America**

Interdisciplinary analysis of the relationship between science and culture in the American past and present. Topics include questions of trust, ethics, objectivity, power and identity in developing scientific knowledge in health and medicine, the environment, and technology.

## **AMST 350: Seminar in Theory and Method of American Studies**

Understanding and appreciation of methodology, theories of society and images of humanity as they affect American studies contributions to scholarship.

## **AMST 390: Disability and American Culture**

Changing meaning, history and experience of disability in American culture through scholarly readings, memoir, film, photography and other cultural documents. Disability in relation to identity, stigma, discrimination, media representations, intersectionality, gender and sexuality, work, genetic testing, and design.

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# Course Descriptions

## **AMST 408: Gaming and American Culture**

Development and significance of outdoor, board and video gaming in America. Literary works, films, television shows, advertisements, manuals and material artifacts to understand how gaming has addressed larger social tensions and shaped American identity and culture.

## **AMST 439: American Photographs as Cultural Evidence**

The cultural work of American photography, examining how photographs—from the extraordinary to everyday variety—can be used to study American identities, beliefs, narratives and values.

## **AMST 401T War: Research Seminar, War in American Culture**

This course explores the impact of war on American culture and society. We will use a variety of sources to analyze how war has profoundly altered American values, perceptions, and behavior.

## **AMST 501: Graduate Seminar in Theory and Methods of American Studies**

The American Studies movement. Its conceptual and methodological development. The way this development was affected by and in turn reflected larger trends in the culture itself.

## **AMST 502T: Graduate Research Seminar on Public Memory**

Analyzes narratives of the past encapsulated in museums, memorials, historic preservation sites, living history projects, and popular culture. Emphasizes the cultural politics and packaging of public memory and tensions between national identity and local, ethnic and regional identity narratives.

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# Hailey Bieber: The Modern Myth of Authenticity

Amanda Endres

AMST 350: Seminar in Theory & Method of American Studies

“Hailey Bieber: The Modern Myth of Authenticity” critiques the recent shift toward a supposed ideal of authenticity, focusing on Hailey Bieber’s significant impact on this trend, particularly among Gen Z. This essay explores the cultural implications of this shift and its ties to social class. Written for AMST 350 -Theory & Method of American Studies, taught by Dr. Carrie Lane, the assignment required analyzing a chosen example of popular culture, such as a food, device, or song. It is important to understand that social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok shape beauty trends, particularly among Gen Z, who value “authenticity.” However, achieving this ideal often demands significant effort and expense, as exemplified by Hailey Bieber, a privileged influencer whose trends reveal the intersection of beauty, social class, and cultural influence.

I typically look up manicure ideas online to show to my manicurist and this time I had chosen a pearlescent design. I was confused when someone in public complimented my freshly done nails, “Oh my gosh, your nails are so cute! You got the Hailey Bieber nails!” I had no idea what they were talking about, and I just smiled and thanked her. Shortly after, I did some research and discovered that the manicure style I had just gotten done was associated with Hailey Bieber. It had gained popularity once she started wearing the style. I never had thought much about Hailey Bieber or her skincare brand Rhode, but I now suddenly donned her newly promoted trend.

In June 2022, Hailey Bieber

founded Rhode and what followed was an obsession with Hailey’s new trend: “the strawberry girl aesthetic, [which] leans into a matching tonal colour palette... [that] incorporates...pretty, soft pinks [and] fun fruity reds.”<sup>1</sup> The strawberry girl makeup aesthetic emphasizes a fresh and natural appearance, with a focus on creating a radiant and youthful complexion. Flushed, rosy cheeks serve as the center of attention, attempting to evoke the warmth of a natural sun-kissed glow. Glossy lips in soft pink or red tones contribute to the impression of obscure vitality and sweetness. The skin is maintained with a dewy, luminous finish, often accented by the presence of freckles—either natural or applied with



makeup—to enhance an organic and outdoorsy charm. Meanwhile, the eye makeup remains subtle, allowing the enhancement of natural features.

From my high school years to my college years, beauty trends have changed (following the trends promoted by Hailey Bieber and Rhode) from exuberant makeup styles to more muted, minimalist, and monochromatic tones - a no-makeup makeup look. I went from watching tutorials on elaborate eyeshadow designs and doing my makeup every day, to getting monochromatic, neutral-toned manicures and rarely doing my makeup. If and when I did my makeup, it was always a more minimalist style. The products I would buy from Sephora shifted from foundation, mascara, blush, bronzer, and highlighter to toners, essence, serums, cleansers, and lotions. I, too, was looking to achieve that naturally perfect look promoted by Hailey Bieber. At the time, I thought I had just decided to take better care of my skin, but hundreds of dollars later, I realized that I, again, had fallen into the trap of branding and beauty trends.

Hailey started as a model, at the age of 17, walking red carpets with her father, Stephen Baldwin. In 2018, Hailey went from being a niche celebrity to becoming a household name when she became engaged to Justin Bieber. Hailey has also been famously associated with the Kardashians, who, during the 2010s, played a pivotal role in encouraging millennials to embrace maximalism.<sup>2</sup> This period was defined by bold makeup, vibrant colors, and a strong focus on self-expression. Hailey has strongly influenced Gen Z fashion trends, encouraging minimalism which led to the development of and overwhelming prevalence of the clean, natural, “strawberry girl” look.

The shift to minimalism for Gen Z is particularly interesting, as it is an overall more progressive generation than the last. It can, in part, be explained by the cultural shift to “authenticity.”

Hailey’s influence on Gen Z fashion began with her expansive social media presence on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Hailey, born to rich and successful parents, has been described as a “nepo baby” by popular media outlets and within greater popular culture, but, despite this controversial label, her influence on Gen Z trends is palpable.<sup>3</sup> Hailey and Rhode have not only reshaped beauty standards, but they underscore the role of social class in defining and spreading hegemonic norms within popular culture and the zeitgeist.

Hailey’s impactful presence as an influencer for Gen Z teens and young adults started to gain traction once she highlighted her “glazed doughnut” nails, a pearlescent chrome gel manicure. Hailey’s Instagram (as of April 2025) boasts over 54.4 million followers and has become a fashion bible for young women who have made it their goal to imitate her pre-meets-streetwear style.

Gen Z has become invested in the idea of authenticity. It is a movement away from the aura of fakeness on Instagram, and a shift to embracing the realness of life. This can be seen with the rise in popularity of social media platforms TikTok’s trend GRWM (get ready with me) and BeReal - a platform that focuses on sharing pictures with friends at a specific time regardless of what you are doing or where you are at. When it came to beauty trends, it became all about attaining a kind of beauty so effortless, it is like you woke up that way. Women in society have faced an

expectation of making everything appear effortless, as though they're not trying at all to portray themselves in certain ways.<sup>4</sup>

This is known as “effortless perfection... the expectation that one would be smart, accomplished, fit, beautiful, and popular, and that all of this would happen without visible effort.”<sup>5</sup> The concept of no-makeup beauty operates on the same principle — never acknowledging the effort behind the polished result. The shift toward authenticity might seem like a welcome change, allowing women to spend less on makeup and time on glam. However, this “natural” beauty often requires expensive skincare routines, dermatologist visits, and/or a multi-step skincare regimen. Not only did social media hide this reality for the most part, but it was also encouraging a kind of “quiet luxury” - being able to afford a look that appears effortless.<sup>6</sup> It kept the lower classes out, and it became a symbol of status to look good without makeup. It resulted in some women performing no-makeup, whether or not the performance was intentional, subconscious, or simply following a trend. This created a fractured sense of authenticity in modern society that is highly curated.

Hailey's skincare brand, Rhode, is built upon five core values conveyed through its mission statement: simplicity, affordability, authenticity, quality, and transparency.<sup>7</sup> These values play into the myth of modern authenticity. The brand

claims to give its consumers an effortless glow with its product lineup that includes a cleanser, lip tint, peptide lip treatment, glazing milk, and peptide glazing fluid.

The phenomenon surrounding Hailey Bieber and her brand also highlights the

**By using her celebrity status, Hailey has contributed to a cultural shift, steering the collective understanding of beauty towards ideals that, while presented as universally attainable, still reflect the sensibilities of a privileged few.**

intricate role of social class in shaping beauty norms and access to trends. While Rhode aims to embody values like simplicity and affordability, the reality of achieving the “natural” beauty it promotes is often contingent upon access to resources that are not available to all. The pursuit of a “no-makeup” look, which requires an extensive and costly skincare routine, illustrates the paradox of striving for authenticity in an age where such authenticity is commodified. This highlights how social class influences one's ability to participate in certain beauty trends, thus maintaining and reinforcing social divisions.

Hailey's impact on Gen Z beauty ideals illustrates a larger phenomenon in which the preferences and styles of the elite gain widespread acceptance. By using her celebrity status, Hailey has contributed to a cultural shift, steering the collective understanding of beauty towards ideals that, while presented as universally attainable, still reflect the sensibilities of a privileged few. Hailey Bieber's influence on beauty and

fashion trends through her social media platforms showcases the power of discourse in popular culture. Discourse refers to the formal and structured exchange of ideas within a community or society that reflects and influences cultural norms, ideologies, and power dynamics. Her trends, including the aforementioned “strawberry girl” look and “glazed doughnut” nails, are not just fleeting fashions but are saturated with societal meanings and values that reflect and shape the aspirations of Gen Z. These trends, disseminated through the vast reach of social media, become part of a larger narrative that influences what is deemed desirable or attainable.

The discourse surrounding these trends can empower individuals by providing them with a sense of belonging and identity while simultaneously reinforcing certain beauty standards and ideals that are often exclusive to the elite. The cultural trend against anti-neatness reflects a growing embrace of imperfection, authenticity, and individuality. It challenges societal expectations of perfection, often associating neatness with superficiality or a lack of spontaneity. This shift is seen in various aspects of culture, from the rise of messy hairstyles to the acceptance of more casual, less structured clothing and interior design.

The revelation I had when that person complimented my nails, made me realize how quietly this new trend had slipped into my life, as well as how influential and seemingly unharmed they can be. Social norms have so much influence on our subconscious and our ideas about beauty and lifestyle that it's startling. The ideas established by/promoted by hegemony, as illustrated through the widespread reach of popular culture and influential figures like Hailey Bieber, subtly dictate the standards of beauty and fashion, guiding our preferences and decisions in ways we're barely aware of. This subtle domination, rooted in the cultural influence wielded by those at the pinnacle of social and economic hierarchies, seamlessly integrates their ideals into our collective consciousness, making their preferences our own. It's a testament to the power of cultural hegemony that the trends and norms established by a select few can become so universally adopted, shaping not just the landscape of beauty and fashion but also our identities and perceptions of self-worth.

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# Selena Por Siempre: Mourning and Memory as a Framework for the Latinx Community

Eva Amarillas Diaz

AMST 502T: Graduate Research Seminar on Public Memory

In this paper I discuss Selena Quintanilla-Perez's public memory within the Latinx community in the U.S. I situate my analysis in a contextualized Latinx geographical experience specific to the U.S. Southwest as well as the history of gun violence in this nation. I argue that Selena's public memory, via examples such as Saint Selena prayer candles, film and television, statues, and drag performance, can be used as a sensible tool for humanizing and processing our collective community grief regarding the long-standing treatment of Latinxs as second-class citizens in this country. More broadly, mourning can be used to bridge our fractured Latinx community by meeting each other in a space that naturally requires vulnerability.

Selena Quintanilla-Pérez has only existed in memory for me. By the time I was born, Selena had died two years earlier. People may have become accustomed to talking about her in the past tense, but the love the Latinx community has for her makes it feel as though she is still alive. From an early age, I was enamored with Selena and her music. Selena had always been present in my childhood in some way or another. Whether it was waking up to one of Selena's cumbia songs while my mother cleaned our home or rewatching her music videos until I could recall the lyrics by heart, Selena felt like more than an idol. She was beautiful, talented, and most importantly, she looked like the Latina women I was used to seeing in

my community. I distinctly remember watching *Selena* (1997) for the first time as a child and uncontrollably crying in the final scene, where audiences learn she had been killed. Maybe my mother did not have the heart to break the news to me, maybe it is a rite of passage for young Latinas/es, but Selena's vocals from "Dreaming of You" and montages of real fans mourning her death touched something spiritual, even sacred, within. Yet, I found comfort in knowing that this was a collective community grief I could identify with.

In this paper I discuss Selena Quintanilla-Perez's public memory within the Latinx community in the U.S. I situate my analysis in a contextualized Latinx geographical experience specific to

the U.S. Southwest as well as the history of gun violence in this nation. I argue that Selena's public memory, via examples such as Saint Selena prayer candles, film and television, statues, and drag performance, can be used as a sensible tool for humanizing and processing our collective community grief regarding the long-standing treatment of Latinxs as second-class citizens in this country. More broadly, mourning can be used to bridge our fractured Latinx community by meeting each other in a space that naturally requires vulnerability.

### **Initial Memorialization of Selena Quintanilla-Perez**

Public memory refers to how narratives of the past are circulated, remembered, and forgotten by a community, rather than how the events of that memory factually occurred.<sup>1</sup> Our memories are important in how we retell stories about our past and whose stories we tell. Theorist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that the past is not a stagnant list of events, but rather a narrative that is structured, and often reworked, by those who have the power to shape a collective memory.<sup>2</sup> By analyzing Western narratives of the Haitian Revolution and Christopher Columbus through a revisionist lens, Trouillot identifies the interrelations of history and power and their reliance on the invisible.<sup>3</sup> What we choose to re-remember is a contestation of power and the United States' legacy of violent racism, sexism, classism, and ableism. Memory is also closely tied to identity. How we remember the past, or are told to remember it, can shape how we identify as individuals, a community, and ultimately as a nation. Novelist and scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen makes a similar argument using what he calls

the "industry of memory" to describe "ideological forces that determine how and why memories are produced and circulated... who has access to, and control of" memories.<sup>4</sup> Nguyen uses Hollywood's depiction of the Vietnam War as an example of this industry of memory in action. Through films, those with the power to shape narratives can project their version of history into our individual and collective consciousness via our home screens.<sup>5</sup>

The 1997 film *Selena*, directed by Gregory James Nava and featuring Jennifer Lopez as the Tejana star, is a staple film within the Latinx community that heavily influences our memory of Selena. For many, such as myself, born after the singer's 1995 death this is their first introduction to Selena. The film tells the story of Selena's rise to fame and sudden death. Released only two years after her death, Selena's father Abraham Quintanilla made the decision to make a film about his daughter's life to put an end to rumors and speculations regarding her sudden death.<sup>6</sup> The film's director, Gregory James Nava, described many disagreements Quintanilla had with the portrayal of Selena in the film, claiming he wanted to protect her image and reputation.<sup>7</sup> While Nava pushed back on many of these disagreements, it is clear that *Selena* is a version of the star that her father ultimately approved of—an almost infantilized version of her that leaves little to no room for the nuances in Selena's relationship with her father.

Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, mononymously and famously known as Selena, was born on April 16, 1970, in Lake Jackson, TX and grew up in Corpus Christi, TX. Selena's singing career started when her father made her the lead singer of *Selena y Los Dinos*, a family band with

her sister, Suzette Quintanilla, on drums and her brother, Abraham Quintanilla III, on bass guitar.<sup>8</sup> After local success at the expense of Selena's well-being and schoolwork, Selena y Los Dinos were signed to EMI Latin Records in 1989.<sup>9</sup> Her debut album "Selena" was not expected to succeed but eventually reached number seven on the U.S. Billboard Regional Mexican Albums charts. In the early 1990s, Selena began to gain nationwide popularity among Latinxs in the United States. In 1992, Selena and Chris Pérez, the lead guitarist of *Selena y Los Dinos*, secretly eloped despite Selena's father's disapproval of Pérez. In 1994, at the 36th annual Grammy Awards, Selena's album won Best Mexican/Mexican-American album category.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Selena's life was cut short in 1995 after being fatally shot by her former fan-club and boutique store manager Yolanda Saldivar.<sup>11</sup> Her funeral was attended by thousands. Several memorials and vigils in her honor were held across the nation.<sup>12</sup> Even at the time of her passing, Selena was remembered by the Latinx community as a venerated ancestor. The Latinx community developed a parasocial familial memorialization that evolved into sanctification. She was perfect and untouchable, a talent taken too soon that cannot, and has not, been replicated.

In large part, this is the way Abraham Quintanilla wanted the world to remember his daughter. This public memory of Selena is further reinforced when considering the Latinx cultural belief that one should not speak ill of the dead. Selena's death at the young age of 23 also freezes her in time and places her adjacent to a child-like innocence. I believe this does a disservice to Selena's true character, though we may never know.

### **"Selena Forever" and Other Ways We Remember the Queen of Tejano Music**

It was not long after Selena's death on March 31, 1995, that people began to memorialize her. Vigils and ceremonies held in her honor started to pop up across the nation. To this day, on the anniversary of her death, people hold candlelight vigils for the Queen of Tejano Music. Over the years, people have become more creative in their ways of memorializing Selena. Cover bands of her music have gained popularity, her likeness is often used by Drag Queens, and her image can be found on an array of everyday items like tote bags and earrings.

Shortly after Selena's death, Hollywood and corporate America were beginning to realize the consumer power held by the Latinx community. Selena scholar Deborah Paredez writes that Selena's death served as a marker for a growing Latinx market and consumer power.<sup>13</sup> Through Selena, it became known that there was money associated with Latinxs. However, even though Latinxs were seen as a large consumer base, their socioeconomic challenges were largely ignored. Using Viet Thanh Nguyen's industry of memory theory, I identify ways that Selena's memory has been commodified and highlight alternatives that are productive for community healing.

One way Selena's memory is honored is through public installations. Public installations are free of charge and force us to reckon with the past and notions of power. In *A People's Guide to Los Angeles*, authors Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng write that "struggles over who and what counts as 'historic' and worthy of a visit involve

decisions about who belongs and who doesn't, who is worth remembering and who can be forgotten, who we have been and who we are becoming."<sup>14</sup> In reaction to this, the authors provide an alternative guide for Los Angeles that values public use of space as resistance for the forgotten stories. The creation of a Selena statue in Corpus Christi, Selena's hometown, aligns with this kind of resistance. *Mirador de la Flor* is a public installation that contains a statue of Selena accompanied



Figure 1. *Mirador de la Flor*

by a large white rose, her favorite flower. Opened to the public on May 25, 1997, this is one installation of eight along the Corpus Christi Bayfront, a project called *Miradores del Mar*.<sup>15</sup> In March of 2024 the statue and surrounding area was renovated to remove writings visitors had left for the late singer, polish the statue, upgrade the LED lights, and repair the sound system.<sup>16</sup> By choosing to honor Selena's memory, the city of Corpus Christi recognizes the importance of Latinx culture to its city. However, in 1993, the city also chose to memorialize Christopher Columbus by creating replicas of his three famous ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa*

Maria.<sup>17</sup> A history that does not exist in Corpus Christi but nonetheless brought the city money. This stark contrast in who and what we choose to remember creates a conversation about what we deem important enough to remember. It is worth pointing out that Selena's memory, although considered Latina/x representation, still reinforces the idea that Latina bodies are worth celebrating only after their death rather than when they are alive.

So how do we remember Selena more honestly? One way that feels both true to her spirit and can move the Latinx community towards healing, is through performance, specifically queer performance.<sup>18</sup> Selena was a performer at heart, this is widely known about her. She was personally involved in creating her iconic outfits for concerts and music videos. From her bedazzled bralettes to her purple jumpsuit, a hyper feminine imagery easily comes to mind when one thinks of Selena. Vocally, she stood out from mainstream pop acts higher in tone and pitch. Her rich, husky voice, was full of emotion. In her music and her physical appearance, she never caved to the whitening effects of pop music.<sup>19</sup>

Selena grew up working class. I would argue she is associated with a working-class sensibility. By being able to step into Selena's persona, Latinxs can explore and express their gender identity in ways accessible to the working class. Selena is also association with the Chicana do-it-yourself (DIY) style known as *rasquache*.<sup>20</sup> To be able to make art and beauty out of nothing is inherently queer. Similarly, drag culture contains much of the same *rasquache* spirit. Makeup techniques are learned through trial and error, costumes are made by hand, and wigs take months to perfect. Deborah



Paredes writes that “Selena’s memorial terrain serves as a solid foundation on which queer Latina/o worlds are built.”<sup>21</sup>



Figure 2. Selena Vyle, July 2022. Photo from @selenavyle on Instagram.

Whether it be drag, cover bands, or theater, queer performance blurs the lines between real and fantasy. José Esteban Muñoz argues that queer performance, specifically performances done by people of color, “is about transformation” and creating “a world that is born through performance.”<sup>22</sup> For a brief moment in time, Selena is here with us. We can imagine a world where Selena is still alive doing what she loved the most: performing.

**The Saint Selena Prayer Candle**

White prayer candles are common items with those who practice Catholicism. They are most commonly presented as a plain white candle, but in recent years it has become more popular for an image of a saint or Jesus Christ to decorate the exterior of the candle. Even more recently, celebrity prayer candles have grown in popularity and have become easy to find on sites such as Etsy, Amazon, and Redbubble.

Common celebrities on these candles include Beyonce, Taylor Swift, Harry Styles, and Kim Kardashian.<sup>23</sup> While celebrities on prayer candles are created with lighthearted intentions, prayer candles of celebrities or popular figures who have passed away hold a heavier weight to them. Among popular celebrity prayer candles is that of Selena, one that carries a particular emotional weight in my community.

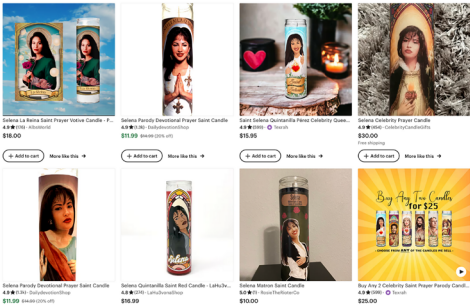


Figure 3. Selena prayer candles for sale on Etsy

Often dubbed as “Saint Selena,” her image is adorned with roses, angel wings, a halo, clouds, a sacred heart, a microphone, her hair and make-up done, and wearing one of her infamous performance outfits. What is particular about the Saint Selena prayer candle is that Selena’s memory is held in such high regard by the Latinx community that giving her the status of sainthood feels almost appropriate. Finding a Saint Selena prayer candle is quite simple and current listings on Etsy show various designs one can choose from.

The Catholic imagery and symbolism used is important to analyze. It is undeniable that Catholicism, stemming from the violent colonization of the Americas in the name of Christianity, has heavily influenced Latinx culture.<sup>24</sup> Within Catholicism, white roses are a symbol of purity, red roses represent the blood of

Christ and his sacrifice for humans, and angel wings and a halo establish a holy/saint/angel-like status. Additionally, clouds represent heaven, and the sacred heart is symbolic of God's boundless love for all. To light a prayer candle is to call on that saint for guidance. A parallel can be seen with Selena's memory. The Latinx community, and especially her father, see Selena as pure and a good role model for young girls. Her death parallels that of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross and tragedy. Her angel wings and/or halo establish Selena as a saint, up above in heaven, watching over her fans and Latinx community. Similarly, giving Selena a sacred heart further reinforces the idea that Selena loved her fans and the Latinx community to the same degree that we love her.

The Saint Selena prayer candle also creates space for a conversation about generational differences within the Latinx community, specifically for Latina women, girls, and queer femmes. Traditional prayer candles are associated with the elders in our community, particularly our grandmothers who proudly declare themselves Catholic and practice their faith regularly. While a church may have patriarchal structures embedded in it, most Latinx churchgoers tend to be working-class middle-aged and older women. On the contrary, younger Latinx generations are less religious. As of 2022, only about 30% of Latinxs under 30 years old identify as Catholic and almost half had no religious affiliation.<sup>25</sup> This corresponds with the steady increase in the number of Americans that claim no religious affiliation.<sup>26</sup> It is not uncommon for younger Latinx to identify as culturally Catholic, but not in practice. Celebrity prayer candles exist in this in-between space that allows Latinx youth

to do just that. This is also an in-between space many Latinx youth find themselves in regarding their identity as Latinx Americans. Celebrity prayer candles are seen as prayer candles nonetheless and thus create a bridge between generations for deeper and more meaningful connections.

### **Contextualizing the Latinx Experience in the United States**

The late 1980s and early 1990s play a significant role in contextualizing Selena's death and the Latinx community at large. During this decade, the Cold War had come to an end after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the Soviet Union's disbandment in 1991.<sup>27</sup> As many scholars have argued, the United States' victory in the Cold War led to reinforced ideologies around nationalism, citizenship, and hegemonic American values. This left little to no room for minority groups to be considered as part of such ideologies.

In the early 1990s there was a steady increase of immigration to the United States which peaked in 2000.<sup>28</sup> Simultaneously, the Latinx population was also increasing during this era. From 1990 to 2000, the Latinx population in the United States increased more than 57%, just a little more than 12.9 million people.<sup>29</sup> This is seen as a threat for those interested in holding onto power and the hegemonic ideology of a white America. The 1990s was also a time of much public xenophobia. Anti-immigrant hate groups, anti-immigration legislation, and the use of "invasion" rhetoric, were just some of the systemic ways that immigrants were attacked.<sup>30</sup> Since 2011, we have seen an increase in these same anti-immigration and xenophobic sentiments. With the 2016 presidential election, these hate groups have been further emboldened

to carry out violent xenophobic attacks on immigrant communities, including Latinx communities. Regardless of citizenship status, Latinxs, alongside other communities of color, are coded as perpetual foreigners who are subject to anti-immigration violence at any given moment.

In 1992, Bill Clinton won the Presidential Election and promptly signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico.<sup>31</sup> Once in effect in 1994, NAFTA allowed for immediate lifting of taxes on imported and exported goods and worked towards the removal of barriers for cross-border investments and labor.<sup>32</sup> Two main things occur in response to NAFTA that directly affected Latinxs. The first is the boom in maquiladoras (manufacturing plants) located in Mexico but owned and run by a parent company in the United States or Canada. Often located near the United States and Mexico border in Texas, maquiladoras are known for paying offensively low wages, having poor working conditions, and being generally unsafe places to work. This, in conjunction with the increase in the militarization of the border and increasing numbers of migrants and refugees from Mexico and Central America, creates a particularly dangerous space for women and girls.<sup>33</sup>

This leads to the second effect, a sharp rise in femicide at the United States-Mexico border, specifically in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. From 1993 to 2005, over 370 known murders of women and girls took place in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua, with a third of them being victims of sexual violence.<sup>34</sup> To this day, women in Mexico continue to fight the ongoing femicide that has reached over 24,00 missing women across the

country and an average of 11 femicides per day.<sup>35</sup> This violence does not pertain to just Mexico. It is locally known that the perpetrators of femicide in El Paso, Texas, just across the Rio Grande from Ciudad Juarez, are mostly men. Border agents, U.S. military, police officers, higher ups at maquiladoras, and those involved in human trafficking and drug rings are all complicit in this violence.<sup>36</sup> At the border, Latina and Indigenous bodies are marked as disposable.

In her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Chicana queer feminist Gloria Anzaldúa famously wrote, “The U.S-Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture.”<sup>37</sup> This open wound is felt by all Latinas and femmes. To apply Anzaldúa’s words more figuratively, the third country is also symbolic of where Latinxs navigate their identity and Latinidad. Where Latinas and femmes quickly learn about intersecting struggles and find their voice. From the subtle patriarchy in our homes to the extreme violence that goes unchallenged, Latina and femmes know grief.

This is why, in part, I believe that Selena’s death feels particularly personal to Latinas and femmes and why we have taken it upon ourselves to keep her memory alive. How many times has our spirit been killed before our body is taken at last? Viet Thanh Nguyen brilliantly writes, “struggles for memory are thus inextricable from other struggles for voice, control, power, self-determination, and the meanings of the dead.”<sup>38</sup> The struggle to keep Selena’s memory alive is a struggle for claiming ownership of and

autonomy over our bodies. To experience heartbreak and fall in love. To be able to make mistakes without violent repercussions. To know sisterhood and womanhood. And to grow old with the ones we love.

### **Selena Por Siempre**

The public memory of Selena Quintanilla-Perez can be seen throughout Latinx spaces, and more recently, in mainstream culture. Her music carries her memory generation after generation. Her image has become iconic with her signature red lips, dark hair and eyebrows, Brown skin, curvy body, and Tex-Mex look. In many ways, Selena's memory is a representation of young Latina girls and Latinx femmes trying to understand their identity within a society that does not fully recognize them. In other ways, Selena exemplifies collective mourning of the Latinx community for much of the systemic oppression and loss we have faced.

Selena was a victim of gun violence. However, in much scholarship about Selena's memory, her death is not often remembered under a context of rampant gun violence within the United States. Our elected officials' lack of action towards sensible gun laws are directly correlated to Selena's death. Had we been a country that took gun violence more seriously and worked towards reducing and/or removing the use of guns, Selena might still be alive today. But we were not and still are not that country. Our immigrant and border communities are victims of gun violence. Our Latinx community is a victim of gun violence via police brutality and gang activity. And as angering or devastating this may be, it is important we talk about this and other challenges our Latinx community faces. We must be willing to open our wounds and inspect them. Find the root cause of this collective grief and work towards an ongoing healing that promotes social justice. Latinidad is layered, complex, and nuanced. There is no one way to be Latinx. Selena herself grew up speaking English as her first language. Her family had been living in the United States for generations. She does not necessarily have the stereotypical Latinx story, yet she is proudly claimed as Latina by the Latinx community. Truthfully, I do not have a cohesive answer to what Latinidad is or how it is identified. Maybe Latinidad lies within the erosion of constant negotiation of what it means to be Latinx, perpetually shifting in meaning. What I do know is that mourning is a good place to start. We must collectively acknowledge our grief by looking towards our past. It is only then that we can begin to shed the years of trauma we carry in our souls and heal in meaningful ways that promise safety and autonomy to the most marginalized while uplifting the community as a whole

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and, 2. As a term to represent those who challenge hegemony in the U.S.

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# Queering the Male Voice: '70s Strategies of Gender Transgression

Teddy Hogerhuis

AMST 320: Women in American Society

"Queering the Male Voice" was first conceived in Dr. Gonzaba's AMST 320: Women in American Society class, taught in Winter 2023. Dr. Gonzaba asked us to write a short essay in which we related a performance by a female artist to a piece of feminist theory taught in the course curriculum. In the time since, I have developed "Queering the Male Voice" almost beyond recognition, though it still contains a close reading of Patti Smith's performance(s) of "Gloria: In Excelsis Deo," contextualized by a reading of Pat Mainardi's "The Politics of Housework." Readers should know that queering is a practice of doing sexual and gender transgression, as opposed to being LGBT+. If nothing else, I hope my paper helps explain that.

## Queering 70s Feminism

"Get UP—!" With two words, Patti Smith transgressed the barrier between performer and audience. In May of 1979, in Passaic, New Jersey, Smith disrupted her reworking of the song "Gloria"—but it was all part of the act. From the start of "Gloria: In Excelsis Deo", the artist embodies power. At first, she delivers the lyrics standing still, empty hands half-raised, almost dancing. She draws attention to her boxy black suit jacket, adjusting the cuffs as she sings about the "wild card" up her sleeve. She establishes a masculine

character, aloof and defiant, by scowling and gesturing inflexibly. Her tension raises anticipation, reflected in the pit. The audience—climbing on seats, spilling over the barrier—looks taller now. "She looks so good!" Smith sings, which would have conjured an image of Gloria, the feminine object of the speaker's interest... But Smith flicks her jacket, revealing the curve of her torso: a purposeful contrast to the character she's embodying. The anticipation in the room rises as she takes the mic in hand and purposefully steps downstage. At last, she really dances. The audience follows in kind. When they



don't take the ground they are offered, she says "—Get UP!" they step up, Smith steps down, and, on a level, it's clear now that several of them are taller than her. Smith has reached the call-and-response portion of the chorus, but—one with the audience—Smith isn't "leading" it. In every performance of "Gloria: In Excelsis Deo," Smith queers—or, more specifically, *transgresses* the edge of the stage.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I do a queer reading of Smith's performance, but I won't argue that Smith's work was in any way ahead of its time. Instead, I will contextualize it with rock counterculture and radical feminism of the era. Radical movements flourished in the sixties and seventies, but the countercultures of these decades were never perfectly inclusive, and often replicated the power structures of the period. Feminists critiqued the rock space in particular for the way it upheld normative gender hierarchies. Janis Joplin's persona and story were a particular point of focus for members of the Redstockings, a radical feminist organization. There is a particular power to "Cock Rock: Men Always Seem to End Up On Top," a 1970 article published anonymously in Redstocking publication *RAT Magazine*, shortly after Joplin's death. "Cock Rock" discusses the author's perspective on the treatment of women in the rock counterculture. Joplin's career challenged the belief that "women were meant to play only folk guitar, like Joan Baez or Judy Collins, that electric guitars were unfeminine." Yet the author of "Cock Rock" argues that even Joplin didn't use the electric guitar and was treated as an object by her audience. For all her transgressions against gender norms, Joplin's experience in the rock counterculture space was not so different from her folksier contemporaries.

Both Joplin and folk rock queen Joan Baez influenced "punk poet laureate" Patti Smith. Baez inspired Smith to exercise artistic freedom to explore stories which transcend her own experience, including songs with a male point of view. Smith worked closely with Joplin in her early career, and is cited as a key interpreter of Joplin's work. Like Joplin, she would challenge ideas about gender, whether they came from obvious misogynists or second-wave feminists. Smith's influences provide context and insight to her strategies of gender transgression.<sup>2</sup>

Smith did not identify with the radical feminist movements in the '60s and '70s, though her performances shared elements of gender transgression with feminist scholarship of the period. Redstocking Pat Mainardi discussed interpersonal politics and gender essentialism in the home in her 1970 article "The Politics of Housework." The first edition of the feminist anthology *Woman in a Man-Made World*, printed in 1972, reprinted Mainardi's article along with other "contemporary proposals related to the demands women make."<sup>3</sup> Her partner was theoretically willing to split housework, but in practice, he employed countless rhetorical strategies that revealed his unwillingness to engage in equal household labor.<sup>4</sup> Like the rock performers I've discussed, Mainardi takes on the male perspective and voice in order to challenge it.

Throughout "The Politics of Housework," Mainardi borrows and queers her husband's voice. The article's main section concludes with a representation of the ongoing discourse around chore distribution in Mainardi's household, structured as a list of her husband's remarks followed by her analysis of their meaning. Mainardi could

have simply represented and critiqued examples of harmful male rhetoric on the subject issue. Instead, Mainardi's perspective takes on the male voice as she formats her analysis through the first-person. For example, Mainardi repeatedly rephrases the quote "we should each do the things we're best at" until she ultimately reworks her husband's statement to: "I don't like the dull stupid boring jobs, so you should do them," exploring the idea of weaponized incompetence.<sup>5</sup>

By not using quotation marks when she reinterprets, she incorporates a queer—in Soulellis's sense of "performative, non-conforming acts that deviate from the unexpected"—approach to typing.<sup>6</sup> Mainardi uses typing to perform the non-conforming act of taking on her husband's voice in order to satirize it with parody, ironic tone, and color commentary.

Mainardi encourages her audience to take on male-identified rhetoric through this process of borrowing and queering. This is the purpose of the article's "Postscript." This section, providing a practical framework for readers to apply Mainardi's ideas, is far more significant to Mainardi's argument than its name implies. Here, Mainardi suggests a strategy to queer rhetorics of biological essentialism by weaponizing flawed strategies against themselves: "I admit playing top wolf or who runs the gorillas is silly but as a last resort men bring it up all the time. Talk about bees."<sup>7</sup> Crucially, this is one of many moments where Mainardi admits the borrowed strategies aren't perfect. The article ends with a meta moment: Mainardi's husband dismissing the writing of the article. This represents the limits of Mainardi's argument, and demonstrates the brutal truth of the unfinished process of gender

politics in the home.<sup>8</sup>

Bringing critical intersectionality to feminist arguments was another unfinished process. Here, Mainardi acknowledges racial oppression in the context of labor distribution, but her approach is more harmful than helpful. In the third point enumerated in the "Postscript," Mainardi claims that gender-based oppression is "little different from that of the racist who says 'N—rs don't feel pain.'"<sup>9</sup> Mainardi draws a false and obviously harmful comparison, implying that all oppressions are the same—related to but less radical than her organization's stance that patriarchy was the root of all oppression.<sup>10</sup> This is paralleled in Patti Smith's song "Rock N' Roll N—r," an example of Smith's politic of identity transgression, which attempts to reclaim the slur and re-define it as artistically transgressive.<sup>11</sup> The shared lack of intersectionality with critical race theory in Smith's and Mainardi's works exemplifies the connection between the two feminists, but the two bodies of work share strengths as well.

Pat Mainardi and Patti Smith's activisms share rhetorical strategies of queering, but neither performed intersectional queer activism. My queer reading of Mainardi's article and the gender transgressions within must not overwrite her historical stance that lesbians were disengaged from the sexual revolution.<sup>12</sup> Still, I argue that Mainardi's article contextualizes trans strategies present in 1970s feminist scholarship which elucidates Patti Smith's performances of her reworking of the Them/Van Morrison blues song "Gloria." Smith's version of the song, titled "Gloria: In Excelsis Deo" is such an impressive genderqueer disidentification that I argue that the performance functions more

like a drag performance than a standard punk rock act.<sup>13</sup> In *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*, Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor introduce a concept which they deem fundamental to drag shows: “a performance that visually questions the meaning of gender.”<sup>14</sup> Here, I begin with an altered definition that I hope to expand upon: “a performance which queers or transgresses gender.” “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo” fits both conceptions of drag.

As a drag king with a background in English studies, I conceptualize drag performance by its queer transgressions on two fronts: content and form. Queer content indicates a level of purpose; for example, Mainardi’s gender-transgressive content was her subversive challenge toward gender-normative arguments. Similarly, a drag performance’s content involves the presentation of critical themes of gender transgression. Queer form, on the other hand, speaks to the function of the work. Mainardi’s argument was structured in a way which kept the reader continually questioning the masculine-identified argument styles it demonstrated. In a drag performance, this is a self-conscious “realness,” a queering of “passing.”<sup>15</sup>

Patti Smith’s performance uses intertextual content and interdisciplinary forms to subvert normative expectations, which I argue is the key to the piece’s continual draglike function. Intertextual content allows her to evoke and then satirize the figure of the rock star and their relationship with glory. Interdisciplinary forms allow her to challenge the norms of the genre itself, so that she never truly joins it. The draglike form and content (and therefore, functions and purpose) of Smith’s art gain additional significance when one considers the queer similarity in rhetorical strategy to Mainardi’s

feminist work from the same era. Both of their bodies of work come from a place of racial and heterosexual privilege, even as they both challenge the white male voice through their queering. Yet, the earlier activism performed by Mainardi and Smith in the 1970s demonstrates critical gender transgression. Throughout this paper, I treat video recordings of Smith’s “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo” as my primary sources. I queer my readings in order to examine the mechanisms and extent of Smith’s artistic transgression. Through looking at the speaker, subjects, cult traditions, and audience reception of the song, I ultimately conclude that Smith’s performance radically subverts hierarchies that the rock counterculture often upheld or replicated.

### **Queering Gloria; Transing the Speaker**

Within the scope of this work, I use they/them pronouns for the speaker of “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo.” Scholarly tradition generally supports applying the artist’s pronouns to a narrator unless otherwise stated within the material, but while Patti Smith’s pronouns are she/her, the speaker of “Gloria” was first channeled by Van Morrison. Further, in her performance of the song Smith purposefully adopts the male voice. They/them pronouns are a compromise which I hope honors Smith’s queering of the material without obscuring the elements of patriarchal perspective which she retains in order to criticize. Secondary sources use a mixture of she/her and he/him pronouns for the speaker. When it makes the most sense for clarity, I adjust these to they/them as well.

Some fans interpret Smith’s “Gloria” as a sapphic story. A YouTube commenter writes, “pirate girl Patti

getting it on with G-L-O-R-I-A,” in response to a video recording of a performance of “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo” recorded in Belgium, 1976.<sup>16</sup> Fans like this consider Smith’s narrator to be a woman, and the song’s plot reworked into a lesbian love story. While audience interpretation carries weight, Smith has been quoted on her differing intention:

I always enjoyed doing transgender songs. That’s something I learnt from Joan Baez, who often sang songs that had a male point of view. No, my work does not reflect my sexual preferences, it reflects the fact that I feel total freedom as an artist. On *Horses*, that’s why the sleevenote has that statement about being “beyond gender”... as an artist, I can take any position, any voice, that I want.<sup>17</sup>

The word “transgender” is fascinating in its use here. Smith specifies the nature of her queering has to do with the difference in gender between performer and speaker. Scholar Mike Daley argued that “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo” is “an intertextual, critical recasting of Morrison’s tale of male sexual conquest,” focusing primarily on the queer musical forms of the distributed song.<sup>18</sup> A central component of his argument is that certain elements of Smith’s melodic range function as the vocal counterpart of a cross-dressing impersonation of male rock star Mick Jagger. Smith personifies a masculine persona in a number of ways outside of perspective. When she performed her reworking of “Gloria” in Germany in 1979,

for example, Smith was peak androgyne, wearing trousers and a small waistcoat with only a single button done as a top.<sup>19</sup> In the NPR article “You’ve Never Heard Patti Smith’s ‘Horses’!?” Charlie Kaplan describe Smith’s appearance on the cover of her album “Horses:” she wore “a dress shirt, one hand slinging a blazer over her shoulder, the other clawing her suspenders.” Kaplan finds himself “sure the androgyny of her outfit and Joey Ramone haircut was shocking by 1975 standards.”<sup>20</sup> Smith’s butch appearance was not just shocking—it was recognizably gender transgressive. Audience members imagining Smith’s speaker to be a self-insert had plenty of opportunity to process the gender play happening on stage. Though audience reception may stray from author intent, they recognize a trans form of gender liberation in the piece.

At an earlier point in the song, the speaker looks out the window to see the object of their affection “leaning on a parking meter” or rather, Smith changes her mind, “humping on a parking meter.”<sup>21</sup> Her objectification of this woman goes past the reverent and into the ridiculous. Through Smith’s campy exaggeration, the performer is no longer encouraging the audience to objectify an idealized woman. The woman, “Gloria,” is oversexualized to the point she is no longer idealized, which is massively significant considering the nature of the character. On the subject of who—or what—Gloria is, Mike Daley suggests:

It would seem that the Gloria character becomes more metaphorical in Smith’s hands; in a 1975 live version of the song, a section of lyrics is substituted where Smith’s

anticipated success as a rock artist becomes the thing “so good” and “so fine,” as Gloria comes to signify that which is generally desired and eventually conquered.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, to Daley, Patti Smith’s version of the character Gloria is the personified concept of glory. The denotative definition of glory is one-part reception of accolades and one-part attainment of splendor.<sup>23</sup> When Mike Daley acknowledges that, in Smith’s reworking, the glory of success is represented by a woman who is both desirable and conquerable, he provides (possibly by accident) a fascinating insight to glory’s patriarchal and imperial connotations.

What Daley fails to acknowledge is that the musical tradition of “Gloria” already had a history of violent heteromascularity. Daley argues that Van Morrison’s version was gender transgressive because the speaker waits for Gloria to approach him, which apparently makes the speaker “shaded with traditionally female-coded sexual passivity,” and therefore potentially more intent on celebrating Gloria than conquering her.<sup>24</sup> I find this reading over-appreciative of Van Morrison’s “feminism.” The lyrics that evoke Gloria’s approach are: “she comes over in the middle of the night / she’ll make you feel alright!”<sup>25</sup> There is no clear evidence of agency or lack thereof, validating the author of “Cock Rock’s” concern that “when you get to listening to male rock lyrics, the message to women is devastating.”<sup>26</sup> Smith’s 1976 performance in Belgium, for example, integrates Screamin’ Jay Hawkins’ lyric “put my spell on her” and Ray Charles’ lyric “make

me feel so good.”<sup>27</sup> In these lyrics, Smith shifts from parodying Van Morrison’s white masculinity to challenging sexist performances by Black men, echoing the Redstockings’ view that all men—including minorities and radicals—reinforce patriarchy.<sup>28</sup> This aligns with the critique in “*Cock Rock*” of the rock world as a “realm where macho reigns supreme.”<sup>29</sup>

Even less open for feminist interpretation is the rest of the musical tradition of “Gloria.” Daley acknowledges that “hundreds of recorded and unrecorded cover versions by garage bands from the late 1960s on had transformed it into a kind of public property.”<sup>30</sup> He does not, however, interrogate the most popular cover of the song of the previous decade: a fan favorite Doors act in the late sixties. In an archived Doors video from 1968, Jim Morrison’s version of the speaker asks, “hey what’s your name? How old are you? Where d’you go to school?,” indicating that his version of Gloria may be concerningly young.<sup>31</sup> Following an extended series of graphic moans, Morrison demands, “Well now that we know each other a little better / why don’t you come over here / MAKE ME FEEL ALL RIGHT!,” ending on a threatening scream. The Doors version of the song loudly upholds the tradition of gendered violence that the author of “Cock Rock” railed against; all listeners had the opportunity to confront its aggressive dominance.

As a known fan of the Doors, Smith was reacting to the Doors cover of the Van Morrison song at least in equal measure to the original.<sup>32</sup> In fact, it seems most likely that Smith’s reworking queers the entire tradition of the culturally-owned musical canon, and therefore *all* of the violently patriarchal things that the song had been used to say. In Smith’s

own version of “Gloria,” she focuses on parodying male heterosexuality. Evoking Jim Morrison’s moaning, Smith begs and pleads: “I... I ache to... I... couldn’t go in... Let me in! (x4) I just... Oh honey, I just wanna go in.. wanna go in to your... [unintelligible]... I need you! I’m gonna be true to you, TRUE TO YOU! (x5) TELL ME YOUR NAME (x5)”<sup>33</sup> She mocks the Jim Morrison-style performance by turning something clearly threatening into something pitiful and at times incomprehensible. Through the pitiful aspect, Smith makes it clear that glory will never fulfill the masculine fantasy; her speaker will always have to beg Gloria for more accolades and splendor than they have. In a process of impersonation typical to drag, Smith effectively takes elements from other performers and spins them into something laughably insignificant. Through her parody, she joins the Redstockings in challenging the way that even supposedly sexually liberated men in the Movement claimed ownership over other people, especially women.<sup>34</sup> Smith’s gender transgressive performance adds an element of queerness that subverts mid-century sexual liberation. Through the context of the subversion it becomes clear that the work interrogates the patriarchal desire to claim a lover as a possession, paralleling the challenge to alternative sexual lifestyles discussed by the Redstockings.

Every performance of Smith’s “Gloria” is unique, but a common thread is its drag-like intertextuality. The performance critiques male performers through allusion and impersonation. She is the woman “performing as exhibitionist in macho sex roles” that the author of “Cock Rock” said women in 1970 couldn’t imagine—but in doing so, Smith challenges the tradition she joins.<sup>35</sup> And like how Mainardi’s husband

exemplified the full group of “most men... too hip to turn you down flat,” Smith brings a broad pattern of rhetoric into question, challenging not only Van Morrison but a multitude of male artists from the sixties and seventies.<sup>36</sup>

### **Queering Faith; Transing the Audience**

I must again emphasize that Smith’s “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo” is a reworking, not a cover.<sup>37</sup> Smith begins her performance with an original spoken word introduction. The line “Jesus died for someone’s sins, but not mine,” is always part of this introduction. In her 1979 performance in Germany, this line concludes a poem about “tabling” He who “disabled these veterans.”<sup>38</sup> Smith’s speaker’s invocation and subsequent renunciation of the Christian deity makes an ironic start to a song so ecclesiastically titled “Glory to God in the Highest.” In fact, I argue that the blasphemous beginning is the queer thesis of the performance, challenging the musical tradition on the basis of ideology outside of gender politics. Daley argues that the narrator “rejects” Jesus in this thesis, as well as throughout the song.<sup>39</sup> Kaplan takes a different stance: “Smith’s narrator isn’t rejecting atonement in [their] opening statement—[they are] relishing the depravity of what [they] can’t wait to do, acts Jesus probably wouldn’t have bit the big one to atone for, if he could take it back.”<sup>40</sup> Kaplan’s point is contextualized by his larger argument, which assesses a motif of death throughout the entire album. In this case, he argues that the speaker is willing to die for their own sins, believing that Christ would not absolve them. Kaplan treats the introduction as part of a cohesive statement coming entirely from Smith’s speaker throughout the song and album. Smith never makes

any claim on Christ's opinion of her speaker; it doesn't matter. The speaker's refusal to give up their sins has more to do with preference than the extent of opportunity to relinquish them. Ignoring that ignores the speaker's total agency in this issue.

The lyric following the speaker's initial declaration continues on that subject: "my sins, my own / they belong to me,"—and they repeat "me" a second time, emphasizing their own responsibility for their religious or moral transgressions.<sup>41</sup> Molloy interprets this line as an issue of women's liberation: "She reclaims what others might shame, and in doing so she liberates herself from the societal pressures of what women "should" and "should not" do."<sup>42</sup> Molloy uses feminine pronouns for the speaker here, despite acknowledging the male voice in the rest of the song. Arguably, Molloy interprets this line as coming from Smith. If, however, the speaker remains the same character throughout the song, the lyric (and therefore Smith's thesis) is not about what's right for someone of a particular gender to do, but what's right for *anybody* to do. I prefer this interpretation because it means that Smith's ethical ideas, expressed through her art, transcend the gender binary.

By claiming their sins, the speaker asserts their agency and ownership over all of the actions in the plot. This character's ownership of their "sins" helps define not only their relationship to women and sex, but to Christ, God, and faith. The speaker is a character who may not reject those figures or concepts, but certainly challenges them through their own agency and self-exception. Let's not forget, the character has also attempted to claim not just the character Gloria, but *glory*, the concept. *Glory intended for God*, according to the title of Smith's

reworking. The speaker is shaping up to be someone whose total agency means they have a great deal of power. This archetype forms a key issue of "Cock Rock:" the concern with the hierarchy between performer and audience, which the author described as potential for "a lesson in totalitarianism," in which "there is no psychic or visual or auditory space for anyone but the performer."<sup>43</sup>

Smith's speaker is unquestionably such a performer. In the 1976 Belgium performance, Smith's lyrics explicitly establish the speaker as a rock star:

I was at the stadium  
there were twenty thousand girls  
called out their names to me  
Marie, Ruth, but to tell you the truth  
I didn't hear them, I didn't see.<sup>44</sup>

Immediately preceding this moment, Smith has queered the formal structure of the rock song through her repeated bell motif. Daley claims that Smith "proudly" uses a queer feminist structure meant to evoke multiple climaxes, refusing to fall into the expectations of typical rock songs.<sup>45</sup> Echoing the subversive form, this section's content is a radical challenge to the relationship between audience and rock star. This aligns with the idea presented in "Cock Rock" that "women are required at rock events to pay homage... by offering sexual accessibility, orgiastic applause, group worship, gang bangs at Altamont."<sup>46</sup> The rock star's challenge toward faith is related to their own god complex, fueled by idolization from the audience. When Smith's narrator turns their audience into a number, they objectify a vast number of women to quantify their glory. This parallels the objectification of the allegorical Gloria, though she is kept on a pedestal while the

others are shunted aside. The speaker's objectification of their fantastical audience is offset by Smith's anarchistic relationship with her own audience.

Smith's original audiences have the opportunity to take part in the performance, to the extent that they are treated as a highly significant element of the act. The recording of the 1976 Belgium performance focuses on the crowd in approximately half of the shots, cutting away from Smith to capture audience reception. An audience member, who attended the show live, comments on the YouTube video, "The audience in front of the stage (like me) went so crazy that most of the seats went broken. Even the floor of the first rows did collapse. I was even captured on the video footage of this incredible moment in my life."<sup>47</sup> It is particularly significant that this audience member is able to speak to the emotional atmosphere of the performance. His comment reveals a punk perspective that the damage caused to the venue is a testament to how thrilling the concert was. For all of its ironic parody, Patti Smith's "Gloria: In Excelsis Deo" is a genuinely euphoric song. Despite the solemnity and tensions of the beginning, most of the song has the audience bouncing in time. Punks have a reputation for angry violence, and it isn't undeserved—but in 1976, these guys were jumping for joy rather than anger. In my experience (mostly with hardcore bands, an admittedly separate scene), punk shows are more about experiencing and expressing emotion communally than they are about receiving the song in its most perfect form and walking away having merely heard it.

Smith's speaker spells out "G-L-O-R-I-A" but the audience chants it back louder.<sup>48</sup> This is one of the most clearly audible lyrics of the performance. Given

the context of the emotional atmosphere, it seems the audience celebrates *Patti Smith's* glory in the guise of praising the song's titular character. The labor of the act becomes a group effort as Smith's audience joins her, in total antithesis to the "passivity" Jesse Colin Young forced his audience into.<sup>49</sup> Smith's audience even dressed like her; "men and women began to dress in white shirts with black ties like her iconic Horses outfit."<sup>50</sup> The audience participates in the performance, assisting the artist in her queering.

The 1979 Germany performance has a particularly intense ending. A member of the audience climbs on stage and Smith welcomes him, as she does in the Passaic performance the same year. Venue security, however, pushes the fan back into the pit—but Smith pulls him back onstage. As a performer, Smith contributes to the environment her audience is in. One YouTube comment reads: "I love how Patti tries to protect the first guy from the violence of the security staff..."<sup>51</sup> Another commenter points out in reply, "Yeah people have died from security guards pushing them willy nilly and violently."<sup>52</sup> In punk spaces, it is considered safe practice to bring audience members who end up on stage off to the side, as pushing them back into the pit can cause injuries. When Smith intervenes when security makes an unsafe move, fans see it as courageous and kind. This clash forms a sort of parallel to the chaos of the Doors' 1968 "Gloria" video, in which there is an ongoing conflict between security and crowd—except, unlike Smith, Jim Morrison sides with security.<sup>53</sup> The way she transcends the performer-audience hierarchy that male performers uphold is part of why the punk audience adores her. Nevertheless, Smith's intervention exhausts her. When several other audience members end up on stage, Smith



is pulled out of the altercation. She ends the song quickly, with a few repetitions of the refrain and some shouted goodbyes. At last, Smith falls to her knees and sings a final “Gloo-o-o-ria!” She ends the performance when she says flatly, “Jesus Christ.” Like Mainardi’s conclusion, it is open-ended through the lack of clarity on who’s speaking, and through the idea that the argument’s work is not yet done.

While Smith typically incorporates a more planned return to her initial declaration regarding the Christian savior, Smith still effectively returns the narrative to the issue of Christ. In her 1976 performance, recorded in Belgium, Smith repeats the entire lyric “I said that Jesus died for somebody’s sins / But not mine,” unchanged. Daley argues this final thought is a return to “her initial rejection of Jesus, a rejection in favour not of sexual freedom, but of the freedom to play and to transgress boundaries: boundaries of gender, music, and discourse.”<sup>54</sup> Daley’s interpretation works, especially in the context of the album version of the song, where there is only this version of the lyric. In the 1979 performance in Germany, though, Smith’s final blasphemy is not her typical repetition of her initial statement. The single “Jesus Christ” is an ambiguous invocation. It’s worth noting that in the fall of the same year, Smith performed the song live for the last time using the changed lyric “Jesus died for somebody’s sins, why not mine?” Sharon DeLano claims this *re*-reworked thesis of the song comes from a speaker closer to God, especially contextualized to the queered glory of Smith’s career.<sup>55</sup>

In September of 1979—months after the performance in Passaic—the Patti Smith Group performed for the last time. “The band played for seventy thousand people, and at the end the audience stormed the stage. ‘It was anarchistic, but

it wasn’t destructive,’ Smith says after the fact. ‘We gave them our instruments. They yelled in the microphones.’”<sup>56</sup> Like the performance in Germany earlier that year, the group’s final act ended with the audience claiming the stage. Taking instruments and yelling in microphones surpassed joining the performance through dancing and call-and-response; the audience was more involved than ever before. It brought a cathartic end to an era; notably, the attendance was fifty thousand more than the unfulfilling twenty thousand girls in the 1976 “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo” lyrics. These numbers were so vast because Smith’s claim to glory was less a conquest of an audience and more Joan of Arc inspiring a revolution.

### Queering Hierarchy

Patti Smith’s involvement of her audience in her queering challenges normative and hierarchical ideas about success. Through this process she effectively dissects, critiques, and subverts the practice of using a female love interest to personify glory. Smith’s transformative performance draws attention to rhetoric used—by her own heroes and artistic influences—to equate glory with conquering women. Her androgynous delivery draws attention to the way she queers a pre-existing media tradition. She criticizes objectifying elements of the male gaze through re-contextualization and introduces subversive ideas of gender through intertextual conversation. Her queerly transformative performance (her *drag*) is a forum for Smith to comment on her own ability to reclaim a masculinized idea of glory. Above all, the audience celebrates Smith and her redefined vision of success, because despite the cynicism of parody, “Gloria: In Excelsis Deo” is a euphoric closing act which encourages

audiences to join in the artist's creative resistance.

I started this paper with Smith's break in character, where she dropped the act in order to transcend the dichotomy between performer and audience—and I do mean *transcend*. It was not enough for Patti Smith to become a rock star, or for radical feminists to win women civil rights and social equality. It is crucial to anti-hierarchical activism that the hierarchy should be left behind, deconstructed through *collective* labor (whether it be queer performance or housework). Otherwise, someone is still *always* on a lower rung of the hierarchy. When performing this act, Smith tells the audience they should break down the barrier, and they do. Or, if even that way of phrasing it gives her too much authority, it could be said that she *invites* the audience to rebel. Either way she opens the stage to anarchy, redistributing glory to the masses. Fittingly, that seems like a simultaneous reclamation of Christian and American revolutionary values. When the Christian deity was, in Smith's words, "tabled," in a challenge toward Christ or at least an assumption of personal power—that was a critique of religious hierarchy in relation to patriarchal hierarchy. Yet when the audience transitions from celebrating a parody, to celebrating an activist, to celebrating themselves... The false idol of the rock star, a symbol of American patriarchy, no longer stands between the audience and a taste of liberty.

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# Hardcore Punk as a Heterotopian Space

Jesse Lai

AMST 501: Graduate Seminar in Theory & Method of American Studies

This paper analyzes a video of a hardcore punk band performing shortly after COVID restrictions were lifted. The video was analyzed as a text and explores hardcore punk shows as an American space of heterotopia. As evidenced in the video, the hardcore community acts as a group of deviation, entrances/exclusion, and juxtaposition or a combination of incompatible spaces aggregated in one space. Both the performance of the band and the participation of the crowd share similarities to a church service and expose an American desire for a “Third Place” and community. The video demonstrates the power of a transient heterotopia and a display of sociality after deep loneliness during COVID lockdown.

Additionally, discourses of policing, rules, values, and identity are analyzed as forces of group norms and structure. This is primarily demonstrated through the lyrics describing the performativity of police and the commentary offered before the show begins. All the discourses support the hypothesis of Americans seeking sociality and a “Third Place”. Finally, the tropes and structure of the music genre/performance are identified as building blocks for a consistently evolving community.

On July 19th, 2021, soon after COVID restrictions were lifted, one of the first hardcore shows since the pandemic happened in a makeshift outdoor venue. After the show, a videographer named 197 Media uploaded a video of Sunami’s performance.<sup>1</sup> Within the first four minutes, the video revealed a larger audience than is typical of a hardcore show in the Bay Area as the show takes

place between two commercial buildings with a stage near the parking lot. The entire space is filled with bodies facing the stage. The stage is made of unfinished plywood and is shaded by a single tree. The video displays discourse on the police, ritual, and statements describing geography as identity. Behind the amps and around the band are people with cameras and members of other bands.

### **Theoretical Perspective: Heterotopias**

The theory of Heterotopias was elaborated and described by Michel Foucault in "Of Other Spaces." This theory contributed to new ideas of space and time. Foucault was responding to an essentialist perspective of space in which places are fixed in their natures. An example of an essentialist understanding of space would be a cemetery as a place to encounter essential ideas like death and remembrance. Foucault rejected this oversimplification of space and created the theory of Heterotopia which translates to different places.<sup>2</sup> Heterotopia is a more complex existential perspective of spaces and describes places as being specific to their time, context, and relationships. For instance, a cemetery in 1940s New York should be approached differently than a cemetery in modern day Southern California and furthermore, should not be understood through its essential qualities of death-ness or remembrance. Another important quality of a Heterotopia is the experience of a mixed joint experience. This can be understood as two-ness or two spaces existing in one experience. An example of this is a mirror. When looking at a mirror a person is experiencing their true existence in the room and a false existence reflected back as their image in the mirror. In short it is two contradicting realities existing simultaneously, a) the real person and b) the non-existent person that is also a real image. Along with Heterotopia another recurring term that will be used to analyze the text is discourse. In *Archeology of Knowledge* Foucault describes discourse as statements that move from subject to subject and then overtime create meaning among human society.<sup>3</sup> This is different from colloquial

usages of discourse in which discourse is associated with debate.

The text being analyzed using Foucault's theories is a performance by a Bay Area hardcore punk band named Sunami. Sunami's performance demonstrates many qualities of Heterotopias including being a space of deviation, contradictions, juxtaposition, and temporality. Heterotopias are described by Foucault in six principles, some characteristics of these principles being; spaces of inclusion/exclusion, spaces that reveal false Utopias, and deviation or spaces of socially unaccepted behavior.<sup>4</sup> The three principles present in the text are deviation (socially unaccepted behavior), inclusion/exclusion, and false Utopias. Using this theoretical perspective allows for new understandings of subcultures after the 2020 lockdown and more widely, some Americans' desire for sociality in using punk culture as a multiplicitous and liminal space.

### **American Life and Hardcore Punk as a Space**

Hardcore shows are a place of sociality with rituals, rules, and identity attached to the subculture. These qualities are more attractive to Americans than ever. For instance, Sound and Fury, the largest Hardcore festival on the West Coast, sold more than 5,000 tickets in 2023. This is not a large number compared to Coachella with its 99,000 attendees over two weekends in 2019, but when compared to how many attendees Sound and Fury had in 2018 at the Belasco theater, which has a 1500 person capacity, selling 5,000 tickets reveals a substantial growth. In popularity and size, Hardcore is in two worlds; a small community and a community large enough for national participation.

In this way Hardcore functions as a Heterotopia by living in two spaces that are contradictory. Additionally, during these large festivals or landmark shows, there are many participants from all over the world for a temporal event. This transient nature of touring bands and traveling participants makes Hardcore heterotopian because it is arranged in multiple times/spaces and because the shows are anchored by the local and more static scenes or communities, again two-ness. The growth of the genre and the events suggests a growth in a desire for a social heterotopian space.

As Americans cease to participate in religious events, social organizations, and clubs, we become more isolated and lonely. Harvard's Graduate School of Education's *Making Caring Common Project* reported, "Alarming numbers of Americans are lonely. According to our recent national survey of approximately 950 Americans, 36% of respondents reported feeling lonely 'frequently' or 'almost all the time or all the time' in the prior four weeks."<sup>5</sup> The percentage rose to 40% when they asked 16-24-year-olds.<sup>6</sup> In *Our Vanishing Third Places*, Ray Oldenburg describes "Third Places" as, "nothing more than informal public gathering places. The phrase 'third places' derives from considering our homes to be the 'first' places in our lives, and our workplaces the 'second.'<sup>7</sup> The third place is a place where people meet and socialize outside the first 2 places. It is a place to meet new people and feel connected to society and larger communities. Some examples of third places are churches, recreation centers, cafes, and social clubs. There might be a relationship between the decrease in "Third Spaces" and the decrease of social group participation. Other variables like a

decrease in young people getting married and an increase in job changes may also help explain loneliness. What is clear is that managing isolation as an American now requires a concerted effort. Hardcore shows may be an outlet for this, because they can provide a temporary "Third Place" to participate in and a new social group, it's no wonder they are on the rise.

The Sunami performance demonstrates rituals, congregation, local identity, values of friendship, and common experiences. This performance also exemplifies Heterotopia by exposing false Utopias like the Evangelical church and through containing its own two-ness or contradicting realities. In many ways, the performance mimics and innovates an Evangelical church service, one of the original "Third Spaces" for Americans. For example, beginning the show with announcements and proclamations of values and loyalties is very similar to the beginning of a church service. Furthermore, the common chants and singing along to the music are similar to liturgy and hymns. Although the violence that is common to punk spaces is different, there is still an element of paralleled physicality, as in many Pentecostal churches it is regular to sing and dance to praise music. Mainstay hardcore bands like Terror and Madball use slogans like "Keepers of the Faith" and "Hardcore still lives" and functionally act as clergy. For example, Terror's singer Scott Vogel is known for preaching the good news of hardcore to newcomers. This was illustrated when Vogel shouted, "It doesn't matter if you have a dick or a pussy, we all belong here." or "More stagedives.... Step up to get your rep up!!!!" from the stage.<sup>8</sup> The growth of hardcore from 2018 to 2023 displays the need for more 'Third Places' and more



social groups that can fill the space that churches and social clubs once did. Even more, Hardcore reveals the false Utopian space of the evangelical church. Because Heterotopias are not perfect and ideal they often reveal spaces that attempt to display, explicitly or implicitly, Utopian natures by exposing their imperfect qualities. The commonalities between Hardcore and Evangelicalism do not end with being third places but they also share similar ritualistic qualities.

### **Tropes, Genre, and Context of the Space**

Three primary parts make up a hardcore song: the circle pit, the two-step, and the breakdown, with other supplementary parts being the stomp, side-to-side, and sing-along. Additionally Hardcore punk as a Heterotopian space of behavioral deviation is structured by its tropes. Unlike a “Pop song,” hardcore’s song parts are inspired by and ordered based on crowd participation. For example, a fast guitar riff would be called a “circle pit” because it is written to compel the crowd to run in a circle. Similarly a “two-step” usually involves a medium-tempo riff with the purpose of compelling the crowd to hop in a “two-step” motion to the beat. Finally, the breakdown is the part of the song that is slowest and elicits the most violent movements. All three work in tandem with group participation and the feeling of common catharsis eliciting a certain form. Furthermore, the organization of the violence, and the tacit expression of the band and crowd, display a space of Heterotopian deviation, with evidence from the band and crowd’s tattoos, piercings, style, and choreographic violence. These qualities display Heterotopian deviation in reference to American beliefs about

normative appearance. According to Schaeffer and Dinesh, only 22% of Americans have more than one tattoo.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Schaeffer and Dinesh surveyed Americans and found that of the people without tattoos, 29% of them viewed tattoos as negative.<sup>10</sup> In short, much of the crowd/band’s appearance and behavior are deviations from American social norms.

The musical tropes that people follow as participants and that bands use as songwriters are always evolving and being reimagined. In the video, the crowd responds to the implicit imperatives and tropes with the corresponding physical responses. At the beginning of the video, the crowd hears a stomp riff and begins to stomp. The song’s parts are structured in this format: mid-tempo breakdown, vocal break, slow breakdown, two-step, and then a final breakdown. The crowd responds to these tropes by acting out the physical movements that respond to each of these parts. Much like a liturgy, the parts are taught through observation and participation over time. This is very different from Pop Music because there is not an “a-b-a-b-c-b” form. Hardcore shows provide a “Third Place” and predictable parts much like an Evangelical church. Examples of these predictable parts are hardcore sing-along lines or chants and Gospel call and response sections. According to Finlay et al 2019, U.S. participation in community-oriented “Third Places” and more specifically religious institutions, has been declining for the last couple of decades. From 2008 to 2015 religious institutions lost about 95,000 participants and sporting, goods, hobby, and music organizations lost about 57,000 participants.<sup>11</sup> Covid isolation is indeed a major variable in this outcome, but a decline in participation

has been occurring before Covid meeting restrictions were in place. If people are retreating from third places, then they are being excluded from extra social interactions. The participation in third places and more specifically Heterotopias does not necessarily eliminate all exclusion because many Heterotopias are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive.

### **Heterotopia's Inclusion and Exclusion: Themes, Structure, Symbols, and Language**

In the video there are examples of inclusion, demonstrated by group participation, and exclusion which is evidenced by behavior exclusive to privileged groups. The show begins with the vocalist explaining the rules/form of stage participation thus establishing inclusion behaviors. Participatory form functions as a rite of passage and entrance to the stage. In this way the vocalist establishes the space as a Heterotopian space of entrances and exclusions. If the form is not kept then social shame is applied as a disciplinary action to exclude full participation. With that, being on stage is a variable in more liminal egalitarian performances. This could be juxtaposed to a pop performance where artists are watched and are the primary focus of the performance. All to say, the form or rules given during the beginning of the video contribute to the Heterotopian nature of the space. There are four primary rules he establishes: do not be on the stage unless you a) are going to jump off the stage, b) kiss the band members, c) are a security member or, d) are holding a camera. These rules demonstrate a couple of themes and values in hardcore. First, participation is a key element of the show and is expected. Second, staying on the stage breaks the form, or shared rules established and described earlier of

the live performance. The community's assumption disciplines the behavior of staying on the stage by implying that your desire for being on the stage is either to kiss the band or jump off the stage. The singer socially disciplines the audience using a phrase which contains a couple of latent meanings.

Based on his claims, the act of staying on the stage signified a desire for a sexual act with the band. This statement also made assumptions about the type of person who would kiss a person a) in public and b) without direct consent. In Frederick Hegel's Master/Bondservant dialectic, a subject is objectified and subjugated when they are not recognized as a subject with free will, self-consciousness through subject-to-subject interaction, or as an end in themselves.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Hegel's master/bondservant dialectic provides a theoretical perspective for forcing a "kiss" on a subject, a band member, as a form of objectification. Additionally, in Leo Tolstoy's landmark pamphlet *The Slavery of Our Times*, slavery and freedom are put on a spectrum and any event or action can be plotted anywhere in between full freedom or full slavery.<sup>13</sup> When applying both Hegel and Tolstoy's ideas of subjectivity as self-consciousness, subjects being an end-in-themselves and more generally freedom v. slavery/objectification, the audience member who stays on the stage could be then interpreted as a band "kisser" thus signifying themselves as one who does not respect subjectivity or as one who objectifies the band.

In the end, the person who disobeys the rule of staying off the stage does not respect private property/subjectivity. Based on these expectations and rules the permissible stage occupants were the band, other bands, camera

operators, and security. On these exceptions, there is a “two-ness” and contradiction in the fact that the form does not apply to the privileged groups thus reinforcing the space as a Heterotopia. The themes of geography, identity, and communal participation are displayed throughout the performance. Although the general rules and expectations of the show are exhibited through these imperatives, the song’s lyrics and the performance of the songs add a layer of resistance to established rules and institutions to the text.

### **Language and Place: Exposing the False Utopia**

This show as a Heterotopian space exposes the unreal ideal of cops through explicit oral communication, like in *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* or *Law and Order*, as those who catch bad guys and only want justice. There are three types of explicit oral communication present: lyrics from the song, exclamatory statements between songs and during breaks, and whole crowd chants. In the middle of the first song named “Contempt of Cop,” the tempo slows before an instrumental break, and the crowd chants the most popular line of the song, “187 on a P.I.G”. 187, in its origin, refers to a penal code that outlaws the act of murder; more colloquially, it is synonymous with murder. The lyric’s manifest meaning signifies murdering a police officer but the verb, 187, and the noun, P.I.G, signify much more complex ideas. The use of P.I.G., spelled out, refers to a common metaphor for police officers as dirty fat farm animals and is coded in the ambiguity of an unknown acronym. Furthermore, the use of the preposition “on” in reference to 187, specifies the phrase as one that copies a police radio call. Essentially, the vocalist is using police

language to communicate a resistance to the authority and authenticity of police along with the power they hold within the city of San Jose. Earlier in the song, he yells a line that reads, “Wave your stupid badge, that shit is just for show.” In this moment the song exposes the false Utopia of law enforcement as a selfless and righteous institution. This line also reverses the typical idea that the badge symbolizes. Here he is challenging the agreed meaning of the symbol, the badge, by exposing the performativity of policing. This line in conjunction with “187 on a P.I.G.” participates in the society wide discourse on the power of the police. Through this discourse, hardcore music’s ideology of opposing the police, and authority more broadly, continues. The song’s meaning is manifest in the title of the song but the latent meaning is most present in the performance. When the 187 line occurs the audience stops hardcore dancing and stage diving to yell the line as loud as possible. Within this music community is a purpose and common feeling that is demonstrated by singing in unison. The physical and emotional response to the 187 line unifies the audience around a value that creates this imagined community. In short, the audience agrees with the value to resist cops and that is a signifier of a “hardcore” community member. This is confirmation of the unreal Utopia of cops as an ideal institution thus showing another instance of a Heterotopian quality being present during the show.

### **Power, Culture, and Identity from a Space**

Throughout the song, the vocalist makes comments that are not in the album recordings. He shouts out his best friend,

San Jose, other bands, and California. Through this speech, the theoretical community of Bay Area hardcore is being defined and reinforced. The identity of the audience and more generally, the individuals that participate, is formed around the community. In “Identities and Social Locations,” Kirk and Okazawa wrote, “Community, like home, may be geographic and emotional, or both, and provides a way for people to express group affiliation.”<sup>14</sup> The band identifies themselves and their fans as “Real Bay Shit” which appeals to both authenticity and location. The dimensions of identity displayed in the video are shared interest, Bay Area location, anti-authority, participation in live shows, and shared cathartic experiences. Although the words of the band signify location as a rule for community membership, the presence of videographers and photographers exist on stage as a privileged sub-group which demonstrates the desire to export the subculture to other geographical areas and into possible mainstream consciousnesses. There is a contradiction between the messaging that preaches Bay Area solidarity and the privileging of the videographers on stage, who will make the band more popular: both real and unreal spaces. The expectation for both the audience and the performers is group participation, but to different ends. With that, through the internet and video people can watch a hardcore show without physically participating in the Bay Area community. This is not unique to hardcore but many other institutions and subcultures are learning to adapt to people’s preferences for online participation. With all this being new, hardcore tropes and genres were named and built with a physical reaction as a goal.

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# Trivia Night: An Integral Component of Brewery Culture

Markus Albihn

AMST 408: Gaming and American Culture

Brewery trivia nights, such as the case study of Honey Pot Meadery in Anaheim, California, represent a dynamic intersection of intellectual challenge, social interaction, and cultural expression. These events foster community engagement, allowing participants to showcase their knowledge, bond with teammates, and creatively express their identities through team names. While some attendees approach trivia with a competitive mindset, most are motivated by the desire to enjoy a fun, social experience with friends and family. In addition, brewery trivia nights provide cultural capital to breweries, enhancing their social significance and counteracting negative stereotypes associated with alcohol consumption. As brewery trivia has become a staple of craft beer culture, it also reflects the evolving inclusivity of this space, though challenges remain. The history of craft beer, shaped by racial, gendered, and class-based barriers, continues to influence trivia culture, despite efforts to foster more diverse participation. Addressing these barriers—through more inclusive trivia culture, spaces, and questions—remains essential for the continued growth of brewery trivia. This phenomenon presents an important avenue for further research, particularly in Southern California and other regions where beer culture is flourishing.

“OF COURSE, THE  
SONG PLAYING  
FOR THAT ROUND  
WAS ‘MY HUMPS’,  
BECAUSE CAMELS  
HAVE HUMPS AND  
CAMELS IS AN  
ANAGRAM FOR THIS  
QUESTION’S ANSWER  
‘MESCAL.’” - OZZY  
VEE, HONEY POT  
MEADERY, ANAHEIM,  
CA, 02/22/2024 ”

This is something you would expect to hear if they took part in an average trivia night at a brewery in Orange County, California. The general format of a traditional, trivia night is a set amount of rounds split into three questions that fall under specific categories that vary immensely culminating in one final question. These categories can come from popular culture staples like movies, TV, and music, or from more academic categories like science, geography, and history. On occasion, there will be more niche categories like “potent potables,” which is a category referring to alcoholic beverages. The phrase “potent potables” was popularized by and stolen from the game show *Jeopardy*, and this reference says quite a bit about the expectations of the playerbase involved in a trivia night. Bar trivia players are expected to have, at least to some degree, some familiarity

with greater trivia culture and, therefore, be familiar with what “potent potables” is and where the reference comes from.

Trivia culture, in general, relies heavily on certain types of knowledge or cultural capital, a concept first theorized by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu which can be defined “[as] a cluster of social assets that an individual has, and uses, in order to promote social mobility and communication in a hierarchical, stratified community.”<sup>1</sup> Cultural capital is often defined by a community and thus can take on many forms, but traditionally cultural capital directly refers to types of knowledge. In the context of bar trivia and greater trivia culture, one’s immense subset of otherwise trivial knowledge is considered a form of cultural capital. A player knowing certain things that have otherwise no real value outside of the trivia space is a core component to the community. Things like what religion the lead singer of Queen is or the region in the Indian Ocean where he was born or which two countries of different continents have a long-standing feud over the colors of their flag. To answer those questions, you can ask a trivia player who’d be able to tell you that Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of Queen, was born in Zanzibar, Tanzania and was a Zoroastrian, and that Chad–Romania relations were tarnished by both countries’ choice of the same flag pattern, tri colored stripes of blue, yellow, and red. Trivia players know that different events ask a variety of different questions and, thus, collect generally useless knowledge to use at any given trivia event that may offer a variety of categories.

The rules and mechanics of a bar trivia night are fairly straightforward. For each question, a team is able to wager a number of points for each question or set of questions. The number of points

the player is able to wager increases for each round played; round one may allow a team to wager 1 to 3 points while by round six a team may wager 10 to 12 points per question. Before each question is asked, the player inputs their wagers using their own personal smartphone which is connected to a website run by a designated trivia host whose job is to keep the game running and keep the player base engaged. Many trivia nights are run by massive companies, like “Geeks Who Drink,” that bars, breweries, and other drinking establishments employ to provide trivia nights and other activities like it to patrons. A somewhat controversial bonus round employed at times by these trivia companies encourages trivia players to follow said company on social media accounts for bonus points, a practice which, to me, interferes with the sanctity of the game. On occasion, hosts may make the game more their own rather than following the corporatized hosting guidelines. For example, Sunset Trivia host and part-time Underground Empire Wrestling announcer, Ozzy Vee, who was integral for his assistance with the current research. Ozzy Vee has been a trivia host with Sunset Trivia since May 2015, and plays various songs throughout the games he hosts that have loose, convoluted connections to the answer of each respective question like the question mentioned above connecting Black Eyed Peas’ “My Humps” to mescal.

Trivia nights have become a particularly essential component of brewery culture in the United States, especially amongst breweries in Southern California. Their existence is used to garner competition, a sense of community, and an excuse to drink. I sought to understand what exactly

brings the average, everyday Southern Californian to their local brewery trivia night by playing along on a team with my girlfriend at the local Honey Pot Meadery in Anaheim, CA on March 28th, 2024. While there, I conducted a voluntary questionnaire with the help of the usual trivia host at Honey Pot, Ozzy Vee.

Despite the players using their smartphone to answer the questions, the trivia host discourages the players from searching up answers on the Internet as this would be considered cheating. However, there are not necessarily barriers in place to prevent this from happening, so the game runs with a strict, implied honor system. The trivia host also asks the players to not shout out their answers (whether they’re wrong or right) so as to not disrupt the flow or honesty of the game. The winning team (or occasionally the top three teams) are typically provided with some type of prize. In most cases, the top 3 teams are given a gift card between five to twenty-five dollars for the brewery that is hosting the trivia, but the real prize the team is seeking is the emotional high and social ‘bragging rights’ that come from being the top trivia team. Game scholar Mia Consalvo discusses how games provide the player “a sense of accomplishment [from] their own efforts... even if cheating was technically possible” and states that “[cheating] often rob[s players] of that sense of accomplishment... through giving...answers they felt they should have worked harder for.”<sup>2</sup> It is within this “sense of accomplishment” that runs the core of the honor system that a trivia night relies upon. A team getting the correct answer to a question with no outside help (aside from the other members of their own team) and the emotional response that this provides is a central component



to the sanctity of a trivia night's "magic circle." While game scholars may question the validity of the "magic circle" as a critical concept to examine and analyze particular games, it is integral within a conversation about trivia nights as they are "a space where [players] can experience things not normally sanctioned or allowed in regular space or life."<sup>3</sup> The minutiae matters in the context of a trivia night—the normally tried and true method of conducting a quick Google search to find information of your choice is not allowed and the smartphone is redefined as a mere answering device; the trivia night space allows for players' most "trivial knowledge" to have validity.

C Thi Nguyen explains that there is a player's purpose with a game and a player's goals for a game; one's purpose with a game is the player's reason for playing while the goals of a game are the "target[s] we aim for."<sup>4</sup> In the case of a trivia night, the most dedicated players' purpose and goals are identical; they seek only to win by getting the most points possible. However, a majority of players play the game only to have fun. Nguyen explains "I have to chase the goal of winning to fulfill my purpose, but I don't actually need to win in order to have fun. Winning, in this case, is rather incidental to my true purpose."<sup>5</sup> The metanarrative promoted by trivia nights and alike activities is to provide players with a pseudo-intellectual activity to support their own desire to drink and decompress with their friend group. The "true purpose" for most players is to have a few drinks and spend time with close friends. As Nguyen puts it, "games can [act as] a motivational inversion of ordinary life."<sup>6</sup> Unlike in the traditional rigmarole of dog-eat-dog American life, trivia spaces allow players to still compete, but not for

very high stakes. If players or teams don't know the answer to the question, they can often make a guess or they try to make a joke that will make other team members laugh.

The physical brewery provides trivia nights and other adjacent activities to build into their own rendering of a family-friendly environment. Trivia nights provide breweries and like locations with cultural merit taking away from the fact that they're nothing more than upscale drinking establishments trying to satisfy the vice of patrons. Attendees are able to be absolved from the social guilt associated with their vices as the activities of which they attend are considered valid or valuable in greater culture compared to simply drinking. In other words, trivia nights act as both a game and a tool to provide cultural merit to the very spaces that these games inhabit. Players are able to "find freedom in [these] games" as the trivia night can provide "liberating play... if we conceptualize a space of rules outside and beyond the limits of the game itself."<sup>7</sup>

Sarah Alexander, a co-owner of Free Range Brewing in Charlotte, NC argues that "[n]ot wanting kids in breweries is a very American idea" as opposed to "other countries [where] people take their children with them everywhere."<sup>8</sup> American culture does not generally see or want a parent to go to a drinking establishment with their children; however in the context of a brewery trivia night, the promotion of a family friendly space in which both parents and children are allowed is prominent. California breweries and similar institutions are aware of the larger cultural narratives they've taken part in shaping modeled after "older European beer garden ideals" that have dignified trivia and similar activities to liberate

their patrons and players and enable them to take part in their vices via the sociocultural framing of breweries as family-friendly spaces.<sup>9</sup> Nick Bachman, a manager for Inglewood, California's Three Weavers Brewing Company says "[Three Weavers] offer[s] events such as trivia, bingo, paint and pint nights [so] the whole family can participate."<sup>10</sup> The trivia night is one of many tools utilized by breweries to reframe them as family friendly and therefore help exonerate brewery patrons from the sociocultural stigmas associated with consuming alcohol by giving them an excuse to attend.

The Honey Pot has hosted trivia nights every Thursday for many years with the help of Sunset Trivia, a California trivia company established in 2016 that advertises itself with the tagline, "Think, Drink, Win!" Sunset Trivia services over 50+ locations throughout San Diego, Orange, and Los Angeles counties. Sunset Trivia also conducts trivia tournaments where its top 60 teams of a given season, Winter or Summer, compete for cash prizes. Their website goes over the rules of these tournaments, it states:

The tournament... add[s] up the scores [of teams] every week over an 18-week period... [allowing teams to] play at any Sunset Trivia venue in any given week [as long as players] keep the same team name. [The company requests players to] help [them] out by telling [the host] that you are a tournament team and where you typically play. At the end of the 18 weeks, [the company will] take each

team's top 18 scores (best score from each week) and add them up to determine the Top 60 teams that are going to the Semi-Finals event!<sup>11</sup>

The Sunset Trivia tournaments display that trivia companies are attempting to create networks across multiple locations allowing players to attend any brewery that is convenient rather than developing a strict routine. It also showcases the importance of an immutable trivia team name. The first challenge my girlfriend and I faced upon our entry into the trivia night experience was deciding upon a team name. The trivia team name is arguably one of the most important factors in a trivia night as it acts as an identity signifier and communication tool, so I struggled to come up with one. My girlfriend ultimately thought up "Bottled Logic," a reference to and a play on our collective favorite brewery, Bottle Logic Brewing, so that's the team name we decided to use.

The respondents to my questionnaire - all regular players at Honey Pot's trivia night - all hold distinctive names with their own stories and naming conventions. The Team Valkyrie has no real story behind their name; it was chosen essentially at random, but ultimately refers to the female majority that holds their relatively large team together. The solo player, Super Nintendo Chalmers, chose his name as a reference to his status as a fan of *The Simpsons*. The couple team, Antifreeze Cocktail, acts as a reference to the husband's job as a toxicologist. A group of coworkers, Wizards of Worthless Wizdom, that work in computer tech wanted their team name to have 'www'. The friend group, The Wet Bandits, is a reference to the *Home Alone*

film series as well as its members' team name in Dungeons and Dragons. Another friend group, I Mead an Adult, chose their 'punny' name to reference their regular play status at Honey Pot. The family team "Shit, Dicky" refers to a phrase that the mother of the team says to the father when she's mad at him. Anthropologist Tom Boellstorff provides that the:

importance[of a chosen name]... is understandable given the significance of names in the dominant Western tradition... permanent surnames help to chart the human topography of any region. Names play a vital role in determining identities, cultural affiliations, and histories.<sup>12</sup>

In the context of trivia night, we can see the way identities, cultural affiliations, and histories are determined and shown through trivia team name choices. Antifreeze Cocktail references the husband's identity as a toxicologist. Another family and friends team Lil Bear named their team after the family's dog. Friend group teams The Barry Boiz and Donner Party Potluck: Bring Your Friends are named after jokes amongst the groups. The development of a shared team identity and affiliation employs members to use the first-person plural of "we" of which "ha[s] the double effect of conveying an inner, hidden, essential truth about oneself and explicitly situating that truth in relation to a collective."<sup>13</sup> Participants' trivia team names define and display their respective shared identities, cultural affiliation, and shared histories which further develops a sense of community and togetherness amongst trivia players.

The types of teams that play at trivia nights seem to exist in three distinctive camps—solo players like Super Nintendo Chalmers, couples like Antifreeze Cocktail and my girlfriend and I, or friend/family groups like Team Valkyrie, The Wet Bandits, and I Mead an Adult. The type of group that a player may belong to also seems to impact the way the player interacts with and imagines themselves in relation to trivia. The solo players and couples tended to consider themselves as a part of a larger trivia community and said that they would identify as a *trivia player* if asked while members of group teams did not generally consider themselves as part of a larger community but still would identify themselves as *trivia players*.

This is also indicative of player motivations, habits, and the purpose that brewery trivia serves in the respective players' lives. A player, we'll call "David" of I Mead an Adult, referred to trivia as an excuse to "hang out with friends and use your brain" and stated that "it's competitive, but we joke around a lot."<sup>14</sup> David said that "it's cathartic" and "it makes you feel smarter and dumber than you think you are."<sup>15</sup> A player we'll call "McKayla" from The Wet Bandits, said that "trivia is just a plus" and "the people contribute to my happiness, not the activity."<sup>16</sup> McKayla and her friends play to have a consistent schedule that allows them a reason to hang out with their friends, not necessarily for trivia itself. A player from Team Valkyrie when asked why they play trivia said simply "why not? It's something to do."<sup>17</sup> All of the members of group teams echoed a similar sentiment that it's not necessarily the trivia itself that drives them to periodically play at Honey Pot, but the pattern and schedule of spending time with their

friends. In other words, it seems that trivia is a bigger deal for solo players and couples as they integrate trivia more into their personal identities than players on group teams do.

Group teams are just having fun with each other using trivia, not as a culture to ingratiate oneself in or a hobby, but as an excuse to get together. Meanwhile, solo players, like Super Nintendo Chalmers (SNC), value trivia as an activity itself. SNC cited his favorite trivia location as the Yaamava Casino, because “it has the highest cash prizes.”<sup>18</sup> SNC “play[s] anywhere [they] can, two or three times per week” and has played “over 25 years,” because they “love learning new things” and “take trivia very seriously.”<sup>19</sup> SNC says that they “usually win” and have “made dozens of friends through trivia.”<sup>20</sup> The solo player, ironically with the plural moniker, Bulldogs, plays as a “competitive outlet with his purpose being “[t]o beat larger teams.”<sup>21</sup> Bulldogs values the patience involved and appreciates the fact that it’s typically possible to win despite “starting out slow.”<sup>22</sup> Another regular solo player, a lawyer going by AJK, said that he plays to “show off” with his most memorable experiences from playing being “winning.”<sup>23</sup> AJK said that he is “competitive” with trivia and that it provides him both “pleasure [and] self-confidence.”<sup>24</sup> On this specific trivia night, AJK was not playing solo, instead he was playing with his girlfriend that he met online. In this instance, AJK was broaching the other player category using trivia as a bonding experience with a romantic partner.

The couple play group is one that encompasses both play motivations simultaneously; they often value both the activity and the experience it provides as well as the bonding and intimacy that

trivia nights can provide. The wife of Antifreeze Cocktail, I’ll refer to as Claire, met her husband in high school at a quiz bowl and uses trivia nights at Honey Pot as their date night. Both Claire and her husband have played trivia for “all [their] lives,” because “it’s fun and [they] like the questions.”<sup>25</sup> They both take trivia very seriously and “enjoy thinking.”<sup>26</sup> Claire and her husband typically bring along a notebook chock full of questions that they’ve recorded over the years to commemorate each trivia event that they attend; I’ve also seen other trivia players utilize this notebook technique at other trivia events I’ve attended. They record the questions and the answers serving as both a study guide and a personal journal to outline all of their trivia experiences.

Claire belongs to the Jeopardy Alumni group, with “three of her family of four” having been on *Jeopardy*.<sup>27</sup> Her husband, a professor of Emergency Medicine and Clinical Pharmacology, was unable to make it to this trivia night, so Claire was playing on location and sending her husband pictures of the questions and consulting him through text message to come up with answers. They still made an effort to play the game together as a team, despite her husband’s other responsibilities; this was indicative of not only their commitment to each other, but also their commitment to the trivia activity.

An additional component that guides players’ commitment to be regulars of a specific trivia location is the host. Honey Pot’s regular host, Ozzy Vee, was referred to by name by many of the teams interviewed as being the reason that the Honey Pot is their “favorite location to play trivia.”<sup>28</sup> In my experience playing trivia at various locations across California, Ozzy Vee has a very specific presence that

makes the experience feel more personal rather than formulaic and commercial despite the commercial basis of trivia nights provided by Sunset Trivia. Simply put, Sunset Trivia is hired by brewery locations in California as a means to drive revenue with their “Hire Us” section on their website boasting testimonials that it has “increased [a brewery’s] revenue by more than 40% on Wednesday nights.”<sup>29</sup> Sunset Trivia advertises that it will “create new [r]egulars, [k]eep existing patrons in their seats for longer eating and drinking, [and] transform [a brewery’s] slowest night into one of [its] busiest.”<sup>30</sup> It’s interesting that the commercial aspect of the trivia industry is lost on the player, because Sunset Trivia does seem to make good on its promises. As a playing team, my girlfriend and I saw our evening out to its end despite our middling performance in fifth, out of twelve teams. We drank more than we probably normally would, and we’d be willing to go back regularly for the fun and competition of the trivia night.

While brewery trivia nights seem to be welcoming venues for many people, considerations must be made to acknowledge the possible hurdles to participation, especially for marginalized groups. The combination of craft beer culture and trivia may unintentionally exacerbate existing inequalities by forcing people to exhibit particular types of cultural capital in order to feel accepted. It’s important to consider the fact that my girlfriend and I are both white and middle-class and have a bit of history and cultural capital within Southern California brewery culture. Historically, the craft beer industry, in general, and brewery spaces have been argued by scholars to be racially, classed and gendered as white, middle-class male and deeply

entangled with gentrification.<sup>31</sup> Many of “these spaces discourage and exclude Black people and other minorities from participating in craft beer cultures,” and, by extension, activities like bar trivia.<sup>32</sup> Craft beer culture is also connected to the concept of cultural capital as “[w]hen... people enter [breweries and other craft beer] spaces, they must display their cultural capital in order to be perceived as welcome. As such, their identity performances are centered around beer knowledge and cultural taste.”<sup>33</sup> It’s shown that there are two marked barriers of entry for minority groups in entering bar trivia spaces—the cultural capital of craft beer knowledge and the cultural capital of trivia knowledge itself.

The framework of trivia nights with its implicit honor system seems to create a rather meritocratic space, although this may privilege certain types of knowledge and certain groups. In the space of trivia culture, an argument can be made that certain types of knowledge are privileged. The questions are written by the companies that conduct trivia nights and, in most cases, specific questions and categories are provided to the host for a specific trivia night. The trivia hosts do not have the power to adapt to the different audiences they may encounter on a trivia night, and are only able to provide the questions that their company gave them. According to a myriad of non-white trivia goers in the Bay Area, a major problem is that the often white question-writers assume things about popular knowledge of music and entertainment that privileges white folk. Chuck Butler, a Bay Area trivia question writer and self-described “middle-aged white guy... realizes that [his] questions aren’t as inclusive as they could be.”<sup>34</sup> Butler, known affectionately as “Trivia Chuck,” does try to broaden the

scope of his questions by asking people from different backgrounds to allow for a more inclusive experience for trivia goers, but this unfortunately does very little to impact the majority of white-centric trivia questions and trivia nights.<sup>35</sup> In one instance in the Bay Area, a trivia night had only sixteen percent of questions (ten out of sixty) “relate[d] to non-white or non-European people or topics.”<sup>36</sup>

It’s established that trivia nights in breweries can be seen as exclusionary spaces for some, they can also be places that present as more inclusionary. Lauren O’Neal, a self-described “Lady Quiz-Bowler” and writer for *Slate*, was one of very few female quiz bowl players in college and experienced a throng of subtle or unsubtle misogyny.<sup>37</sup> According to O’Neal, in quiz bowl settings, there is much anxiety for female players due to gendered socialization; she writes “[i]f you’ve been raised not to show off how much you know, you might find it uncomfortable to play a game whose entire ridiculous point is to show off how much you know.”<sup>38</sup> The quiz bowl setting is both “an overwhelmingly male setting [that] can occasionally get downright hostile toward women” while O’Neal describes trivia night spaces as “a land where free booze flows for correct answers and there are usually plenty of women around.”<sup>39</sup> O’Neal argues that the bar/brewery trivia space is more inclusive for women compared to one of the other mainstays of trivia culture: the college quiz bowl. The laid-back setting of a brewery, the introduction of alcohol, and the lesser stakes allow O’Neal to feel more safe within a brewery trivia night than in a room full of quiz bowlers.

Trivia culture, in and of itself, can be a rather harsh space for people to enter into as it can present as a

rather elitist space as seen with O’Neal’s example of being a “Lady Quiz Bowler.”<sup>40</sup> Ken Jennings, arguably one of the most famous trivia players and author of *Brainiac: Adventures in the Curious, Competitive, Compulsive World of Trivia Buffs* writes that he “associate[s] trivia with the unexpected joy, the epiphany, the ego stroke, of mentally dredging up answers you didn’t even know you knew.”<sup>41</sup> However, Ken Jennings has trouble considering the world’s largest trivia contest in Stevens Point, Wisconsin as real trivia as players are asked questions through tuning into a radio station and can call in to answer.

Jennings fears that players will just use Google or their notes which he describes as “Notes with a capital N, to Stevens Point trivia diehards [as] [t]hese aren’t just notes, these are Notes - not just a study aid but a way of life.”<sup>42</sup> You may recall Claire and her husband from Antifreeze Cocktail mentioned above who wrote down the questions and answers of the trivia at Honey Pot Meadery. Antifreeze Cocktail records the questions and answers of Honey Pot trivia as both a means of recording their team history together, but also as “Notes.” Players at the Honey Pot nor the host, Ozzy Vee, seem to have an issue with Claire and her husband’s cataloging of trivia questions in their notebook, but that is not a traditionally accepted way to store trivia knowledge amongst those with major weight in trivia culture like Ken Jennings.

Jennings, the prototypical trivia player, also admits that he is one that has “an elitist idea of trivia” as he views trivia in a more meritocratic light; this is perhaps impacted by his background of winning money off of his trivia knowledge via gameshows.<sup>43</sup> Jennings as an individual was able to utilize his cultural capital of

trivia knowledge by converting it into financial capital, therefore he doesn't see "Notes" or Google as effective indicators of trivia skill nor cultural capital. American historian Jackson Lears writes that "[t]he affluent have always found it easier than the poor to believe that the rich were rich because they deserved to be."<sup>44</sup> Ken Jennings views his own accomplishments as deserved as he sees himself having immense amounts of cultural capital in the context of trivia knowledge that justifies his financial winnings on game shows as prime examples of meritocratic games of skill.

Christopher A. Paul writes that "meritocracy becomes an actualized practice [in games]... [as] they are one of the few places where the ideology runs rampant, unchecked and celebrated while slipping into the background and becoming part of the perceived natural order."<sup>45</sup> He continues that "[g]ames of skill are meritocratic, where talent is clearly rewarded and the resulting distribution of players is rife with inequality because of differential levels of ability."<sup>46</sup> Jennings relents that despite his elitist view of trivia, he still sees "the camaraderie of shared knowledge, the occasional 'I didn't know that!' moment of learning something new, [and] the vertiginous thrill of producing the right answer at the last second [in Stevens Point]."<sup>47</sup> These are all paragonic emotions that fly in all trivia events like those at Honey Pot Meadery and seem to be collectively experienced by all players, including me.

Alternative spaces of trivia like those offered in Stevens Point can provide a more inclusive experience of trivia for all. Jennings argues that Stevens Point's trivia contest allows "whole families, whole neighborhoods, [and] even folks (kids, women, oldsters) who get left out

or underrepresented in other trivia arenas [to play together]."<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, there seem to be three potential barriers of entry into the bar trivia world that need to be addressed as places of inclusion—more considerate trivia culture, more inclusive trivia spaces, and more diverse trivia questions.

Brewery trivia nights, like those held at Honey Pot Meadery in Anaheim, California, combine intellectual challenge, social engagement, and cultural expression. Trivia nights allow players to test their knowledge on a variety of topics and build relationships with their respective teams and the greater emerging brewery trivia culture. Teams are allowed to express their identity creatively through selected team names while the presence of hosts, like Ozzy Vee, provide a more personal experience for players and influence a particular event's distinct appeal.

Some patrons might attend trivia night with a competitive mindset, but most players seem to just play for fun and the chance to spend time with and drink with their friends and family members. Additionally, trivia nights provide breweries with their own form of cultural capital that elevate their respective spaces and dispel social stigmas associated with the consumption of alcohol. Brewery trivia nights have become synonymous with craft beer culture as a whole and considering the attempts to include all age groups in the space it seems going forward the racial, gendered, and classed barriers that stemmed from craft beer's history that have unintentionally shadowed trivia culture will fall, but the privileging of certain knowledge is still present. In any case, the brewery trivia night is a particularly important aspect of the growing greater beer culture in

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Southern California and other areas that is ripe for further research and scholarship.

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# Destruction, Healing, and *Godzilla* (1954): A Film That Represents The Era of Nuclear Trauma

Alexander Alvarado Martinez

AMST 401T: Research Seminar, War in American Culture

The paper was written in the spring of 2024 for Dr. Gonzaba's AMST 401T class on War in American Culture. The paper examines the effects in which the nuclear bombs had on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. America's swift end to the Second World War using nuclear weaponry would ensue Japan's surrender, leaving Japan in ruins nonetheless. The paper then examines how people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would relive their trauma in 1954 with the release of *Gojira*, which would help the Japanese people from the trauma that still lingered from the U.S. nuclear attacks. *Godzilla* represented the nuclear bombs that ravaged Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, once the film reached American audiences in 1956, the film would be stripped of its metaphorical meaning of *Godzilla* as a nuclear weapon set to leave Japan in ruins. The censorship of *Godzilla* (1956), leaves viewers unaware of the trauma the nuclear bombs left on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and how *Gojira* (1954) would help the people of Japan to confront any lingering trauma.

In the fall of 1954, a destructive force disrupted Japan's Pacific waters and demolished Tokyo, igniting the city into terror and flames. An unsuspecting crew ship near Japan's shore would be the first to witness the disaster to come and not live to tell the story. The ship's crew witnessed a flash of light from a hydrogen bomb that would then destroy their boat. The bomb left the Pacific waters near Japan a wasteland, leaving fishermen with nothing to catch. Unbeknownst to Japan and its fishermen, the bomb awoke a monstrous lizard. Godzilla would soon rise from the depths of the ocean to bring terror and devastation to the citizens of Tokyo. Destroying everything in its path with its atomic breath, Tokyo and Japan's army and navy face a powerlessness against the destruction and might of the monster. Japan must stop the monstrous lizard from destroying Tokyo and ensure atomic weapons lay at rest so civilization can live on.

On-screen, Japan was ravaged and set aflame by a monstrous creature. *Godzilla*, directed by Ishiro Honda and produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka, deviates from history, replacing the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki with a test hydrogen bombing and a monstrous after effect. *Godzilla's* wide release to Japanese audiences was on November 3, 1954. However, the events that played on-screen would not be too far off from the events of 1945.

Almost a decade prior to the development of *Godzilla*, monstrous atomic bombs sent by the U.S. set Hiroshima and Nagasaki on fire and ravaged them, leaving in its wake nothing but despair and death for Japan. On August 6, 1945, Japanese citizens awoke to daylight from a blissful morning. As they prepared for work or school, none of

the citizens of Hiroshima expected to see a United States bomber plane fly over and drop a devastating nuclear bomb over their city. The atomic bomb, executed under President Truman's orders, would go on to wipe out anything and anyone in its immediate path and cloud the city with its "mushroom" cloud. Only three days later, Nagasaki faced the same fate as Hiroshima when another bomber plane flew over and unleashed more nuclear disaster onto Japan. The atomic bombs and their destruction resulted in Japan surrendering to the U.S. and World War II coming to an end.

The atomic bombs created catastrophic numbers for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With a total of 70,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed outright by the atomic bombs, such nuclear force left Japan in shock and uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> President Truman's approval to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki would result in a time of mourning for Japan. Having suffered through such a traumatic experience, the people of Japan found healing through artistic outlets such as *Godzilla*. The film explores themes that parallel and echo the historical trauma of the atomic bombings. The American studios censored the theatrical release of *Godzilla* to U.S. audiences.<sup>2</sup> Although the film displays levels of violence that might have been overwhelming for some viewers, the censorship at hand exemplifies America's refusal to face accountability for the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

### A Monstrous War

The traumatic white flash of light that the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki went through is illustrated in *Godzilla*. The flash of the atomic bomb is a warning for what is to come. At the

beginning of the film, the fishermen become shaken up by a tremor nearby, and before they can even react, the atomic



*Still from Godzilla (1954)*

bomb blinds them. Such an opening for a film left moviegoers blind-sided by how quickly things could change. When the film first opens, viewers watch the fishermen bored at sea. The tone is calm, and the music playing is soothing. However, the scene's sharp turn reflects how quickly things changed for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors. A survivor from the bombing of Hiroshima recalled, "When the atomic bomb exploded, there was seen a flash and white smoke, which gradually formed into a cumulus."<sup>3</sup> The white flash from the bomb meant it was too late. The flash of light signifies the terror and destruction that was about to be poured down onto them. Another survivor, a student learning at Hiroshima Communications Hospital, recalls, "Oh, there's a B!" and, looking skyward, "felt a tremendous flash of lightning. In an instant, we were blinded and everything was just a frenzy of delirium."<sup>4</sup> For Japanese citizens watching the film, it was a reliving of the trauma that the United States imposed on them. For Honda and Tanaka, creating the film was something personal to them. From the beginning of *Godzilla*, the message was clear: the monster awoken in the waters was a metaphorical symbol

of an atomic bomb, and the first sign that his destruction had only begun was a flash of light that blinded the fishermen and viewers.

The fishermen in *Godzilla's* opening represent something much more realistic. Although the exact events depicted in the film are changed to accommodate the film, there was a real group of fishermen who were victims of the testing of nuclear weapons. On March 1, 1954, a Japanese tuna fishing trawler known as Lucky Dragon No. 5 began to shake due to the testing of a hydrogen bomb that was dropped just 87 miles from Japan's shore.<sup>5</sup> The test hydrogen bomb landed on Bikini Atoll.<sup>6</sup> The ocean floor shook the boat so hard that the fishermen recalled it feeling "like an earthquake."<sup>7</sup> Although the fishermen seemed fine and nothing more than a slight shake in the ocean, that same evening, they started to develop symptoms of radiation poisoning. Tanaka and Honda went on to remake this event in the opening of *Godzilla*. The film's opening suggests the writers started the film in a way they knew Japanese viewers would automatically be emotionally invested. The events of the nuclear testing remained fresh in their minds, and still not yet over the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the opening scene opens the door to healing from their trauma.

The monster *Godzilla* reigns terror over the Japanese citizens. *Godzilla* is the main subject of the film scene, and although he is not at the center of it, viewers' eyes still become drawn to him as he towers over Tokyo. The landscape of what at first was a calm night in Tokyo is now ruined by the cloud of smoke that covers the nighttime sky. Despite the film scene being in black and white, the darker and shadowed city of Tokyo



Top: Still from *Godzilla* (1954)

Bottom: Nagasaki, Japan under atomic bomb attack, U.S. Army A.A.F. photo, August 9, 1945.

Library of Congress.

contrasts the illuminated sky caused by Godzilla's atomic breath. Such contrast causes viewers to almost overlook Tokyo and look directly at Godzilla and the devastation he leaves in his wake. The film scene uses the city landscape to draw a line between the peaceful city of Tokyo and Godzilla. Such imagery impacts its viewers because it shows how vulnerable and unexpected Godzilla's attack was. Tokyo was at peace, and the citizens were at home resting when their city began to be ignited in flames, and a monster tore through their city.

The cloud of smoke that covers Tokyo's sky symbolically parallels the infamous mushroom cloud that the atomic bomb caused in Hiroshima. As the technician for Japanese Imperial Defense

General Headquarters, in "Tokyo Puts Toll of Atomic Bombs at 190,000 Killed and Wounded," Toril said, "When the atomic bomb exploded, there was seen a flash and white smoke, which gradually formed a cumulus."<sup>8</sup> In the film scene, we see the cumulus of white smoke hovering over the city as it ignites in flames. The "black shower" left by the cumulus of white smoke leaves Tokyo in a shadow only illuminated by the lights in the city building windows.

The "monstrous" atomic bomb that the Tokyo radio show had mentioned in the *New York Times* article by The United Press is symbolically reflected by the monstrous Godzilla. Similar to the unsuspecting citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Tokyo was unprepared for the "extremely powerful" Godzilla and the terror it unleashed on them. As Professor Yamane states, in the film, Godzilla is "baptized in the H-Bomb."<sup>9</sup> With Tokyo residents unsure and afraid of how to fend off Godzilla, they first surrender to the monster. The film scene also reflects the political culture at the time of the invention of the atomic bomb and the uncertainty behind it. As we see in the film and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this new monstrous invention had the world at a standstill at the implications such a weapon could mean for future wars.

### A City in Ruins

*Godzilla* (1954) directly confronts the trauma and implications of nuclear destruction. As Godzilla tears through Tokyo, the flames from the atomic breath engulf the citizens. Godzilla's roar and stomp were the warnings that he was closing in on the citizens as the buildings also vibrated and fell. Leaving nothing but fire and smoke in his wake,

the Japanese citizens have nowhere left to run. Honda's choice to make the scenes of Godzilla attacking Tokyo from below the monster's point of view helps create such a fearful tone. As Godzilla roars and releases his atomic breath, audiences feel helpless. Although the Japanese citizens run into buildings trying to evade the monster, they are no match for his atomic breath. The monster reigns terror over them, and his power cannot be matched.



*Stills from Godzilla (1954)*

Godzilla reigns terror over Tokyo, and the atomic bombs were no different. Hagiwara, a survivor of one of Godzilla's first attacks, describes the attack as "crushed from above."<sup>10</sup> Survivors of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki recall nothing but a frenzy and blur of details. Even those who were forewarned about Nagasaki's attacks and what its results would be were in disbelief.<sup>11</sup> The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki so suddenly,

and with such power contained in the bomb, Godzilla and the atomic bomb were one and the same. "After the bomb exploded in the air about 1,900 feet above Hiroshima, witnesses reported seeing a searing flash of light, feeling a sweeping rush of air, and hearing a deafening roar, which was intensified by the sound of collapsing buildings."<sup>12</sup> Godzilla roaring over the people of Tokyo as he burns their city to the ground juxtaposes to that of the deafening roar of the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Similar to Godzilla's atomic breath, the fishermen from *The Lucky Dragon No. 5* recall white particles raining on them as they got in their eyes, ears, and noses.<sup>13</sup> Godzilla's attack on Tokyo was drawn from the stories of those who survived the destruction of the United States' atomic bombs. The destruction of buildings, as they gave in and collapsed under Godzilla's power, also helped illustrate the tragedy the atomic bombs caused.

Tokyo was left in ruins, a city in need of rebuilding. Godzilla's merciless attack left the city in flames, causing the buildings to crumble and collapse. Few buildings were left standing, only those that could sustain Godzilla's wrath. Once a city swarming with people, Tokyo was now a ghost town. Godzilla's destruction left the people uncertain of what to do. The only choice now was to rebuild the city despite the trauma they faced from such a monstrous attack.

The destruction left by Godzilla was no different than the destruction left behind by the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The buildings collapsed, and the only sign of humanity being what was left of the corpses; Hiroshima and Nagasaki were also ghost towns. Except it was not at Godzilla's hands but at the hands



of President Truman. As Truman once proclaimed, “It is an atomic bomb. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East.”<sup>14</sup> After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the events that would later occur at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were seen as justice by some Americans. Truman believed that by causing such annihilation, the war would finish much sooner.<sup>15</sup> Truman, upon hearing about the destruction the atomic bombs had caused, showed delight and was happy with the news.<sup>16</sup> The innocent people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were evaporated entirely, so the American president and his people celebrated.



Top: Still from *Godzilla* (1954)

Bottom: “Hiroshima in ruins,” 1946, Harry S. Truman Library & Museum

Godzilla’s mindless destruction of Tokyo was in self-defense, yet President Truman annihilated innocent people in an act of disproportionate, sadistic revenge.

President Truman tried to

justify the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by claiming they helped end the war in a much more timely manner. Technicians continued to assemble more destructive weapons of disintegrating power on a secret base as protective measures if Japan did not surrender.<sup>17</sup> Japan was already set to lose and surrender despite the time they were taking to do so. In his diaries, Truman claimed that only sailors and soldiers would be the targets of his atomic bombs; women and children would not be.<sup>18</sup> Such a claim would ultimately prove to be untrue as many children and women were evaporated or left maimed beyond recognition due to the bomb. Truman, also in his diaries, states, “Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless, and fanatics, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital or the new.”<sup>19</sup> Calling the Japanese people ruthless and savages when Truman caused the destruction of two cities would further show Truman’s hypocrisy. The bomb wiped 30% of Nagasaki from the map, and the city faced a much more intensive atomic bomb than the one dropped three days before in Hiroshima.<sup>20</sup> “Merciless” astonishingly describes what Truman did to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as entire families and their homes would vanish with almost no trace of their existence. Though the atomic bombs left Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and its people broken and damaged, the people came together to rebuild and mend their city as a form of Kintsugi.

## Kintsugi

Kintsugi is traditionally known as the mending of broken pottery using gold. Like Kintsugi, *Godzilla*’s bittersweet ending symbolizes a change for the

people of Japan. Once plagued with trauma from the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the film reflects a journey of healing. Godzilla's reign of terror that lasted all through the night came to an end by daylight, allowing the people of Tokyo to let the light shine into them and begin their healing process. The cultural artifacts of Godzilla and Kintsugi similarly symbolize how healing and change can make you stronger. The citizens of Tokyo celebrate as they watch Godzilla in defeat. However, that celebration slowly becomes a mourning, and the Japanese citizens pay their respects to Godzilla as he sinks to the ground. Despite the terror the monster caused in the city, the Japanese citizens chose to move on because only then could they heal. They no longer felt terror or rage but rather an understanding and forgiveness for the monster as it was also a victim of nuclear weaponry. Through the understanding of Godzilla and their trauma they could begin to mend.



*Stills from Godzilla (1954)*

The survivors of Hiroshima also found a middle ground in their healing that could help them mend. Now a city in ruins, Hiroshima was not forgotten, but transformed. The transformation was made possible through the help of the survivors. "Just as the city of Hiroshima itself, within the peace movement, survivors found the emotional means

and language with which they could rebuild their lives and find meaning and pride."<sup>21</sup> The once angry, confused, ashamed, and guilty survivors of Hiroshima were now proud symbols of an emotional mobilization.<sup>22</sup> *Godzilla's* ending helps to reflect the need for the Japanese people to heal and move on. Rather than let anger and guilt keep consuming them, the only way to heal from the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to mobilize their emotions. An outlet for this mobilization was film. A difference between Japanese and United States forms of entertainment was that the Japanese did not search for "happy endings" in their films, as they perceived Americans to search for in films.<sup>23</sup> Instead, Ruth Benedict claims, "Japanese popular audiences sit dissolved in tears watching the hero come to his tragic end and the lovely heroine slain because of a turn of the wheel of fortune."<sup>24</sup> Such an understanding of Japanese entertainment aligns with *Godzilla* since he may be seen as an antagonist, yet, as the Japanese citizens in the film come to understand, Godzilla is also a victim of the atomic bomb testing. Displaced from his home, he enacts terror on Japan as a form of self-defense from people he believes may be the aggressors who dropped the atomic bombs on him. For this reason, the film is censored in a way that would keep the healing from such traumatic nuclear events in a much more intimate way for Japanese audiences.

As Benedict believed, Americans were not accustomed to such raw and tragic endings or storytelling for films. By censoring any mention of nuclear weaponry or the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the new version of the film was sanitized of its original purpose to not disturb the consciousness of American

audiences. Bosley Crowther, a writer for the *New York Times*, was unimpressed with the film and referred to the Japanese film as “cheap cinematic horror-stuff.”<sup>25</sup> According to Crowther, the “Oriental monster” seems to be attacking Tokyo for no reason.<sup>26</sup> Although Crowther did watch the edited version, his tone of voice proves that the film is not meant for American audiences the way Tanaka and Honda intended it to be understood. Since Americans were not victims of such atomic destruction, the film was nothing more than a silly monster movie that carried no emotional weight. Honda created a film that was tacitly anti-American without having to bluntly show it.<sup>27</sup> Crowther takes the emotional importance that many Japanese audiences resonate with when watching the film. Crowther points out how the atomically mutated monster attacks Japan for *no apparent reason*.<sup>28</sup> Such thinking is ironic considering how close Crowther was to realizing that, with *Godzilla* as a metaphor for the atomic bombs, there was also *no reason* for the atomic bombs to be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan, by the spring of 1945, could not wage aggressive war against anyone outside of its borders, further proving that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were highly unethical, as the ones who carried the burden of such a decision would be innocent civilians.<sup>29</sup> The film’s censorship would keep themes of healing and the truth of senseless violence solely for Japanese audiences.

*Godzilla’s* ending promotes the end to the testing of nuclear weaponry. Having suffered not only from the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but nuclear bombs were also still tested near Japan. In fear of another attack, the people of Japan called for the U.S. to stop the nuclear testing. Many people in Hiroshima and the rest of Japan became activists against nuclear weapon production and testing. *Godzilla* would be a cathartic viewing experience for Japanese citizens as they relived their trauma, confronted their emotions, and found a middle ground in which they could heal. Despite everything, the people of Japan were able to sympathize with *Godzilla* and understand that the monster was also a victim of nuclear weaponry. *Godzilla’s* theatrical release to American audiences is censored in a way that strips it of its symbolism for the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Such a choice to censor the film comes off as a lack of accountability for the trauma imposed on the people of Japan. America, at the time of *Godzilla’s* release, also faced a fear of nuclear weaponry and the dangers it could impose.

The testings and threat of nuclear destruction would not end with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Cold War would keep the world in fear of the threat of nuclear war. The production of weapons of mass destruction would only increase as both the U.S. and the Soviets attempted to ensure they were leading the arms race. Americans would face a time of anxiety and fear at the possibility of a nuclear war waged against them. This was the context in which the U.S. release of *Godzilla* was censored of all mentions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tomoyuki Tanaka and Ishiro Honda’s censored message on the subject of the tragic events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki may have had the potential to influence the American public to help stop the creation of more nuclear weapons, but the U.S. and Jewell Enterprises refused to let that happen.

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# The Photography of Lewis Hine: Illuminating the Realities of Child Labor

Melissa B. Garrison

AMST 439: American Photographs as Cultural Evidence

This paper was written for American Photographs as Cultural Evidence taught by Professor Alison Kanosky in Fall 2023. Students were asked to analyze photographs related to social reform in the United States by performing a close reading of the images. My essay looks at a 1912 photograph taken by Lewis Hine that depicts child laborers in a Massachusetts textile mill. Although I explore several possible interpretations of the photograph, I ultimately argue that the image illustrates the massive scale of child labor in the U.S. and condemns the discrepancy between these harsh labor practices and utopian American ideals. When considered within Hine's extensive photographic corpus, this photograph seeks to shed light on the realities of child labor and inspire American audiences to push for social change.



In the early twentieth century, Lewis Hine spent ten years traveling throughout the United States, photographing the nation's child laborers. Hine's documentary work reflected the mission of his employer at the time, the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), which sought to "survey and publicize the facts of child labor" during an era in which numerous industries exploited child workers. In addition to amassing an extensive visual record of child labor, Hine also recorded personal details about the children he photographed and the realities of their work. By documenting child labor across the United States in this way, Hine and the NCLC sought to expose illegal practices and ultimately ensure that "existing state laws were enforced."<sup>1</sup> Historian Alan Trachtenberg notes that Hine performed social "work" through the practice of surveying, meaning he collected "social facts" that were then "presented to the public in word and image."<sup>2</sup> For Hine, then, photographic images served as not only documentation

but as *communication*, informing the public and advocating for social change on behalf of the photographed subjects.

One photo by Hine, taken inside a spinning room at a Massachusetts mill in 1912, illustrates his ability to articulate a far-reaching social message through his camera lens. The image features a group of workers—the majority of whom appear to be children—lined up between rows of spinning machines, momentarily pausing their labors to gaze up at Hine's camera.<sup>3</sup> A close reading of this photograph may reveal several varied meanings, but overall, the photo's composition communicates the immense scale of child labor in American industry and reveals the human cost of the nation's economic advancement, ultimately seeking to illuminate the troubling realities of child labor in the United States. The photo takes viewers behind the scenes of the American labor force, prompting Americans to reflect on the moral price of industrial progress.

The stylistic choices made by Hine when taking the photograph create an illusion that the spinning room extends infinitely beyond the frame, thereby characterizing child labor as an immeasurable societal ill. Indeed, the subject of Hine's photo is not any individual child in the Massachusetts mill, but rather the collective child laborers in their vast industrial environment. The majority of children stand in the middle ground and background of the image, with a relatively deep depth of field rendering many faces visible in clear detail. By situating the children in the middle and background, Hine ties the photograph's meaning to the scale of the workers and workplace, as the children appear smaller than the grand machinery surrounding them. Behind the children, spinning machines laden with spools of white fiber extend in a series of straight lines, drawing the viewer's eye further and further back until the lines begin to converge. From the viewer's perspective, the rows of machinery—and rows of child laborers—seem to continue into the background indefinitely, even beyond the farthest wall of the mill.

The image's symmetry also contributes to the sense that the spinning room expands, unbounded, in all directions. A single line of machinery extends vertically through the center of the photograph, framed by duplicate

machines on either side. Identical rows of machinery can be seen stretching to the right edge of the photo and beyond—and although the left half of the photo does not contain additional machinery, columns of ceiling-height windows mirror the structural pillars of the building visible in the right half of the image. This sense of balance produced by Hine maintained the symmetry of the photo and therefore the illusion of an infinite space. Although children are only visible next to the central three machines, viewers may reasonably assume that the surrounding rows of machinery conceal additional young workers. Thus, the photograph symbolically represents the scale of child labor in U.S. society, suggesting that an untold number of children are toiling unseen throughout the limitless expanse of American industry.

Furthermore, Hine's image highlights the incongruity between the utopic ideals of American capitalism and the plight of countless young workers resigned to labor in

factories and mills in service of those ideals. In the photograph, the spinning room appears startlingly bright, awash in sunlight streaming through the windowpanes that line the left wall of the building. Even in black and white, the sunbeams cannot help but imbue the photo with a paradisiacal quality. The light, which angles down toward where the child workers are standing, can perhaps be seen as bestowing an angelic aura upon the

**“ To one viewer, the apparent maturity of the child laborers might represent the admirable outcome of hard work. Another viewer, however, might see the tragic loss of a childhood marred by adult responsibilities. ”**



children in the mill. However, it is important to consider the source and direction of the sunlight. That the light must enter the mill through windows suggests that the true paradise lies *outside* the mill's walls, visible to the workers but ultimately out of their reach. The children captured in Hine's photo have been relegated to this mill, tasked with spinning fibers that will become textiles and eventually made into clothing and other goods to be sold to the American public. Their labors keep the world outside the mill turning—and economically thriving—but the children themselves are imprisoned among the endless rows of machinery. Notably, the aisles where the children stand are the darkest areas of the photograph, shadowy trenches that have trapped the workers in a state of eternal labor. The dramatic lighting in the image thus invites viewers to consider what the children are missing out on while they toil in the spinning room. While the rays of sunshine invoke the idea of an American utopia just outside the window, the children's place on the wrong side of the glass suggests a darker reality in which even the nation's youngest citizens cannot enjoy the alleged benefits of industrial society, thereby undermining notions of American progress and modernity.

Admittedly, the stylistic decisions Hine made when photographing the Massachusetts mill might be interpreted in several different ways. For instance, proponents of child labor could easily have argued that the light resting on the workers represents some kind of heavenly message regarding children's self-sufficiency and work ethic. Additionally, the children in Hine's photograph have an unmistakable air of maturity about them, resulting in an image that might convey drastically different messages to different viewers. From their self-assured facial expressions to their casual

body language as they lean against the machinery, the children appear at ease in their work environment. Indeed, the young workers seem as comfortable in the mill as the handful of adult laborers captured in the photograph; the children could almost be mistaken for working adults themselves, were it not for their small stature and obviously youthful facial features. To one viewer, the apparent maturity of the child laborers might represent the admirable outcome of hard work. Another viewer, however, might see the tragic loss of a childhood marred by adult responsibilities. To further complicate the photograph's meaning, it could be argued that Hine's wide view of the spinning room dehumanizes the child workers, reducing them to mere cogs in the American industrial machine. Although the angle and distance of Hine's photo effectively convey the scale of the room and thereby communicate a broader message about child labor in American society, a close-up shot of a single worker in the mill might have offered a more personal view of child labor and elicited greater emotion from viewers. Thus, Hine's photograph holds multiple meanings that could be seen as alternately justifying or condemning child labor in the United States to varying degrees of effectiveness.

However, when considered within the larger corpus of Hine's photography during the early twentieth century, the intentions behind this image become more apparent. This photograph represents just a single moment in Hine's decade-long effort to document child labor. He reportedly took as many as eight hundred photographs for the NCLC in a single year, and certainly thousands more throughout

his tenure with the Committee. He not only photographed child workers in an array of industries and locations, but from a variety of angles, and many of the resulting images—including a striking portrait of a young girl working in a spinning room similar to the Massachusetts mill—undoubtedly humanized these children while revealing the deplorable and dangerous conditions in which many labored.<sup>4</sup> In his analysis of Hine's career, Trachtenberg explains that Hine's photographic work attempted to awaken in audiences "a heightened, sympathetic awareness of the lives of others."<sup>5</sup> Throughout Hine's photographic corpus, child workers peer up at his camera, asking viewers on the other side of the lens to contemplate the morality of child labor in the United States. As viewers gaze upon the small hands laboring in American mills and factories, they must inevitably consider whether this human cost is a price worth paying. Thus, although the Massachusetts spinning room represents a mere glimpse into the magnitude of child labor in American industry, the photograph works alongside Hine's other images to evoke sympathy from viewers and communicate the challenging experiences of both individual and collective young workers.

While interpretations of this particular photograph may vary, perhaps the most compelling analysis of its meaning comes from Hine himself. Speaking at a conference in 1909, Hine asserted that "the great social peril is darkness and ignorance," for which the only defense is "Light! Light in floods!"<sup>6</sup> As the children in the photograph toil among the rows of spun fiber, the sunlight streaming through the mill windows embodies Hine's mission to shine a light on their labors. By illuminating these children's experiences, Hine's photographic work documented and communicated social facts about child labor in the United States with the express purpose of evoking sympathy and bringing about social change.

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# “From the Moderates to The Militants”: Competing Photographic Narratives of the Selma Marches

Melissa B. Garrison

AMST 439: American Photographs as Cultural Evidence

This paper was written for American Photographs as Cultural Evidence taught by Professor Alison Kanosky in Fall 2023. Students were asked to analyze photographs that portray the struggle for racial justice in the United States, situating the images in historical context and performing a close reading in order to develop an argument. My essay compares photographic coverage of the 1965 marches in Selma, Alabama, in two publications: *Life* magazine and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s newspaper, *The Student Voice*. *Life*’s photographs of Selma highlight a selection of heroic individuals engaged in the fight for civil rights, and I argue that this emphasis on individual responsibility may have absolved *Life* readers of any responsibility to join the fight themselves. *The Student Voice*, by contrast, portrays the civil rights movement as a collective endeavor, emphasizing collaboration and inviting all readers to work together toward a better world.

In March 1965, thousands of individuals joined in a series of marches from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery to protest racial injustice in the region and advocate for Black Americans' right to vote. The initial march was set to take place on March 7th, but shortly after departing from Selma, the peaceful demonstration came to a sudden halt at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where local law enforcement violently attacked the marchers in a conflict now known as "Bloody Sunday." Two days later, the marchers again attempted the journey to Montgomery, but ultimately returned to Selma after law enforcement blocked their passage on the other side of the bridge. On March 21st, almost two weeks later, several thousand protestors took part in a third and final march that successfully reached Montgomery. Media outlets throughout the United States reported on the events in Selma, and the marches and accompanying publicity prompted the passage of the federal Voting Rights Act later that year.<sup>1</sup>

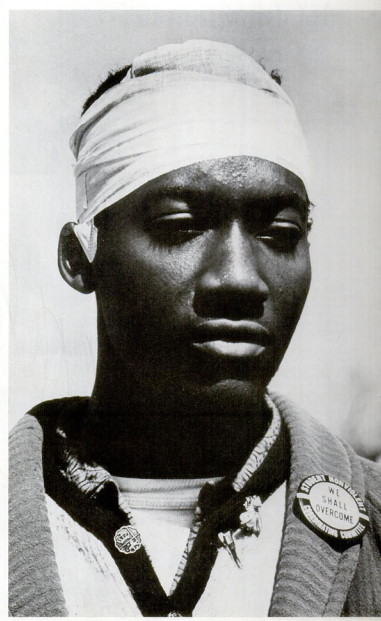
This essay will evaluate media coverage of the Selma marches by comparing two photographs published in March 1965: one in *Life* magazine and the other in *The Student Voice*, a newspaper produced by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Examining these images alongside each publication's coverage of the events reveals two competing visions of the civil rights movement during this time period. While *Life* portrays a fractured movement tenuously held together by heroic individuals, *The Student Voice* characterizes the fight for civil rights as a heterogeneous movement working collectively toward a common goal, ultimately inviting participation in the movement in a way that *Life* does not.

In its coverage of Selma, *Life* recognizes the marches as events worth

## SELMA'S FACES OF DEFIANCE—AND DEATH

"We must show them," said Dr. King, "that if they are going to beat the Negro, they are going to have to beat 100, and if they beat 100, they are going to have to beat 1,000." Even though one march had ended with a peaceful protest, two implacable faces (right) symbolized the determination on both sides to yield not an inch.

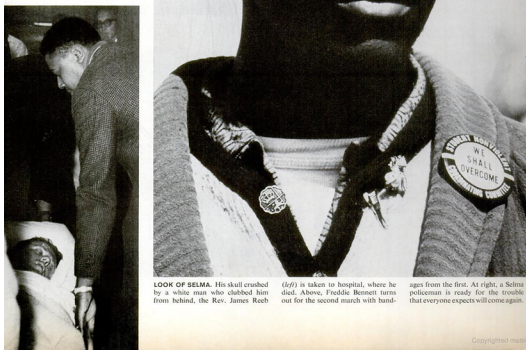
Though others would march, and march again, one man would not. He was the Rev. James R. Ray, a white Unitarian minister from Boston (below), who had hurried to Alabama to join Dr. King in the second—and bloodless—march. That evening he went to supper with two other white clergymen in a Negro restaurant. On their way out, five white men, one brandishing a club, called after them: "Hey there, nigger!" Ray, 36, didn't look back, but one of the other clerics, Orloff Miller of Boston, did, in time to see the club whither cut loose at Ray's head. "like he was swinging at a baseball." The blow crushed Ray's skull. He died in a hospital and police arrested four men for Ray's murder. Miller himself was only knocked down and kicked. As he tried to shield his head, Miller heard his assailant say, "You want to know what it's like to be a real nigger?"



LOOK OF SELMA. His skull crushed by a white man who claimed him from behind, the Rev. James Ray

(left) is taken in hospital, where he died. Above, Freddie Bennett turns out for the second march with hands

ages from the first. At right, a Selma policeman is ready for the trouble that comes every week from the marchers.



*Life* Magazine, 19 March 1965

Page 4	March 26, 1965	STUDENT VOICE
<p><b>Clark</b></p> <p>Continued from Page 1 for "voter agitation" to leave "and 12 Alabama, Clark said, recent demonstrators 'have done more to destroy the relations between the white man and the Negro in Selma and the Negro in Selma and the Negro in Selma than any other thing that has happened in the last 100 years.'"</p> <p>The Sheriff always carries a shotgun, which he describes as a "must." He is usually accompanied by some members of his mounted civilian posse, organized in 1955 to break up union organizing attempts here.</p> <p>During the current drive Judge Thomas finally issued a restraining order against Clark and other county officials, preventing them from interfering with the orderly process of voter registration.</p> <p>Thomas ordered Clark to allow at least 100 people only a 15-minute permit to enter the county. He also ordered Clark to make a statement in front of the court that he had no interest in the future of the law, and another statement on board to stop "refusing to receive and process" any petitioners applying for voter registration.</p> <p>Clark's refusal to do so was the last part of the bank's registration question.</p> <p>Dr. Raymond Brown, 58, Atlanta, Georgia 30314</p>	<p>March 26, 1965</p> <p>Continued from Page 1 for "voter agitation" to leave "and 12 Alabama, Clark said, recent demonstrators 'have done more to destroy the relations between the white man and the Negro in Selma and the Negro in Selma and the Negro in Selma than any other thing that has happened in the last 100 years.'"</p> <p>The Sheriff always carries a shotgun, which he describes as a "must." He is usually accompanied by some members of his mounted civilian posse, organized in 1955 to break up union organizing attempts here.</p> <p>During the current drive Judge Thomas finally issued a restraining order against Clark and other county officials, preventing them from interfering with the orderly process of voter registration.</p> <p>Thomas ordered Clark to allow at least 100 people only a 15-minute permit to enter the county. He also ordered Clark to make a statement in front of the court that he had no interest in the future of the law, and another statement on board to stop "refusing to receive and process" any petitioners applying for voter registration.</p> <p>Clark's refusal to do so was the last part of the bank's registration question.</p> <p>Dr. Raymond Brown, 58, Atlanta, Georgia 30314</p>	<p><b>Arkansas</b></p> <p>Continued from Page 1 for "voter agitation" to leave "and 12 Alabama, Clark said, recent demonstrators 'have done more to destroy the relations between the white man and the Negro in Selma and the Negro in Selma and the Negro in Selma than any other thing that has happened in the last 100 years.'"</p> <p>The Sheriff always carries a shotgun, which he describes as a "must." He is usually accompanied by some members of his mounted civilian posse, organized in 1955 to break up union organizing attempts here.</p> <p>During the current drive Judge Thomas finally issued a restraining order against Clark and other county officials, preventing them from interfering with the orderly process of voter registration.</p> <p>Thomas ordered Clark to allow at least 100 people only a 15-minute permit to enter the county. He also ordered Clark to make a statement in front of the court that he had no interest in the future of the law, and another statement on board to stop "refusing to receive and process" any petitioners applying for voter registration.</p> <p>Clark's refusal to do so was the last part of the bank's registration question.</p> <p>Dr. Raymond Brown, 58, Atlanta, Georgia 30314</p>

reporting—but the magazine pays little attention to the motivations that drove the demonstrations, or even the protestors themselves. *Life* devoted approximately seven pages to Selma in its 19 March 1965 issue, which was published two days before the third march took place.<sup>2</sup> The story begins with two pages of photographs documenting Alabama law enforcement's brutal attack on the peaceful protestors during the first attempted march. The wide-angle photos focus primarily on the uniformed perpetrators of the attack, depicting swarms of state troopers as they bear down on scattered groups of civilians.<sup>3</sup> The magazine then continues on to the second march, featuring select images of protestors peacefully walking and, later, kneeling in prayer. Rather than capturing the scale of the crowd or highlighting the average protestor, however, the photos and accompanying captions explicitly center white participants in the march, such as the high-profile wife of an Illinois senator. But the main focus of the story is clearly Dr. Martin Luther King, who appears alongside white allies in several of these photos.<sup>4</sup> A one-page article paints Dr. King as the sole architect of the demonstrations, focusing on the complex politics behind his decision to move forward with the second march despite a federal injunction. Although several small photographs next to the article show Dr. King contemplating and deliberating with other civil rights leaders—"from the moderates to the militants"—the night before the march, the article portrays these individuals as obstacles rather than allies. According to the article, Dr. King struggled to "maintain control of his movement, especially those participating organizations to whom his campaign of nonviolence no longer made sense."<sup>5</sup>

Following this behind-the-scenes glimpse into Dr. King's world, *Life* concludes the story with a single page about the victims of the bloody conflict in Selma. A short article and accompanying photo recount the murder of a white clergyman, Reverend James J. Reeb, at the hands of local white men while dining in Selma. Next to Reverend Reeb's story, an image featuring a young Black man with a heavily bandaged head offers readers their only closeup view of the violence carried out by law enforcement during the first march.<sup>6</sup>

Moreso than the other images in *Life*, this last portrait seemingly seeks to evoke sympathy from readers and thereby galvanize support for the marches. In reality, however, this photograph works in tandem with the rest of *Life's* coverage to cast the fight for civil rights as an individual, rather than collective, struggle—arguably dissuading readers from actively supporting the movement. The photo's caption identifies the victim as Freddie Bennett, pictured at the second march after sustaining a head injury during the first. Bennett's head is wrapped in several layers of clean white bandage, with a few short wisps of hair peeking out above the dressing. His eyes are cast downward, away from the camera, giving him a troubled appearance. But his expression is not one of hopelessness or desperation. Rather, the lighting in the image highlights his other facial features, particularly his mouth, which is set in a contemplative yet determined expression. Although the image is cropped at Bennett's shoulders, readers might follow his gaze down and out of the photo, imagining this battered protestor as he concentrates on placing one foot in front of the other, continuing his perilous march toward equality.

Based solely on this image, however, Bennett seems to walk alone in this fight. The photo contains hints that Bennett is part of a broader movement, including a SNCC button prominently pinned to his lapel—but the tight crop and shallow depth of field render the background of the image unclear, singling out Bennett as the sole subject. At least in this issue of *Life*, Bennett is the lone figure with visible injuries from the violence of the first march. This brave young man stands as an emblem of personal strength and perseverance in the face of antagonism—much like another prominent figure in *Life*'s coverage, Dr. King. By focusing its coverage on figures like Bennett, Dr. King, and Reverend Reeb, *Life* subtly implies that the civil rights movement consisted of a select group of inspirational individuals intently laboring towards progress. The patience and sacrifice of these remarkable heroes thus become the most effective instruments of change—ultimately absolving *Life* readers of responsibility to act or participate in the movement themselves.

In *The Student Voice*, SNCC's coverage of the events in Selma offers a stark contrast to *Life*'s veneration of these select individuals. In its 26 March 1965 issue, the newspaper published several articles and photographs that sought to situate the marches within the broader context of civil rights in the American South. For example, one article offers a broad overview of the legal struggle for voting rights in Alabama.<sup>7</sup> An

article about Sheriff Jim Clark, the primary antagonist in the Selma demonstrations, outlines the voter suppression tactics that drew SNCC and other civil rights groups to Selma prior to the demonstrations.<sup>8</sup> Another article about the death of Reverend Reeb informs readers of similar murders in the area and critiques the flawed criminal justice system that repeatedly fails to administer justice for these victims.<sup>9</sup> Although *The*

“...Therefore each reader of *The Student Voice* also has the capacity and the responsibility to meaningfully contribute to the fight for civil rights.”

*Student Voice* devoted much of its front page to Selma—including these articles, as well as a closeup photograph of SNCC chairman John Lewis recovering from injuries he sustained during the first march—the page also includes several articles describing SNCC's civil rights work throughout the region. These front-page stories discuss Arkansas state troopers' violent response to anti-segregation demonstrations, as well as an ongoing school boycott in Mississippi.<sup>10</sup> Rather than reporting on the events of the marches themselves, *The Student Voice* focuses on making readers aware of what Selma demonstrators were fighting *for*, while also highlighting numerous other efforts to overcome racial prejudice in the American South.

In addition to providing crucial context to the Selma marches, *The Student Voice* also conveys a sense of community that is notably absent from *Life*'s coverage. On the final page of the newspaper, SNCC published an image of three young Black protesters retreating from the first march

following the infamous events of “Bloody Sunday.”<sup>11</sup> In the photograph, one young man stands in the center supported by two companions on either side. Although a head covering partially obscures his eyes, he appears to be gazing at the camera with his lips parted in a dazed expression. The extent of his injuries is not clear, but he is obviously unwell; his body angles awkwardly to the side as he leans on his friends for support. The other two young men look relatively unscathed, although one has a wrapping around his head that may be a bandage. He, too, looks at the camera, his face frozen in an expression of distress. The third young man grimaces as he looks beyond the photographer at some unknown focal point outside the frame, leaving readers to wonder whether his face contorts from pain, fear, anger, or some combination of all three. Around the young men, several other people can be seen in relatively clear focus walking behind or alongside them. The three main subjects of the image, along with these additional figures, convey an unmistakable sense of unity as they walk forward together, supporting one another in the aftermath of a horrific experience. With this image, SNCC suggests that communal support plays a key role in the movement to resist voter suppression in Selma—and in the civil rights movement more broadly. By focusing their visual coverage of Selma on these three young protestors uplifting each other during a period of intense distress, *The Student Voice* communicates to readers that individuals *joining together* is crucial to the struggle for justice and equality in America. In SNCC’s vision, each member of the movement has a vital role to play, and therefore each reader of *The Student Voice* also has the capacity and the *responsibility* to meaningfully

contribute to the fight for civil rights.

Notably, the unifying message of this image came at a time when SNCC itself was rife with division. As African American Studies scholar Leigh Raiford explains, SNCC dealt with contentious internal politics from 1964 to 1965 as the organization struggled to redefine its purpose amid a sudden increase in membership and media scrutiny.<sup>12</sup> In addition to internal disputes, SNCC also had to contend with disagreements within the civil rights movement more broadly, as organizations with competing goals and strategies attempted to come together in service of larger goals. This tension played out in the months leading up to the first march, as SNCC’s Selma office found itself working alongside Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) on a voting rights campaign. Although they collaborated on efforts to educate and register Selma’s Black voters, SNCC and SCLC disagreed on the role of protest and publicity in securing civil rights for Black Americans. As a result, SNCC initially declined to participate in the Selma demonstration. SNCC chairman John Lewis famously led the first march alongside SCLC’s Reverend Hosea Williams—but he did so as an individual, rather than as a SNCC representative.<sup>13</sup> These disputes between two prominent civil rights groups echo *Life*’s coverage of the difficulties Dr. King faced in organizing the Selma demonstrations. In fact, SNCC executive director James Foreman is one of the leaders pictured on *Life*’s pages in dialogue with King the night before the second march.<sup>14</sup> But while *Life* celebrates Dr. King for his ability to tame radical tendencies in “his” civil rights movement, *The Student Voice* demonstrates SNCC’s alternative assertion that these disparate

voices—disagreements and all—lend strength to the communal movement.

Despite tensions within and beyond the organization, SNCC's coverage of Selma in *The Student Voice* projects an image of unity, highlighting the diverse participants who collaborated to accomplish the larger work of the civil rights movement. Speaking of the competing visions held by the many photographers who worked for SNCC during the 1960s, Raiford describes the organization's photographic archive as "heteroscopic," consisting of a "range of visions and diversity of photographic expressions . . . that from the outside appeared uniform and unified." Photography, she argues, "communicated the inherent diversity and internal differentiations that were prevalent and unavoidable, destabilizing and *enriching* to the organization."<sup>15</sup> Just as SNCC's photographers can be seen as diverse individuals whose personal contributions combined to form a cohesive communications strategy, the differing methods of various civil rights activists can be seen as part of a diverse—but ultimately collaborative—movement. At least, this is the vision of the civil rights movement seen in the pages of *The Student Voice* as it highlighted individuals supporting one another in the collective pursuit of equality. While *Life* placed the burden of the civil rights struggle on the shoulders of a few heroic individuals, SNCC invited *all* readers to join their efforts to build a new world.

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# Eve and Empiricism

Sasha Westerfield

AMST 332: Science and Modern America

Eve and Empiricism was written as an editorial assignment in Professor Carolyn C. Thomas's course, AMST 332 Science and Modern America, based on reading a section from Kimberly Hamlin's book *Eve to Evolution*. The chapters from this book were very interesting and informative, allowing for a new way of approaching the history of science. Hamlin creates the opportunity to see both reactions to the Scientific Revolution in America for men and women. An emerging world of middle and upper class women fought for their rights to be taken seriously as capable, intelligent adults, while their equivalent men took positions of prestigious science to re-establish sexist and racist hierarchies within the foundations of the field.

Nearly a century ago, Helen Hamilton Gardener died with the incredible wish to have her brain donated to science upon her death, and scientifically examined to prove its superior intelligence. She took great pains to affirm agency over her body by making an ironclad will and picking the doctor who would remove her brain. To Gardener, her brain would provide proof that being born as a female was not an intellectual handicap because "...[her brain] represented the highest development possible for a woman."<sup>1</sup> In the nineteenth century, the field of science was evolving, and had gained respect as a definitive way of proving facts about the world. Certain groups seeking to prove superiority flocked to science to

reinforce what they believed to be true. For example, some white men aimed to show the world that these women and racial minorities were scientifically inferior, especially intellectually. They used their findings as a new way of denying access to certain intellectual and social spaces, especially the prestigious areas of academia popping up alongside scientific progress. The Bible was no longer sufficient to suppress women's desires to participate in the public sphere of society, so science was utilized as a new oppressive force. White male scientists' arguments were shaped by in-vogue ideas of Darwinian evolution, such as: women evolved only to watch children, or that they had smaller/lighter brains which meant a decreased overall intelligence, or

even how the pain of menstruation meant that women's bodies were more fragile and less suited to the rigors of education. These ideas all aimed to prove women's "natural and biological" inferiority to men, to designate women on the basis of their sex as lesser in the hierarchy of progress. And if they had "science" to prove their beliefs were factually undeniable, then they could justify their abilities to determine it ethical to strip women of agency, because it was for their own good. The white male scientists in upper academia—their experiments, studies, reports—were all presented in journals as infallible facts. Fundamentally, a mindset like this is only achievable when one falsely perceives themselves and their results to be completely objective; a self-imposed pedestal that then can easily warp observations, studies, and results, because of a personally undetected moral bias. Their female counterparts, however, recognized that their lived experiences were different, and so believed the studies must have been inaccurate, a belief that existed despite what the science was supposedly concluding. Nineteenth-century women understood their voracious desires to learn and study were legitimate despite the biased science that was peddled to them, desires which led these women of the 1870s and 1880s to build women's colleges for science a.k.a. "science of feminine humanity."

In chapter two of *From Eve to Evolution: Darwin, Science, and Women's Rights in Gilded Age America*, Kimberly Hamlin writes that Gardener was the product of nineteenth-century feminism, one that had turned to science as a means of salvation from the society that had used a religious cudgel to prevent women from engaging in spaces outside of domesticity. Feminists thought they could

turn scientific-minded men to equality through their own work. Such was the line of thought that caused Gardener to take great pains to donate her brain after her death. If it was dissected, examined, and studied by a top male scientist, she thought it could bring women to the light of intellectual respect. It was an incredibly idealistic goal, perhaps missing the forest for the trees. The men who made inaccurate studies were not doing so with a scientific goal of understanding in mind, they declared it as fact despite incongruencies in their methods. Their conclusions were already made. Rather than forming a theory and conducting research to either prove or disprove it they explained biological differences (of/between) males and females as they saw fit, which would reinforce their sexist beliefs. Being sexist was the conclusion, the point even, and the culture they wanted to live with, science was just now being swapped into the function of previous religious practices. Unlike the Bible, women could technically use the scientific method to cut through cultural myths, but it would not make men open their minds and hearts to the perspective of people they desired to label as inferior. Just as before the Enlightenment, men did not want to talk to women, listen to women, or understand the nature of the female sex as it is, instead of as they wanted it to be. If they did, then the culture of scientific sexism (and racism) would not have become so developed.

Hamlin argues that nineteenth-century feminists were both critical of and inspired by the way that science was being used. In the 1870s and 1880s, educated women who read these published studies disagreed, believing that their studies being done from a male perspective desired a foregone

conclusion, and thus were unscientific. They felt they could not trust the science. Reflecting on this, prominent feminist Antoinette Brown Blackwell said, “[o]nly a woman can approach the subject from a feminine standpoint; and there are none but beginners among us in this class of investigations...[Woman] must consent to put in evidence the results of her own experience, and to develop the scientific basis of her differing conclusions.”<sup>2</sup> As a result, these women conducted their own research, despite lacking resources and respect in the field. And this is where we really do see differences in comparing religion to science, because while today women cannot hold many positions of religious power, such as being the pope, their faith in the abilities of science provided the foundation for the widespread ability to challenge the narratives of cultural, and scientific, validity. It was no wonder then that so many women, like Hamlin herself, put faith in this new way of thinking as a chance to save themselves from being doomed to subjugation.

In this clash, both sides clung to the “truth of science.” Men and women wanted science to be definitive because they wanted to be able to prove what they believed. They saw the promise of a field that could ascertain the truth. These men believed women were inferior, so they sought to just prove it as true as their believed, lived experiences. To them, science existed to determine right from wrong, rather than a methodology to follow. We know today that science is ever-changing, a fluid field that is our best attempt at understanding the

## Eve to Evolution shows us that science is not a moral friend nor foe

underlying mechanisms of the world after observation. Science works best when it is done with an open mind and willingness to work with results. Already models had been created to justify the appearance of exceptionally talented women such as Gardner as insulated anomalies. The Lamarckian model of heredity that theoretically allowed certain traits like intelligence to be passed to one’s offspring, in fact “The Lamarckian model of heredity also helps explain why evolutionary scientists were so interested in the question of female education: it would be one thing to educate a few exceptional women but quite another to simultaneously improve women’s lot for eternity.”<sup>3</sup> The Lamarckian model was utilized to invalidate women’s intelligence and research. Even with Gardener’s brain donation, this model would explain away her achievements and intelligence by attributing them to her inherited genetics rather than her own capabilities. Gardner thought that donating her brain would be an end to the debate, but she ironically had the same flawed approach that many of the men she railed against: she thought that science could give an objective conclusion.

It is dangerous to view science and its methodologies as a weapon, and to pretend like one’s own culture and/or beliefs do not influence one’s work. I see it as a noble endeavor, because the turn of the century battle for the field of science can be an inspiration to all of us. Feminists refused to accept what they were told without verifying it for themselves, and they refused to allow

this new field to exclude them and their opinions entirely. They knew that its findings would forever be flawed when there was only one type of person in the conductor's position and they fought to make science more inclusive and more accessible. The conclusion is not to blindly trust or mistrust the science, but to critically analyze it from multiple perspectives and multiple practices. *Eve to Evolution* shows us that science is not a moral friend nor foe, and is always influenced by the ones leading it. True objective research should always be up for debate, as we are always products of culture and vice versa. And the systems, ones of science and newly reflected in technology, are always run by real human beings with bias. No one holds objective truth is one lesson we should be thinking about in our systems of practice, but there's another one I would like us to take away from this, and that is to reinforce the meaning of feminism in human history.

### **The Cycle Continues**

The relations of sexes have always shifted dramatically and constantly throughout time and space. There are many places where things were different in fundamental conceptions of how women should be treated, but that's only so we can emphasize the place of women always being subject to social norms. Women are always at the center of either social change either to become more oppressed by a certain power looking to weaponize female *distribution*, to imagine it pessimistically, or to lead their own movements towards freedom, often in reaction to their rights being stripped away, and often the new generation proactively making a collective stand. Women have never had the opportunity to rest easy it seems. And as I see every new

piece of technology innovate, it becomes clear, simple even to spot hierarchies being made and oppression reinforced. The internet is a public space like no else, and it seems the battle for how women's bodies are treated in this space will be just as fierce as the battle for respect and consideration under the watchful eye of Science.

Of course these systems always reproduce themselves in the body. The intelligence of women must be degraded in association with her body, with the Bible we could see her natural weakness embodied in her actions, with science we can identify the flaw with her very flesh, but very very clinically. The personal emotions present within sexist systems are slowly being eroded over time as woman has been become more physically exploited. Here is the throughline from the cycle happening at the advent of American science and the modern day technology, the narrowing of women to detached sex objects. Available. Visible. The female body displayed across every website, making millions.

The biology of women in this age has become only notable in total depersonalization in the face of the woman capitalist industry. White men used science to set us down this path, we know this when we understand the treatment of the Black female slave and her use in extensive advancements in the male dominated field of gynecology, we understand this when we view just how much science was pushed to create an understanding of smaller female brain sizes having meaningful consequences for intelligence. Progress will always be cut across the back of women in this way, and we need to be prepared as a society to distrust what these technologies and systems of

discovery affect those amongst us at risk, disadvantaged, vulnerable in every way we know to be meaningful. Feminists of the Scientific revolution have taught us that lesson by fighting to truly establish their space within the movement, and as little recognition they have in collective memory compared to the famous male physicists of myth, the male T.V. doctors we hold dear to our hearts, they have embedded in the history of scientific prowess in America a seed of real truth and discovery, of using science to illuminate through the darkness of oppression.

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# Ignorance is Not Bliss: How Culture Can Lead People Astray

Carmella Pacillas

AMST 332: Science and Modern America

This paper was written for Dr. Carolyn Thomas's AMST 332: Science and Modern America class during the Spring semester of 2024. Students were tasked with analyzing why people tend to dismiss factual evidence in favor of preexisting values and the resulting consequences, using the two books read in class as primary sources. In my paper, I highlight common reasons individuals ignore evidence-based conclusions and the deadly implications that can follow. I also draw parallels to COVID-19, emphasizing the importance of following factual information. During the pandemic, I witnessed firsthand many who refused to comply with COVID-19 safety regulations and how their personal decisions put others in harm's way. I hope readers come away understanding the importance of remaining open to opposing viewpoints. It is crucial to face the world with an open mind and to welcome new scientific findings.

Culture, values, and beliefs are the central framework that creates a person's identity. People's character and personalities are rooted in their cultural background; strong beliefs are not easily swayed or altered. People often choose familiarity, making ignorance the path of least resistance. In Octavia E. Butler's speculative fiction novel, *Parable of the Sower* and environmental scholar Andrew Hoffman's non-fiction book, *How Culture Shapes the Climate Change Debate*, prime

examples are given of how people tend to hold onto their preexisting values and dismiss newly acquired information. This elucidates that ignorance is not bliss and denying the existence of change is harmful to oneself and the environment, despite it being a more appealing path. This dynamic is not just seen in the contexts of climate change and societal collapse in *Parable of the Sower*, but also during the COVID-19 pandemic, where resistance to new information and adherence to preexisting

beliefs often worsen the crisis.

When we grow up, our minds and perspectives are influenced by our families and communities. We tend to gravitate towards individuals who share similar beliefs, further reinforcing our worldviews. When exposed to external information, many individuals often dismiss it as insignificant if it contradicts their preexisting values. Andrew Hoffman explains that, “It is not necessarily that we reject scientific conclusions...but that they are weighted and valued differently depending on how our friends, colleagues, trusted sources, or respected leaders value and frame these issues.”<sup>1</sup> What we consider to be our opinions are often not solely our own, but rather a combination of the views of those we surround ourselves with.

The tendency to reject factual information in favor of familiar beliefs is reflected in *Parable of the Sower*. The characters in Robledo cling to outdated notions of a better past, refusing to acknowledge the severity of their present situation.

*Parable of the Sower* tells the tale of a fictional dystopian world engulfed by climate change and economic crises. All sense of law and order have since evaporated. With crime on the rise, the simple act of venturing outside is a near-death sentence. Fifteen-year-old Lauren Olamina resides in the fractured community of Robledo, California. Lauren has only experienced hardships and anguish within a deteriorating dystopian version of America. She frequently challenges the community’s persistence to overlook the harsh truths of their current world and yearn for the nostalgia of the past. Octavia Butler describes the community as unwilling to move forward, stating how “[t]hey never miss a chance to relive the good old days or to tell kids how great it’s going to be when the country gets

back on its feet and good times come back.”<sup>2</sup> Lauren’s community repeatedly rejects the reality of a declining world, preferring to reminisce about simpler times. Many in her community, including her family, place a high value on God and religion. They cling to religious teachings and hold a strong belief in the idea of returning to a semblance of normalcy. When it’s time for Lauren and several local children to get baptized, the adults insist they perform the ritual at an established church. They claim it’s the only way to have a “proper” baptism as the ones conducted in the safety of a home wouldn’t be legitimate.<sup>3</sup> This decision is reckless, endangering the lives of everyone involved in the journey. They would have to venture outside their community, facing the risk of getting mugged or murdered with every step. Lauren is highly perceptive and recognizes the inherent dangers in her environment. She often prioritizes safety and caution while the adults fixate on their nostalgia for the old paradigm. Many in her community continue to be hopeful for things to change despite the harsh realities around them.

The reluctance to acknowledge such atrocities often stems from preexisting biases. Andrew Hoffman explores how faith and religion significantly contribute to the refusal to accept reality. When scientific evidence and external knowledge contradict deeply ingrained beliefs, it is often more convenient for individuals to dismiss new information. This is evident in the climate change debate, where some deny its likelihood because its existence “challenges their notion of God.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many struggle to align the scientific support for the vaccine with their preexisting values or beliefs. These people often dismiss the reality of the virus or the need for preventative measures. Some deny climate



“  
Remaining ignorant of the realities surrounding us is no longer an option. As the world continues to evolve, adaptability and growth are essential for survival.”

change because it challenges their worldview while others resist health guidelines, painting them as attacks on personal freedoms or religious practices. Scientific findings or external influences can challenge these ideologies, which encourages many to dismiss such threats. Rather than confronting reality, many opt to deny its existence altogether.

The denial of uncomfortable truths is mirrored in *Parable of the Sower*, where most characters struggle to accept the dire circumstances of their world. However, Lauren remains vigilant in her collapsing community. She is highly aware of America's deteriorating state and is determined to survive in this harsh new reality. Unlike her peers, she acknowledges the impending downfall of her community and is committed to creating a strategic plan to escape and endure. When confiding in her friend Joanne, she emphasizes the importance of readiness, urging her friend to be prepared to flee. Lauren is adamant destruction will come and they must be ready to leave and make a life beyond the borders of their community.<sup>5</sup> While Lauren anxiously awaits her community's downfall, she wants to prepare her friend and help her break through the adult's idea of reality. However, Joanne rejects Lauren's encouragement and refuses to consider her advice. Joanne succumbs to the nostalgic propaganda of her community, refusing to believe the world is as horrible as Lauren makes it out to be.<sup>6</sup> This denial of harsh realities mirrors behaviors seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, where many downplayed the virus's risk to maintain a sense of normalcy, rejecting health guidelines and scientific warnings. As demonstrated by Hoffman, it is simply much easier to willfully choose ignorance over accepting the uncomfortable realities of the present world.<sup>7</sup>

The tendency to deny reality is closely tied to the psychological filters people use to protect their worldviews and sense of self. People all have cognitive filters that influence their values and incline them to seek out communities that align with their cultural tribes. Many want to feel a sense of belonging and familiarity. Due to this, people welcome the familiar and tend to push away those that threaten or oppose differing characteristics. Hoffman explains

that “...these belief structures become increasingly stable and resistant to change. We give greater weight to evidence...that support our pre-existing beliefs and expend disproportionate energy trying to refute views...that we find contrary to those beliefs.”<sup>8</sup> During COVID-19, these cognitive filters play a similar role. People seek information that aligns with their cultural or political beliefs, often embracing misinformation and rejecting scientific evidence. This tribalism, much like that in Lauren’s community, makes the notion of adaptation even more challenging. This is seen when Lauren is confronted by her Dad. Upon learning of her intentions of creating an escape plan, her Dad orders Lauren to refrain from sharing her thoughts with anyone else. He doesn’t want the community to lose hope and dread an “unlikely” outcome. He encourages his daughter to silence her outspoken views and try not to scare the whole town.<sup>9</sup> As seen with Joanne, the rest of the town will likely not respond well to Lauren’s thoughtful intentions. When people tend to surround themselves with like-minded individuals, the opportunities to grow and expand one’s views become increasingly limited. The comfort of staying within one’s cultural tribe often outweighs the challenge of engaging with unfamiliar perspectives.<sup>10</sup>

As the years pass, Lauren is confronted with her prediction coming true. People storm the community of Robledo and kill almost everyone in sight. Lauren recounts that “when [she] escaped from the neighborhood, it was burning. The houses, the trees, the people: Burning.”<sup>11</sup> Suddenly, without warning, a horde of people storm the town leaving devastation in their wake. Robledo is left empty and in ruins. No one in the town thought devastation was remotely possible. The community viewed the world through distorted lenses, not seeing the true horrific state of their environment. One of the only surviving members was Lauren. She refused to let nostalgia blind her and vowed never to become complacent. This devastation is eerily similar to the consequences of ignoring the COVID-19 pandemic. In both cases, denial and complacency left communities unprepared for impending disaster, often ending with tragic results. Just as Lauren’s vigilance saved her life, those who acknowledge the pandemic’s dangers are better equipped to adapt and survive. As Lauren demonstrates, it’s essential to remain open to the changes life will bring as remaining stagnant in the past only sets you up for failure.

The refusal to face the truth doesn’t always occur in isolation. It often stems from the cultural values and belief systems that shape how people see the world. Hoffman explains that “...cultural values create a pattern of shared basic assumptions that tell us the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems and situations we face.”<sup>12</sup> Individuals frequently disregard scientific evidence and instead rely on their own values and beliefs, even if they are not entirely accurate. In *Parable of the Sower*, the community’s cultural values led them astray. They refuted outside perceptions and denied truths face-on. The sheer ignorance of Robledo is what led to its demise. This harsh consequence can be seen in real life as well. If climate change continues at its current rate, there will be adverse ecological impacts. Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates how denial of reality can exacerbate harm on a global scale, from overwhelming healthcare systems to devastating communities. Remaining ignorant of the realities surrounding us is no longer an option. As the world continues to evolve, adaptability and growth are essential for survival.

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# Domestic Transportation on the U.S. Home Front in WWII and the Shift of the American Perspective

Alexis Fisher-Davis

AMST 401T: Research Seminar, War in American Culture

During World War II, President D. Franklin Roosevelt created the Office of Defense Transportation (ODT). The ODT implemented regulations on domestic transportation to avoid the transportation bottlenecks experienced during World War I. The regulations included conserving resources such as gasoline and rubber and limiting American transportation habits. This paper explores the shift in the American perspective on patriotism as the ODT collaborated with the Office of War Information (OWI) to frame these regulatory measures as essential to national victory. Even though access to private and public transportation was determined by socioeconomic class, there was still an overall resistance to this shared sacrifice. However, the OWI appealed to the American public's emotions, encouraging a reluctance to comply in the name of patriotic duty.

In the autumn of 1942, Americans witnessed the changing seasons and eagerly anticipated the re-enactment of familial traditions. They gathered with loved ones, cherishing

life's precious moments while sending hopeful thoughts and prayers to those on the frontlines. World War II (WWII) was raging on at this time in American history, and many Americans at home

felt the intensity of the cultural fears surrounding the war and what it would mean for their families, their country, and their future. As citizens tried to maintain morale by immersing themselves in work and traditional recreational activities, the Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) made a bold request. Joseph B. Eastman, director of the ODT, restricted access to one of America's favorite pastimes, football, at the dawn of its season. How did Eastman enact this request? By restricting private and public transportation. Aware of the potential backlash, Eastman sought the understanding and cooperation of American citizens, hoping they would recognize that their sacrifice was a proud patriotic endeavor essential for ensuring the nation's victory in WWII.<sup>1</sup>

How did the limits imposed on private and public transportation by the ODT transform the American perspective about what it meant to be a patriot? This paper will use the term American perspective to describe how Americans reexamined their actions and loyalty in response to these governmentally imposed social norms during WWII when legislation transformed daily life and reinforced a sense of collective duty and sacrifice in private and public transportation.

### **The Transportation War on the American Frontier**

Within eleven days following the Day of Infamy on December 7, 1941, the United States declared war on Japan, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt acted by implementing various executive orders, including the creation of the Office of Defense Transportation. The mission assigned to the ODT was "to assure maximum utilization of the domestic transportation facilities of the nation for

the successful prosecution of the war."<sup>2</sup> President Roosevelt demonstrated his prowess as the nation's leader through a series of executive orders to ensure this advisory committee could prevail, granting the needed authority to this blossoming agency.<sup>3</sup> One of the actions taken by the ODT was the rationing of rubber, gasoline, and other materials to support the war effort. The ODT strongly encouraged the American public to participate in these efforts. Rationing was a typical resolution of the period, notably rubber and gasoline, despite the Great Depression rendering many American families impoverished.<sup>4</sup>

Before the United States' involvement in the Second World War, there was a stockpile of rubber that was only meant to accommodate a single year of peacetime usage; alternative synthetic sources of rubber were not readily available.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the ODT determined there were clear next steps that must be followed, including nationwide gas rationing, a national speed limit of 35 miles an hour, and convincing civilians that driving on bald tires was more helpful to the war effort than dangerous to their person.<sup>6</sup> For the implementation of these procedures, a direct appeal to middle-class Americans promoted by the ODT and the Office of War Information (OWI) rapidly followed.

The ODT faced an inherent uphill battle in balancing the desires of Americans to capitalize on the wartime economy and employment opportunities. They needed to find a way to limit the American citizens' ability to explore new careers, grow capital, and stimulate the economy in a more prosperous period compared to the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> In this period, unemployment rates were reduced compared to what was seen during the Great Depression. Additionally, the American workforce

bore a new opportunity for a new type of worker. Women were found in the job market and the military, bringing multiple facets of income into the family home. An American author, James Twitchell, once proclaimed, “Once fed and sheltered, our needs have been cultural, not natural.”<sup>8</sup> The population found this to be true, yet they were mandated and scorned to only take what was needed; this included regulating transportation.<sup>9</sup>

To successfully regulate the typical commuter, the ODT had to update the transportation narrative so that changes would not be seen as an imposition but a duty that true patriots willingly embraced. A patriot is one who was willing to accept the American perspective that the ODT crafted so diligently. Research and experience in World War I have shown that the nation would be subject to transportation bottlenecks if there were no limitations, impeding the ability to transport soldiers and supplies to where they were needed globally.<sup>10</sup> The ODT calculated the average mileage of the personal automobile and found that 56.25% of its use was for commutes to work. In contrast, they found that the remaining percentage were social excursions, such as shopping, visiting friends and family, and traveling for pleasure. With these findings, the ODT defined unnecessary travel as everything but punching in to work or contributing to the war effort.<sup>11</sup>

### The War on Private Transportation

Soon, the ODT began to strategize how to reduce the public’s use of private transportation. It was imperative to avoid the railroad folly that occurred in World War I, causing a temporary shutdown of the system.<sup>12</sup> Although Americans of the early 20th century rarely left their local communities, their compliance with these

restrictions stemmed from the persuasive rhetoric of new government ordinances. While the term motorist only identified some roadway users in the 1920s and 1930s such as middle and upper-class recreationalists, the marketing of the ODT spoke to all socio-economic levels.<sup>13</sup> A primary example is a large ODT-sponsored poster asking, “Could this be you?” Underneath the text, the poster features rectangles pinned as if posted on a board. These sections depict four scenarios from left to right: first, a woman with a scarf surrounded by shopping bags thinking,



“It’s impossible to find anything in the local shops.”

The second is a hopeful couple with coats in hand and a pile of suitcases at their feet, commenting to one another, “We haven’t seen Bob’s children since way last fall.” The third is a single businessman cigar hanging out of his mouth, with a quizzical face, a golf bag slung over one shoulder, the other hand carrying a briefcase, arguing, “But this contract is vital.” Fourth and finally, the eye is drawn to a mother and her two children, the girl carrying a pet carrier, the son holding one of their suitcases, all three

looking expectantly toward the viewer pleadingly, “But grandma misses us so.” The following text underneath the four pinned images orders the viewer, “DON’T TRAVEL – UNLESS YOUR TRIP HELPS WIN THE WAR.” The illustration implies that the four scenarios are all non-essential reasons for traveling and can be postponed until after the war. The overall message encourages Americans to utilize other means to socialize, capitalize, and normalize their current situation, remain in contact with business partners and loved ones, and focus less on spending during a time of generally perceived scarcity.<sup>14</sup> With the novelty of the private automobile and its ability to grant independence to the consumer, the ODT had to determine the best method of allowing personal travel with the expenditure of resources geared to the military.

By preserving the function of private vehicles, maximizing public transportation, and categorizing necessary and unnecessary travel, the ODT handed the reigns over to the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI efficiently spread this essential information through diverse marketing and propagandizing strategies to the public, as the ODT prioritized managing business compliance with these new policies.<sup>15</sup> The OWI planned first to make rationing be viewed as a needed sacrifice for Americans to play their part in the war effort, not an excuse to hoard resources unbecoming of a patriot; making it so that black markets could not be considered an alternate resource for Americans. Still, the integrity of the ration coupon for rubber had to be held to a higher standard to invoke cooperation, and the summer months brought about a whirlwind of modifications. A good example of what the OWI was trying to accomplish was when, in July 1942, Dr. J.

T. Thompson, the chairman of the National Highway Advisory Committee of the War Department, taught employers how to better conserve resources by developing a new car-sharing habit.

He thought it was better to appear too stern and not allow access to one’s vehicle than to allow one to drive it for non-essential use. Most importantly, it was seen as more responsible to pick up a hitchhiker than to drive alone. By becoming an identifiable carpooler, through the payment of a fee, the funds were directly donated to the United Service Organizations (USO) to fund the programs that support military members and their families.<sup>16</sup> Another great example of the efforts of the OWI is when city businesses such as taxi fleets were given staggered schedules to avoid too many cars awaiting passengers, all while maintaining the promotion of public transportation and car-sharing.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to national efforts of coaxing the American public to adopt carsharing into their commutes, the imagery of car-sharing clubs compared to solo drivers in newspapers and posters sanctioned by the Office of War Information was often directed toward a white male audience, usually by questioning their identity as an American. These marketing campaigns also often portrayed white female drivers benefitting from sacrificing the mobility and freedom of driving alone, which targeted a different side of American identity and what it meant to be an American woman.<sup>18</sup> All the while, advertisements for public transportation portrayed the primary users as poor Blacks. In this way, car-sharing was an activity for the privileged, and all they needed to do was be part of a car-sharing club, have a carpool sticker, and frugally employ their ration coupons for gas and rubber.<sup>19</sup> The

advertisements created by the OWI often voiced a struggle for the American values of the ordinary citizen during the war, including updating the public on the latest definition of being an American citizen, a patriot of the American way of life compared to a sympathizer of the declared enemy.<sup>20</sup> In many of the OWI's posters and advertisements, the use of symbolism and wordplay through the constant questioning of the American's patriotism and involvement in the war efforts aided in their attempts at promoting the growing limits of transportation.

An eye-catching seventy-three by fifty-six-centimeter tricolor poster utilizing white, red, and black to mimic the German flag has a comedic portrayal of a white-collar businessman speeding off. The serious tone of the piece is drawn from Adolf Hitler sitting on the trunk of the vehicle, seemingly directing the driver with a Sieg Heil salute. The poster states in the wholly capitalized text, "HITLER RIDES IN THE EMPTY SEAT – DOUBLE UP!"<sup>21</sup> By refusing to participate in these federal regulations, a person is declared un-American and a supporter of the white supremacist superpower. Countless WWII posters followed a similar rhetoric to sacrifice and preserve, which, concerning the message that the OWI wants to advertise, is to be patriotic; the rationalization of diverting resources was unbecoming of any true American.<sup>22</sup> Harold von Schmidt illustrated a steely-eyed, gruff-faced American soldier asking the most challenging question: "Have you really tried to save gas by getting into a car club?"<sup>23</sup>

This illustration reminded the American people that the violation of their freedom to pursue happiness through their automobiles and their governmentally defined non-essential travel was for a

purpose greater than themselves. The poster's emotional undertones tug on citizens' heartstrings, imploring them to be selfless and actively contribute to America's pending victory in the war. Though the OWI and the ODT made great and strenuous efforts in imploring the American people to conserve their transportation habits, the ban on traveling for personal enjoyment was received with anger and criticism. This is due to the fact that cars had just been integrated and welcomed into the American identity. Paul Sabin's book *Crude Politics: The California Oil Market, 1900-1940*, discussed how, in 1942, there was an average of 2.7 people who owned/operated per one vehicle.

Yet by the end of World War II, Americans had shifted their primary transportation back to those of streetcars and railroads due to this ban.<sup>24</sup> However, the feelings of anger came from those privileged to own a motor vehicle in an urban locale. Unexpectedly, those without the same privileges were also outraged at the restrictions on driving; for example, Sabin states that in Detroit, it was considered to be a threat to one's well-being and potential prosperity.<sup>25</sup> Yet, despite the rage and backlash from the American public, the predicted growing scarcity of fuel, oil, and rubber disrupted civilian commutes, and proper car maintenance was seen as an unobtainable key to a lasting form of personal travel. Dannagal Young features in her journal article "Sacrifice Consumption, and the American Way of Life: Advertising and Domestic Propaganda During World War II" that the Office of Price Administration (OPA), OWI, and ODT had to construct the discourse around the "citizen consumer" and the "purchaser consumer."<sup>26</sup> Both categories were framed as integral to the nation's wartime economy, but they



embodied distinct roles.

The “citizen consumer” was one that sacrificed for the common good, understanding that their buying choices could influence social change and market dynamics. In contrast, the “purchaser consumer” was an individual whose indiscriminate purchases were key to stimulating the economy through their financial power. Young found that standard rhetoric in wartime advertisements involved the following core themes: sacrifice, sacrifice as a civic duty, sacrifice for home and family, the American way of life, and more oriented toward the labor force.<sup>27</sup> The commonality in those phrases is how they provoke an emotional argument amidst the irrationality of war. To “vacation at home” was another way to be a patriot through paced self-indulgence. For middle-class Americans, the novelty of using public transportation as an alternative to driving was applauded by their friends and families, revealing a shift in the American perspective.<sup>28</sup>

### **The War on Public Transportation**

Although public transportation was now seen as the preferred method for travel, there were government-mandated limitations. As previously mentioned, the director of the ODT, Joseph B. Eastman, canceled special transportation services that Americans had become accustomed to in order to travel to sporting events. In a special edition piece produced by the *New York Times*, Eastman explained that all military travel, like the movement of troops and supplies, must have precedence over trips, even for something as coveted as a college football game. To curtail the unsavory responses from the American public, Eastman understood that the agency must also compromise to gain cooperation from the citizens. The ODT worked with

colleges and universities to host sporting events in prime locales to optimize attendance and utilize traditional train and public transportation services over shorter distances. Yet, this action was seen as another accommodation for the privileged minority in a time of required scarcity and sacrifice for the American people since middle to upper-class families were more likely to afford and attend sporting and other recreational events.

Overall, the Office of Defense Transportation’s (ODT) efforts successfully mitigated traffic congestion, another cog in the machine that influenced America’s victory in WWII. Yet, one of the first frontiers of public transportation, railroads, brought together the war effort and the domestic working class, similar to airlines’ primary passengers being military personnel and critical materials.<sup>29</sup> In 1944, railroads experienced a 302% increase in ridership, otherwise called “passenger miles.” While troop movements counted for most of the ninety-five billion passenger miles, civilian travelers still significantly contributed to that formidable increase.<sup>30</sup> By 1945, the American people carpooled, walked, biked, and utilized public transportation in great numbers, dropping individual vehicle ownership to 73%.

### **The Revision of the American Perspective**

Yet, this decline showed that the most formidable factor of domestic transportation was, in fact, the freight traffic of supplies and soldiers being transported to essential training and to the frontlines. Despite the restrictive nature of the ODT, it was not heavily criticized for its reach and power compared to other agencies implemented by President Roosevelt during the war. The policies concerning public and

private transportation, even if lacking physical enforcement capabilities, did reduce unnecessary waste of highly valued materials that came from automobiles and other transportation devices.<sup>31</sup> From 1941 to 1945, the message that was successfully embedded by these agencies was that to be participating in the continual war efforts was to be a good American who “used their cars only for necessary purposes during the war, gave up the use of public forms of transportation for luxury purposes, stood patiently in line, wrote reams of letters to their boys in service, and cheerfully learned to roll their own cigarettes.”<sup>32</sup> The inconvenience of one American helped supply the needs of the soldiers and bring them home safe and sound, one at a time.

Wartime transportation is typically perceived in the context of heavy machinery in the air, land, and sea. However, in modern war, a significant part of a nation’s population is at home, living semi-normal lives, while the latter fragment is fighting for the country. The civilians left behind are subjected to a multitude of governmental changes that impede on their civil liberties, all under the guise of necessity for the war effort. The effects of war are invasive as they interfere with everyday life, even if the conflict is occurring in a completely different part of the world. While the grievance of the Office of Defense Transportations (ODT) reach was not as egregious as the powers extended by the War Relocation Authority with the carrying out Japanese internment, it is a violation all the same. The historical impact of WWII was known for rationing. Materials such as rubber, appliances, coffee, butter, and all things that were easy to secure were taken for granted during peacetime among the American people.<sup>33</sup> Yet even with the extremely prosperous, near booming war-time economy, the

restrictions on spending caused citizens to save their money after facing the doom of severe poverty during the Great Depression, obstructing the fundamental human right to pursue happiness. This violation required the federal government to get creative with implementing Joseph B. Eastman’s directives to garner public support while redefining what it meant to be an American.

## Conclusion

The Office of Defense Transportation wanted the American public on their side; enforcing compliance was undesirable when cooperation could be encouraged.<sup>34</sup> According to the ODT, unnecessary travel ranged from visiting family living far away to sporting events. Unless the form of travel contributed directly to the military or was the location of employment for the individual, it was unnecessary. Although this was met with criticism from all individuals, marketers, and advertisers who worked with the ODT and Office of War Information to frame non-cooperation as unpatriotic, citizens found solidarity in their collective sacrifice to bring the men home. Once framed as a dichotomy of the patriotic versus the Nazi sympathizers, Americans were willing to endure scarcity.<sup>35</sup> The scarcity of rubber and oil resulted in overpacked public transportation, the balding tires of automobiles, and a general endangerment of civilian safety.<sup>36</sup> American citizens altered their way of life to adapt to new government policies as the latest call to patriotic duty.

True patriots with their new American perspective saw themselves as people who contributed to the reduction of private automobile use, increased the reliance on railroads and other forms of public transportation. They also waited for peaceful times to travel “unnecessarily.”

The resilience of the American public before and during WWII is a powerful example of a collective overcoming of adversity rather than the work of a few unique individuals. The success of the Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) banked on the people's decision to support the government directives with the combined effort of the OWI, instilling an emotional appeal for a redefined American way of life in each illustration, pamphlet, and poster. While the advertisements targeted those of high socioeconomic status, policies affected every person and caused them to ask themselves, am I a true American? By generating that question in people's minds, the identity conflict was enforced, resulting in reluctant compliance with the ODT for changing domestic travel during the duration of the war.

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# A Journey of a Lifetime: An Oral History of Samuel's Life

Josephine Rusli

AMST 324: American Immigrant Cultures

This was an oral history written for Dr. Susie Woo's AMST 324: American Immigrant Cultures class. One of the assignments for the class was to conduct an oral history interview with someone who immigrated to the United States, including historical context to help readers understand the legal and social circumstances that influenced the interviewee's life. This interview aims to personalize the immigrant experience of a young man who overcame familial and financial hardships to achieve his American Dream, providing a testament to the power of resilience in the face of adversity.



Elwis Musa Tambuwun, "pedicabs waiting for customers," Banten, Indonesia, October 11, 2024, [https://unsplash.com/photos/a-black-and-white-photo-of-a-man-walking-down-a-street-GD\\_PTOK0L4A](https://unsplash.com/photos/a-black-and-white-photo-of-a-man-walking-down-a-street-GD_PTOK0L4A)

As I sat across from Samuel, I could see his eyes, though aged, sparkled with a sense of youthful vibrancy as he embarked on a journey through his memories, transporting me to a time when adventure and excitement were all he had known. My father, Samuel, was born in the bustling capital of Jakarta, Indonesia, during the 1960s, where he witnessed familial hardships, faced cultural struggles, and made tireless efforts to support his family. Throughout my childhood, I've only heard small snippets of his life before he came to America. However, it wasn't until recently that I decided to delve deeper into my father's story.

Samuel's childhood was vivid with laughter, excitement, and hopefulness as he recalled tales of adventuring through the city streets with his siblings and friends. He is the third oldest of eight children, six boys and two girls. Their home, a modest rental business property, consisted of a hair salon in the front and an apartment in the back. His mother owned a salon business, and his father owned a business selling electrical cables; they were financially stable and had relatively few economic difficulties. Some of his hobbies were listening to music, athletics, and scrapbooking. My father recounted numerous stories of his high school years and how he eagerly learned taekwondo and guitar, eventually playing in a band. Samuel expressed how his community, close-knit family, and friends were the center of his world at the time. However, while my father experienced many joys during his childhood, he described a sense of sorrow.

As he delved into his adolescence, his narrative became somber, "My sisters were adopted, the oldest when she was four and the youngest when she was an infant. We were happy; I believed it would stay that way. However, after four years, a regular at my mother's salon kidnapped

both. We never saw them again. To this day, we don't know what happened to them."<sup>1</sup> Shortly afterward, his father's business went bankrupt, and his parents divorced. From then on, Samuel lived with his mother, his two youngest brothers, and his eldest brother, while the rest of his brothers lived with his father. It's clear how this incident undeniably impacted their lives by reshaping their understanding of trust and resilience. This experience taught my father the importance of family and the power of perseverance in the face of adversity, qualities that I see in him today.

As he continued the story, Samuel noted an important cultural realization that greatly influenced his identity. He is part Dutch and part Chinese; his father is half Dutch, while his mother is Chinese, and both are well-versed in their respective cultures and languages. Samuel described how his father's ancestry was Dutch and how they came during the extensive colonization of Indonesia. According to Gert Oostindie, Indonesia gained independence from the Dutch in 1949.<sup>2</sup> This widespread colonialism that lasted for nearly 350 years culturally transformed the Indonesian archipelago as the Dutch brought their culture and language to Indonesia and blended the two cultures together.<sup>3</sup> After growing up exposed to Dutch, Chinese, and Indonesian cultures and languages, Samuel began questioning his identity during his early teenage years. Was he Dutch? Chinese? Indonesian? A mix of all three? Samuel's identity crisis fueled his desire to discover more about himself and of different cultures. This led him to become more ambitious in college and later helped with his decision to move to the US.

When he turned 21, Samuel's aunt, who had already settled in the US, extended her sponsorship to him. Presented with a golden opportunity to start a new

“  
Now, he  
lives on as  
an American  
citizen,  
using his  
experiences  
to shape  
his identity  
and redefine  
his sense of  
belonging.”

life, Samuel decided to take this chance and leave his past behind. The bankruptcy following his parents' separation ultimately left his family financially strained. Driven by the prospects of a better future and the chance to break away from their dismal living conditions, my father accepted his aunt's proposal and immediately left for the US. As he grew up believing that America was the Land of Opportunities, he hoped to make it big and gain economic stability to provide his mother and his brothers a chance at a better life.

In the winter of 1990, Samuel left his homeland and embarked on a journey to California alone. Samuel shared the difficulties he faced adapting to a new language and culture and the overwhelming sense of displacement accompanying his arrival in a foreign land. The plan to immigrate to the US was sudden, and Samuel was unprepared. He explained, “English was my biggest concern when I came over because I never anticipated that I would be living in the US.” The decision to leave, driven by the hope of new opportunities, was heavy with uncertainty. However, despite the initial struggles, my father was determined to adopt the American way of life. Perhaps, due to his background with various cultures as a Dutch-Chinese-Indonesian, he was very open to learning about American culture and was eager to assimilate into American society. My father was excited to learn and possibly discover more about different cultures and his identity. Samuel described his unwavering pursuit of better opportunities and willingness to take on jobs to support his family despite facing many limitations as an immigrant. He quickly realized that the financial and language barriers were the biggest obstacles to his success in America. Samuel's multicultural background as a Dutch-Chinese-Indonesian served as a foundation that fueled his desire to learn about American culture and expand his knowledge. After several months of settling down, Samuel applied to local community colleges to attain a higher education and learn English. He attended Santa Ana College, Orange Coast College, California State University – Fullerton, and finally graduated from the University of La Verne with an MBA in 1998. He took part-time jobs as a bagger clerk at Vons grocery store and a security guard while attending college.



Despite the obstacles he had to overcome, Samuel sincerely believed that immigrating to the US made him a stronger person. He now holds a position as a financial analyst at a prestigious tech company and is fluent in writing, speaking, and reading English professionally. Samuel conveyed, “By coming to the US, I received a good education and obtained the job I have now. If I had stayed in Indonesia, I probably would not have learned English and might not have my high-paying job right now... It truly was a journey that changed my life.” Although Samuel greatly appreciated obtaining a better financial situation and education, he also spoke of the community’s power and his friends’ kindness. He found support among fellow immigrants and forged bonds with many people of different backgrounds. Samuel left his homeland as an immigrant, filled with uncertainty and apprehension. Now, he lives on as an American citizen, using his experiences to shape his identity and redefine his sense of belonging.

Throughout this interview, I deeply respected my father’s willingness to share his story and gained a newfound appreciation for his experiences. Listening to these firsthand accounts paints a unique portrait of immigrant life, helping me connect to my heritage and redefining my perception of the American Dream. Samuel’s story exemplifies how immigration is not just a word with one definition but holds different shades of meaning. Immigration is not just the act of coming from one place to another; immigration signifies a profound experience of finding oneself and one’s sense of identity and belonging. Immigration can be voluntary, as it is with Samuel, or involuntarily, as it is with many others who were forced to come to a foreign country through imprisonment or slavery. My father’s story from Indonesia to America portrays how one’s sense of belonging can be established anywhere, regardless of birthplace. Samuel’s oral history is a testament to the complexities of a single immigrant experience, providing one story amongst a vast collection of narratives. One can only imagine the hardships many, like my father, faced on their immigration journey. As a daughter of an immigrant, I realized that stories like my father’s are crucial for amplifying the voices of minority groups and fostering awareness beyond stereotypes and propaganda. Ultimately, Samuel’s narrative teaches us to embrace new beginnings with strength, resilience, and an open mind.

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# Ady Barkan: The Fight Continues for Universal Healthcare

Jamie Blanke

AMST 390: Disability in American Culture

What I want readers to take away from Ady Barkan's story is that even when you are facing enormous personal challenges you can still make the world a better place. Ady fought his whole life to help others. He will always be remembered for his fight for universal healthcare. He knew that he was extremely privileged to have support that provided him with 24-hour care. Ady could have given up and said "I have everything I need." Instead, he used his voice to speak for those who were marginalized. He knew when to step back and let others shine. I want readers to honor his memory by doing one good deed for someone they do not know.



*Photo of Ady Barkan, August 22, 2019, from Elizabeth Warren's Flickr,  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/67490171@N05/49640332683>*

Ady Barkan was born in Boston, Massachusetts on December 18, 1983. His mother, Diana L. Kormos-Buchwald is from Romania and is currently a professor of history of science at the California Institute of Technology. His father immigrated from Israel and is a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University. His family moved to Claremont, California when he was a small child. Barkan said that while he has dual Israeli citizenship, he was raised secular. From an early age activism was his calling. He protested anti-LGBTQ legislation while in high school. That was the first time he used his voice to persuade people to see one another as equals in the fight for justice.<sup>1</sup>

Barkan attended Columbia College and graduated *cum laude* in 2006. While there he met his wife, Rachael King. Barkan served as the communications director for the failed campaign of Victoria Wells Wulsin who was running on the Democratic ticket for a congressional district in Cincinnati, Ohio. He then earned his Juris Doctor from Yale Law School in 2010. After college, he moved to New York and clerked for Judge Shira Scheindlin of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York where he worked on immigrant legal rights. Following his clerkship, he then worked for the Center for Popular Democracy. While there he worked to help pass the \$15 minimum wage bill in New York in 2013 and Seattle in 2014. At the same time, he started the Fed Up campaign in 2012.<sup>2</sup> The Fed Up campaign is where Ady learned the fundamentals of how to organize. The goal of Fed Up was to convince the Federal Reserve to focus not just on inflation but on full employment. Having a tight labor market means that workers are in a stronger position to fight for higher wages,

better working conditions, and benefits. In times of full employment people of color and people who are disabled tend to see a larger expansion of employment and higher incomes. Employers are forced to hire those who they might not otherwise consider employing. Ady was able to use his connections while working in Washington DC to meet with Janet Yellen, the Fed Chair. Due to his advocacy, Yellen established the Open Market Committee which was dedicated to full employment. This shift in Fed policy towards promoting full employment, and not just inflation improved the lives of tens of millions of workers.<sup>3</sup> Later in his life, Ady said that if he had ten more years, he would want to rebuild the labor movement. “I think we need to politicize a lot more people and get them to take radical, disruptive action in their own self-interest. Labor organizing is the best way we’ve done that, historically.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2016, at the age of thirty-two, Barkan felt weakness in his left hand. He was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a terminal neurodegenerative condition. As the disease progresses patients become paralyzed in the arms and legs and lose the ability to speak, chew, swallow, and eventually breathe. His prognosis was three to four years. Four months earlier Barkan said he was the “luckiest and happiest person.” His wife had just given birth to their first child Carl and landed her dream job as an English professor at UC Santa Barbara.<sup>5</sup> Barkan said that the first week was atrocious:

I struggled to grapple with the fact that while my world was upended, life around me continued on. There came a point when I realized that asking “Why me?” was

not a productive or helpful endeavor. My diagnosis is unjust, but the world is, too. Millions of people meet fates far worse than mine simply by circumstance of their birth. It isn't fair or good or right, but I started to have more of a sense of perspective. Yes, I had received a death sentence, but it renewed my passion and commitment to reducing injustice elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

Barkan's new fight was with insurance companies:

I knew our health care system was broken before my diagnosis, but having a serious illness clarified just how cruel our system really is. My insurance denied me a ventilator, stating that it was experimental, and then two weeks after that, they rejected access to an FDA-approved ALS drug. Even good health insurance, which I have, does not cover the cost of the care I need to survive. Paying out of pocket would have left us bankrupt.<sup>7</sup>

He had to sue his insurance company multiple times in federal court to get coverage and access to the healthcare services he needs. After his battle, he was determined that no other person should have to sue to get the healthcare they need.<sup>8</sup>

He started to go to Congress to meet with members to advocate for universal healthcare. It was while traveling that he was recognized by activist Lizz Jaff. She had seen that Senator Jeff Flake

(R-AZ) was also on their flight. She convinced Barkan to confront Flake on the plane about the proposed 2017 tax cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. She would record their conversation and post it on social media.<sup>9</sup> In the video, Senator Flake disparages Barkan and will not commit to vote no. Barkan repeatedly asks him to "Be A Hero." The video went viral online gaining millions of views which resulted in thousands of phone calls to members of Congress to vote no. Their advocacy would fail as Flake and the Republicans all voted Yes.<sup>10</sup>

Barkan did not let this failure keep him down. He started the political action campaign, Be A Hero. He would rent an RV and meet with every Republican in a swing district that voted yes on the tax bill. He recorded the interactions and posted the videos online. Barkan traveled to twenty-two states in 40 days. At each stop, he met with local activists and held seminars on how to confront local politicians. Barkan helped train thousands of people in the theories of organizing and how to utilize social media as a marketing tool for a cause.<sup>11</sup>

In the final days of the tour, Justice Brett Kavanaugh was being considered for the Supreme Court. Barkan saw the possibility of having six conservative justices as the end to ever achieving universal healthcare. Barkan rented an accessible RV and invited disabled activists to travel with him to Washington DC to persuade senators not to confirm Kavanaugh. During the hearings, it was revealed that Kavanaugh sexually assaulted Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. Barkan immediately changed his campaign from healthcare reform to advocacy for survivors. He used his resources and name to get meetings with senators. He would then leave the room

and allow survivors to enter the room to share their stories. This would leave members of Congress feeling bamboozled, but the tactic worked. Again, after all the hard work that Barkan and thousands of other activists put into it, Kavanaugh was confirmed.<sup>12</sup>

Barkan would see the fruits of his labor finally succeed in the 2018 midterm elections. Almost every Congress member that he confronted lost their seat that year. This would give him the fuel to continue the fight. However, Barkan was also growing weaker. The nationwide tour took a tremendous toll on his body. He was struggling to speak. He finally decided to use Tobii EyeMobile Plus, which tracks the location of his pupil, allowing him to type on a Microsoft tablet that is attached to his wheelchair.<sup>13</sup> The first time he would speak without his real voice was in the first-ever Congressional panel devoted to a discussion of Medicare for All. He made the case that the United States is the wealthiest nation on earth and can afford universal Medicare, the problem is the political will.<sup>14</sup> After this appearance Be A Hero PAC began working with NowThis News and Crooked Media to interview every 2020 presidential candidate.<sup>15</sup>

The first candidate to be interviewed was Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT). In the ten-minute video, they discuss policies such as Sanders's plan to cancel \$81 billion in existing past-due medical debt. Further in the interview, they discuss what fatherhood has meant to them and what legacy they hope to leave behind for their children. Sanders responded,

In terms of your legacy, Ady, I think it will be very clear that even with the terrible illness that you're struggling with right now, that you didn't

give up, that you understood that, especially given your illness, that you could play a significant role in rallying the American people toward a sane and humane health care system, and I think you will be remembered in very, very wonderful ways as a man of great courage in doing that.<sup>16</sup>

Barkan would interview New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, California Sen. Kamala Harris, former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro, Businessman Andrew Yang, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke and finally former Vice President Joe Biden. Barkan at this time did not endorse any of the candidates. (He would later endorse Warren, Sanders, and then Biden.) He felt his role was to inform Americans about the issues.

Thirty-second sound bites and canned talking points just don't cut it when it comes to the crisis of tens of millions uninsured or out of control prescription drug prices. People deserve better, and that's why I'm trying to host a different kind of conversation: one that pushes candidates beyond talking points and to get personal and specific about one of the biggest crises in our society.<sup>17</sup>

However, the filming was exhausting for him. Barkan was forced to postpone his interview with Mayor Pete Buttigieg after having difficulty breathing which turned his feet blue. He spent two nights in the

hospital to recover. Having at-home nurses 24/7 helped him recover fast but at an expense of \$9,000 a month which is unfeasible for most Americans.<sup>18</sup>

One of the last fights that Barkan participated in was in advocating for home care, Medicare for All, and support for Joe Biden’s Build Back Better Act. Barkan stated, “I believe in fully funding home- and community-based services, everyone deserves to live safely and with dignity, among people they love. I get to live a beautiful and full life with my family and watch my kids grow up because of home care.”<sup>19</sup> Without home healthcare Barkan would have been in a nursing facility. Most insurance companies only cover home health care for a few weeks. Most people with diseases like ALS do not qualify for home care homecare due to their expensive premiums. Medicare does not cover at-home care either.<sup>20</sup> Barkan was able to afford his nurses with the help of actor and activist Bradley Whitford.

Whitford would produce the documentary *Not Going Quietly* about Barkan’s Be A Hero 2018 nationwide tour. Barkan wrote the book, *Eyes to the Wind: A Memoir of Love and Death, Hope and Resistance* because he wanted his children to remember him.<sup>21</sup> Barkan passed away on November 1, 2023. He was able to see Carl play his first basketball game and live long enough for his second child Willow to have some memories of her father:

I want Carl and Willow to know who I am. I want them to know that I love them, and I cherish the life they will live, and the world they will create for themselves. I’ve tried to leave behind a multigenerational movement for justice born out of solidarity and community.<sup>22</sup>

*Politico Magazine* would name Ady Barkan the “Most powerful activist in America” in 2019.<sup>23</sup>

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# *The End of the Trail:* How a Genocidal War Prize Became an American Staple

Vyvyana Woolridge

AMST 502T: Graduate Research Seminar on Public Memory

This paper was written for Professor Elaine Lewinnek's AMST 502T course on public memory in American culture. Written as an original research project, this paper examines the statue *The End of the Trail* by James Earle Fraser and how its legacy stands as a trophy of white cowboy culture, while simultaneously representing the perpetual pain brought onto Native communities that have been affected by the expansion of American civilization. I hope that the reader can walk away with a renewed perspective on statues and memorial sites, remembering that some of the most important take aways are not the stories that are being memorialized, but rather the histories that are being silenced in the process.

Historical monuments and statues tell incredibly interesting stories. However, it is not always clear whose stories are told and whose are silenced. These monuments are meant to help the masses remember what took place in history, but as anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot explains, "the ways in which what happened and that which is said to have happened are and are not the same may itself be historical."<sup>1</sup> In American history, Native Americans suffered tremendously under European

rule as they fell victim to diseases, lies, and colonization. For a long time, very little was done to bring these heinous acts to light and instill a change. Although some statues and memorials commemorate the perils Native Americans have gone through, it is not always clear if these monuments tell the whole truth. History may have gotten lost in translation because "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences."<sup>2</sup> These pieces may bring awareness to Native Americans today, but they don't always





Figure 1. *The End of the Trail* postcard, image from Vampire Maman, <https://vampiremaman.com/2022/06/01/artwork-from-the-1915-pan-pacific-expo-san-francisco-california/>

take into account America's actions—from broken treaties to mass genocide. Art is a beneficial tool to bring awareness and promote memory of an incident, and it is also crucial to the ethical work that comes along with fostering what professor and novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen referred to as “just memory.”<sup>3</sup> The statue *The End of the Trail* by James Earl Fraser symbolizes the effects of American colonization as well as the consequences of expansion across the Western frontier.

*The End of the Trail* (figure 1) portrays a Native American man sitting on top of a horse. For this piece, Fraser used Chief John Big Tree, a chief for the Seneca Nation, as a model.<sup>4</sup> Fraser also utilized Chief Big Tree as his model for the Buffalo nickel, which is considered a collector's item in American society today. In the statue, the man exudes an aura of defeat, pain, and immense sorrow. These feelings are not only depicted in the man's body language, with his shoulders

slumped, his head facing downwards, and his spear down by his waist as if he has no energy to fight anymore, but also in the horse he is riding which demonstrates similar emotions. The duality of the Native American man and the horse that he is on expressing the same deep and painful emotions was strategically executed to have an impact on its audience. The question is: who is the intended audience? And what is the statue meant to represent?

This sculpture was created by Fraser in Chicago in 1894. At this time, cowboy culture took the nation by storm. Although Native American populations were already on a steady decline due to colonization by Spaniards and Europeans, disease, and mass genocide, the rise of cowboy culture and its pro-white sentiments aided in the demise of Native populations even further. The statue did not gain great fame until it was presented at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, California, in 1915. Since then, this statue has been extremely commodified and recreated by other artists. It has been restored to preserve its beauty and even put on display in the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. White keepers of American cowboy culture glorify the statue and see it as extremely valuable—but it is not seen in the same positive light by Native American communities. To them, the statue can represent an offensive depiction that perpetuates ideas of Native Americans as helpless and vanishing individuals who are simply put on display for others to watch and analyze. Fraser's piece harmfully freezes Native Americans in the past and depicts them as perpetually defeated victims of colonization. It also serves as a reminder

of what Native people had to go through in history and that white Americans are constantly seen as the victors. This interpretation does not leave room for Native Americans to break out of the tropes and stereotypes that have been created for them.

In this paper, I will analyze *The End of the Trail* statue, focusing on its creation in the nineteenth century through its impact in the present. Since its debut, the statue has gained great popularity. Multiple replicas have been recreated in smaller sizes in order to be mass produced and widely distributed. When I saw this statue a few months ago, it was the first time I ever came across it, so the large demand for this piece was surprising and led me to ask many questions. I wondered—why is this statue so popular? How and why do so many people love this imagery of a Native American man that appears to be so defeated? How could someone be happy about a piece of work that symbolizes so much sorrow?

To demonstrate how white American cowboy culture perpetuates the practice of colonialism against Native American peoples, I will begin this paper with background information about the early stages of frontier formation in the U.S. Then, I will look at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition that was held in San Francisco, California, in 1915. This is intended to give perspective on the purpose and overall goal of the Exposition, as well as why this event helped bring much popularity to Fraser’s piece. After, I will look at the creation of American cowboy culture and how the cowboy as an American hero contributes to the trope of the “Vanishing Indian.” Following this section, we will hear from Native voices to gain insight into their

perspectives on the statue and learn how they feel about its representation of Native people. To conclude this paper, I will look at the ways in which this statue is still heavily commodified, sought out, and reappropriated in today’s society. I will also look at the implications that come along with this type of commodification and how these effects keep colonization practices against Native communities alive.

In order to explain the harmful nature of *The End of the Trail* statue, I will look at how Curtis Evan Hendrickson utilized Marita Sturken’s framework to analyze and understand “how seemingly harmless or innocent objects construct public memory in a way that masks colonial violence.”<sup>5</sup> The statue also demonstrates how “colonial powers have laid claim to public memory through forced assimilation, criminalizing indigenous cultural norms and performances, and controlling the archival memory of native peoples.”<sup>6</sup> This statue serves two different purposes for two different groups of people. To the white keepers of American cowboy culture, the statue sits as a trophy and a constant reminder that American cowboys were able to forcefully impose their power upon a group of people and violently steal their land. However, to Native Americans the statue has a whole different meaning, standing as a constant reminder of what they went through in history and how they are portrayed as frozen in the past. When one specific item, such as a statue, is created to commemorate a particular time in history, Trouillot states that “it imposes a silence upon all events surrounding the one being marked.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, throughout this paper, I will be striving to bring awareness to the silences and misconceptions that are brought on

by *The End of the Trail*, as well as how this statue allows for the colonization enacted by white Americans to continue to affect Native American populations in America today.

### **Westward Expansion and the Creation of the Frontier**

The creation of the frontier through Westward expansion was a very intentional move by white American pioneers. As these new Americans made strides to break away from their mother country of England, they needed to establish new ways to make a name for themselves and become their own powerful entity. One of the most influential theories that helped to establish ideas about the American frontier was Frederick Jackson Turner's paper "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."<sup>8</sup> He presented his work at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, and this moment became known as what professor Robert Rydell referred to as a "defining event for America's young historical profession."<sup>9</sup> The idea of the Western frontier was a very strategic one as well. In Turner's piece he explains: "At first, the frontier was the Atlantic coast. It was the frontier of Europe in a very real sense. Moving westward, the frontier became more and more American."<sup>10</sup> One of the main obstacles that came along with expansion, however, was the fact that the lands were already inhabited by Native Americans. In order to justify the removal of Native people from the land, whether forcibly or through treaties, Turner described the frontier as the meeting point between "savagery and civilization."<sup>11</sup> Framing Native Americans in a primitive state centered around savagery justified any acts deemed necessary to continue the expansion of the frontier, no

matter how these actions would lead to the demise of Native Americans.

This constant expansion to the West and its effects on Native people is exactly what prompted Fraser to create his statue *The End of the Trail*. Growing up on the Dakota frontier, he constantly heard stories from those around him that "the poor Indians would be driven into the Pacific Ocean" due to Westward expansion and the forging of American character.<sup>12</sup> Although Turner's piece was very influential on its own as it established how one could create and practice American character on the frontier, his ideas were later reinforced by Theodore Roosevelt. In 1896, Roosevelt wrote an essay called "The Winning of the West" where he discussed how "the American race" was created on the frontier. In this piece, Roosevelt even justified the process of defeating Native Americans to create a more successful and "higher American civilization."<sup>13</sup> The frontier ideals originally uttered by Turner and further emphasized and made concrete by Roosevelt later allowed the trope of the "vanishing Indian" to come alive.

Turner's and Roosevelt's ideas were further reinforced by artwork, literature, and media that became popular during this time. One of the most well-known pieces is *American Progress* by John Gast. This painting, which still circulates today, was created in 1872 and encompasses popular sentiments of the century. In figure 2, we can see a woman wearing a flowy white gown that provides her with an angelic aura. With a book in her hand titled "school book," she demonstrates that newly created white American ideals, traditions, and knowledge will be spread across the land. This woman is leading American pioneers and new technologies in their westward

expansion, and behind them, the image is



Figure 2. Lithograph, “California Invites the World’

bright. However, in front of the woman we see Native Americans and bison that are depicted in darkness running away from American progress.

The shift from light areas of American progression to the darkness where Native people live was an intentional decision made by Gast that captures attitudes that were on the rise at this time. The antithesis of the light and dark insinuates that Americans are bringing light and knowledge as they move across the frontier, stealing more and more land from the Indigenous populations that were already established in these lands. The darkness surrounding the Natives portrays them as primitive, living in savagery, less knowledgeable, and inferior compared to the white Americans that are coming after them. American progress was an especially important concept in this era, as the U.S. was striving to establish its own empire through acquiring land, separating themselves from their mother country of Great Britain. Artwork, displays, and memorials are all effective ways

of creating public memories, and both Fraser’s and Gast’s work have helped to solidify the public memory of the frontier and Westward expansion. Metaphorically and visually, *American Progress* demonstrates the initial formation of American civilization and land domination. Meanwhile, *The End of the Trail* depicts how those Natives that were running from the light in Gast’s work have been officially defeated by American civilization. The statue *The End of the Trail* by James Earle Fraser was extremely influential at this time as well when it came to solidifying Turner’s theories. The statue gained great acclaim at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition in 1915, but one must understand how impactful this exposition was to fully understand the magnitude of this artwork’s influence.



Figure 3. Lithograph, “California Invites the World’, Panama–Pacific International Exposition San Francisco, Cal. U.S.A. 1915,” priJLC\_FAIR\_001712, Jay T. Last Collection of American View Prints, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

### **Panama–Pacific International Exposition**

World's fairs, also known as international expositions, began to be held in various parts of the world in 1851. The first world's fair was called the London Crystal Palace Exhibition, and it highlighted ideas centered around nationalism, imperialism, expansion, and industrialism.<sup>14</sup> The purpose of American cities such as Chicago, New York, San Diego, and San Francisco holding these large expositions was essentially to share ideas "that hammered home to tens of millions of Americans the fundamental lesson that America's national reconstruction was on course and that the United States was well on the way toward becoming a global power. President William McKinley [stated] the central theme of these fairs when he termed them 'time-keepers of progress.'"<sup>15</sup> Expositions were the perfect time to exalt and uplift the U.S., and this was done by showing "primitive" groups of people in exhibits like one would see at a zoo. This was strategically done to freeze these people in time while also making them dependent upon their colonizers for direction, keeping them still under colonial rule. Although these events took place for short periods of time, they were still extremely impactful due to the large number of participants. America was able to garner many supporters and spectators to these events, as their marketing campaigns strove to "invite the world," as seen in Figure 3. The image in Figure 3 also shows similarities to Gast's work *American Progress* as it echoes similar principles of white American pioneers taking over the land and building a strong nation. Expositions had a substantial number of attendees and participants. This helped strengthen the newly

formulated narrative of America becoming a strong, independent nation because "the greater the number of participants in a celebration, the stronger the allusion to the multitude of witnesses for whom the mythicized event is supposed to have meant something from day one."<sup>16</sup> This sentiment held true in 1915 when the Panama–Pacific International Exposition took place, as well as in the present. The belief that America is a great global power still rings true today, which can be seen with the practice of holidays that generate a strong sense of patriotism such as the 4th of July.

The World's Fair in San Francisco, which was known as the Panama–Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), was held from February 19, 1915, to December 4, 1915. The event served as an incredibly important exposition to display how America was becoming a global power by acquiring land in other parts of the globe, in addition to the immediate surrounding lands that had been stolen from Native Americans. Shortly before this event, America's negotiations in the Spanish–American War of 1898 allowed for "U.S. victory in the war [to] produce a peace treaty that compelled the Spanish to relinquish claims on Cuba, and to cede sovereignty over Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines to the United States. The United States also annexed the independent state of Hawaii during the conflict."<sup>17</sup> Acquiring these lands shortly before the PPIE worked very well in Americans' favor because not only were they able to display their "manly will and technological know-how over the savage and uncivilized landscape" of the Panama Canal, but they were also able to display all of the lands they had just obtained from the war.<sup>18</sup> The purpose of the PPIE was to demonstrate how America was



its domination by colonizing other lands and peoples outside of North America, and the new possession of lands such as Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii helped to reinforce these sentiments even further. This presentation of new lands in American possession helped to reinforce Turner's ideas of the frontier being the "line of most rapid and effective Americanization."<sup>19</sup>

In order to demonstrate and emphasize American domination over other countries and groups of people, the PPIE set up exhibits where, as professor Sarah J. Moore explains, Native Americans were forced to be "the object of aestheticized colonialist gaze—frozen in a primitive, premodern, and preindustrialized time and landscape."<sup>20</sup> This can be seen in figures 4 and 5, which are advertisements for the PPIE. The utilization of Native Americans on the advertisements is an example of how Native people are not seen as human beings, but rather they are exploited for America's profit. Figure 4 specifically showcases Chief Big Tree, who was the model for *The End of the Trail* sculpture. This ad talks about how Chief Big Tree participates in Wild West shows and lives in a tepee. This is an example of how the PPIE was exploitative, as its "native inhabitants are re-created, visually and textually, in soothingly nostalgic terms and as an aestheticized tourist spectacle of a vanishing world whose demise the railroad assured." Moore explains how these displays play into ideas of the "vanishing Indian," stating: "the life of the vanishing race' underscored the prevailing assumption of the imminent and inevitable extinction of native cultures as a price of measurement and progress."<sup>21</sup>

The exploitative and colonialist

nature of the exhibits presented at these world's fairs helps to demonstrate how Fraser's statue fits in perfectly with the essence and mission of the PPIE. It helped to bolster the idea that Native Americans were primitive compared to the white American pioneers who were creating a name for themselves and establishing their dominance over the world. *The End of the Trail* was created with the intent to show how the Westward expansion of the American frontier was driving Native



Figure 4. "Original of 'End Of The Trail' Statue Found at Exposition," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 13, 1915.



Figure 5. "Panama-Pacific International Exposition 1915: Salient Facts About the World's Celebration," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 6, 1914.

communities to the brink of extinction, the end of the world. As Moore states, the “inevitable extinction of native cultures [is the] price of measurement and progress, and that is why Fraser’s statue sits as a trophy for white keepers of American cowboy culture.”<sup>22</sup> *The End of the Trail* is a symbol of American success, expansion, and colonization over Indigenous cultures.

### **James Earle Fraser and the Creation of Cowboy Culture**

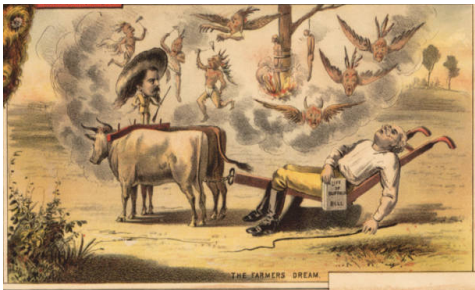
James Earle Fraser was a designer and artist born in Winona, Minnesota. When he was only four years old, his family moved to the Dakota Territory near the town of Mitchell, which is in present day South Dakota. His father worked as a civil engineer in charge of building the railroads.<sup>23</sup> The time Fraser spent on the Dakota prairie was extremely critical to his imagination and led to several pieces of artwork that are still American staples today. Fraser is most well-known for the Buffalo nickel and *The End of the Trail* statue, and these pieces were both influenced by his early years on the frontier.<sup>24</sup> During his time on the plains, he had the opportunity to be in close contact with Native Americans from the Greater Plains region such as the Oceti Sakowin Oyate (People of the Seven Council Fires, also called the Sioux tribe), which includes the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota. Not only was he exposed to them firsthand, but he also heard “stories [that] were often told of the danger of Indians.”<sup>25</sup> As a result of Fraser’s time on the Dakota frontier, he associated himself with the experiences and the title of “cowboy,” thus influencing his personally perceived privilege to be a spokesman for Native Americans. Not only did Fraser feel qualified to be a spokesperson for Natives, but he and many others also considered him a representative and role model for

American cowboys. Fraser’s experiences on the frontier gave him validity with his white audience. This is harmful because even though he had experience living amongst Native Americans, this did not grant him the right to speak for Native people. Through art and media at this time, the symbol of the cowboy exploded and took the nation by storm. Many individuals—from people like Fraser, who lived on the frontier, to Teddy Roosevelt, the eventual president of the United States—identified themselves as being cowboys. What is it that made the idea of being a cowboy so intriguing at this time, and why was it important to perpetuate this new character in American history?

### **Creation of Cowboy Culture and Ideals**

The cowboy has become a symbol of American culture that is often directly linked to ideas about the “Wild West.” The creation of this character has reinforced Turner and Roosevelt’s opinions about the frontier and the call for individuals to help aid in the creation and protection of the frontier. Contrary to the popular belief that cowboys are typically white men, white American cowboys didn’t begin to emerge until 1860, after the Civil War. Some of the first cowboys recorded in history were “vaqueros” of Mexican descent. In *The Real American Cowboy*, Jack Weston says that “one out of three or four cowboys during the cowboy era was either Black or Mexicano.”<sup>26</sup> The idea of the cowboy originally started when these individuals took up cattle ranching, which was seen as a form of work. This is why it is interesting that American cowboys are now associated with whiteness when a large portion of the original cowboys were often men of color. The whitewashing of cowboys began in the late 1800s and

early 1900s, erasing these cowboys of color from history. One example of this erasure can be found in Weston's piece when he explains how George W. Saunders began a fraternal organization in 1915 for white men who trailed cattle. Although there were roughly 35,000 men who trailed with herds at this time, with approximately one-third of them being Black or Mexican, because of their race and Texas Jim Crow laws, these men were excluded from obtaining membership into Saunder's association.<sup>27</sup>



Figures 6 and 7. Lithographs, “Buffalo Bill’s New Drama: 20 Days or Buffalo Bill’s Pledge.” priJLC\_ENT\_001344, The Jay T. Last Collection of Graphic Arts and Social History, Huntington Digital Library, San Marino, CA

Cowboys could not become an American staple as long as they were racially diverse because this was contradictory to the sentiments of the time. The “Real American Cowboy,” as Weston calls him, needed to become white in order to be seen as a true American hero—and one of the main figures who helped reshape

ideas about the cowboy was Buffalo Bill.

The American cowboy as a white male figure was solidified with the creation of Buffalo Bill, whose real name is William F. Cody. Buffalo Bill became widely known for his traveling shows where he performed what it meant to be a cowboy, often utilizing Native Americans in the process. This was strategically done not only to create a sense of realness, but also to cast the “Indian” as the enemy in these shows. However, although these Native Americans were included to provide a sense of authenticity, it was hypocritical for Buffalo Bill to claim that these individuals were dangerous beings while simultaneously employing and exploiting them for the white American pioneer narrative that he created. To provide further context, author and professor of sociology Eva Marie Garrouette explains how many Natives, including Lakota Sioux chief Sitting Bull, participated in these Wild West shows, where they were depicted in “staged battles [where] they assaulted wagon trains, fired off volleys of arrows, and displayed impressive equestrian skills.”<sup>28</sup> These shows became widely popular and were an entertainment staple at the time, playing a significant role in the formation of frontier mythology, as well as the idea of the cowboy as a hero and protector of the Wild West frontier.<sup>29</sup>

Media plays a huge role in a society’s beliefs and perceptions of groups of people. The depiction of Native Americans as aggressive attackers heavily influenced the perceptions that white Americans had about Native Americans. This made it easier for white American cowboy culture to perpetuate colonization against Native Americans without receiving negative backlash from society. Since Indians were seen as villains that



threatened American civility, American cowboys were exalted as heroes.<sup>30</sup> This ideology reinforces Turner's frontier mythology and Roosevelt's call for action to protect the frontier, as Native Americans are portrayed as a perpetual threat to the frontier established by white pioneers. This can be seen in figure 6, a poster promoting one of Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" shows. Figure 7 provides a close-up image of the poster to reveal how Buffalo Bill protects a farmer from the "devilish" looking Native Americans, depicted with horns on their heads, that are attempting to attack and kill him in his dream. The constant reinforcement of the idea that Native people are dangerous threats to Americans and American civilization makes it acceptable for cowboys to protect their country, even at the expense of Native American lives.

The constant villainization of Native Americans, depicting them as a threat to American progress and civilization, and the positioning of white cowboys as the protectors and saviors of American civilization helps to explain how *The End of the Trail* by Fraser became a staple of cowboy culture. The statue can be viewed as a trophy that symbolizes how white American cowboys were heroes protecting their land from Native Americans, who were perceived to be savages. Similar to how professor and novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen analyzed and critiqued individual's biased perspectives on war history, it is also common for individuals to remember their own group in history as being "noble, virtuous, suffering, and sacrificial," and these are the exact sentiments that are created through these Wild West shows and reinforced by Fraser's statue.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Native Plight in America and the Formation of Indian Tropes**

Cowboy culture has been created through the formation of the frontier and the creation of Western figures, as well as by simultaneously eliminating the presence of Native Americans. American cowboys play a significant role in the formation of the frontier because they are seen as one of the main forces that "protects" the frontier and maintains these newly colonized American lands. American cowboy culture plays a large role in the continuation of the "vanishing Indian" trope. This is not an accident, but rather an extremely strategic move for the preservation of America and American identity. For American domination to persist and stay alive, it was critical for Native Americans to "Vanish because they were a threat or an impediment to the colonial settlers... Their continued existence as a separate population is a constant reminder of the foreignness" of American immigrants.<sup>32</sup> Native Americans were viewed as a barrier and obstruction to the progression of white expansion, therefore, white American settlers set out to make them vanish not only physically, but metaphorically.<sup>33</sup> This is why the formation of Indians as villains and white American cowboys as heroes in history is so important. Reporter Greg O'Brien discusses the impact of these stereotypes and tropes by explaining how "Such images played on Euro-Americans' fears and distorted reality while simultaneously justifying ill treatment of Indians."<sup>34</sup> In order to diminish Native American presence, which would allow Americans to tell stories about Native people without them being present, boarding schools were created that attempted to "kill the Indian, [and] save the man." In the

book *Education for Extinction*, David Wallace Adams states “the boarding school, whether on or off the reservation, was the institutional manifestation of the government’s determination to completely restructure the Indians; minds and personalities.”<sup>35</sup> If Native Americans have their language, culture, and identity stripped away from them, then it becomes easier for American society to state that they are “vanishing” as a people. Boarding schools served as a way for Native Americans to be diminished as a people either physically (through murders), or figuratively by having their culture and language violently stripped away. There is also much harm in stating that a group of people are “vanishing” because it strips away their independence and ability to stand up for themselves. When the main narrative shoves Native people into a box and steals their autonomy to speak for themselves, then it is easier for Native Americans to be dehumanized, molded, and utilized for America’s benefit.

American culture has an extensive history of appropriating Native American cultures for selfish purposes. From sports teams to mascots to weaponry used in the military, Native Americans have been minimized to tropes, stereotypes, and even mythical creatures who are viewed as two-dimensional figures, not human beings. This is further explained in the book *The White Man’s Indian* by Robert Berkhofer, who explains that “at no time has the Indian in popular culture ever been developed into an actual person. Instead, he invariably lacks complexity, motive, personality, or other individualizing features. The result is an infinite possibility, a metaphor that can be employed to give substance to the most starkly diverse ideas. Because the Indian is simply a container to be filled,

he can be used interchangeably as, for instance, the symbol of savagery and as the symbol of primal innocence.”<sup>36</sup> When Native Americans are utilized simply as a container and have tropes prescribed to them, this has long-lasting harmful effects on Native Americans because it strips away their humanity and makes them into an object.

Although the trope of the “vanishing Indian” is not accurate and there are still many Native Americans alive and present in America, their spirits have been tainted by the grief, loss, and ignorance that comes along with these harmful stereotypes.<sup>37</sup> One example of this trope in full effect can be seen in figure 8, which is an ad from the *San Francisco Chronicle* from June 15, 1915, with an image of three Native American men adorned in traditional feathers and cultural attire. The ad states: “See the Glacier Park INDIAN POW WOW NORTH GARDENS, EXPOSITION.” In the description, the ad says, “Never before and probably never again will

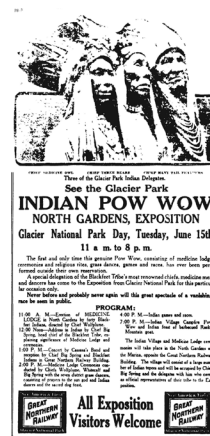


Figure 8. “Display Ad 18,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 15, 1915, page 5, from ProQuest Historical Newspapers Database.

this great spectacle of a vanishing race be seen in public.”<sup>38</sup> This type of rhetoric reinforced stereotypes surrounding Native Americans. This also stigmatized Native American existence and humanity because by placing Native people in a perpetual state of “near extinction,” the mass culture views them as a spectacle and mythical, not normal humans.

The creation of *The End of the Trail* statue by James Earle Fraser was just one of many examples of the perpetuation of Indian tropes at the time. This statue perpetuates the trope of the “vanishing Indian” and plays into the “Columbian Discovery narrative” as well.<sup>39</sup> When Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas and encountered Native peoples, he spoke down about them, belittling their existence. This is an ongoing sentiment that was established and consistently shared at the Chicago World’s Fair and the Panama–Pacific International Exposition, which showcased tropes such as the “vanishing Indian” in order to exalt white Americans taking over lands and peoples around them. The vanishing Indian trope does something similar because “as a metaphor, Vanishing Indian imagery implied that Native people were unprepared for ... ‘civilized’ life and thus needed help and protection from well-meaning whites.”<sup>40</sup> *The End of the Trail* appears to bring awareness to the atrocities brought onto Natives, who are perceived as a vanishing race; however, this simplistic depiction of history “actively silence[s] the violent colonial past of the United States.”<sup>41</sup> Although the statue is presented as a piece that memorializes the Natives’ plight, it is doing more harm by freezing them in a moment in time, a moment of perpetual defeat. This makes it seem as though Native Americans are a weak

people, in a constant state of being dominated. The Native man on the horse is all by himself, no women or children present. Women and children help to represent new beginnings and hope for a future. However, not including them in the piece symbolizes that there is no hope for procreation or the continuation of the Native bloodline. Taking away a man’s ability to create life and continue his bloodline is emasculating, and Fraser has fully disparaged this Native man through this statue. This further reinforces the vanishing Indian trope, with Fraser’s piece painting Native Americans as a spectacle to be seen and memorialized, not actual people that should be allowed to speak for themselves, tell their stories, and live their lives. As long as this trope is continuously revived and practiced, and as long as Native people are unable to tell their own stories, their culture will continue to be lost and the lies about them as a people will continue to be told.<sup>42</sup> This is why it is imperative to not only see this statue from the perspective of the white keepers of American cowboy culture, but to hear the opinions of the victimized Native Americans as well.

This work by Fraser garners much support from his white audience that helps to perpetuate white cowboy culture. However, the main subject depicted in this statue is a Native American, so therefore, there should be feedback from these communities as well. As discussed earlier, the Panama–Pacific International Exposition was a place where America was able to place itself up on a pedestal compared to the rest of the world. However, to demonstrate their dominance over other groups of people, white Americans often placed Native Americans on display, forcing them to become an “aestheticized tourist

“

It also made me realize that I would never have gone further into learning more about the statue if I didn't have to, so how many other people make assumptions about this piece and don't take the time to learn more?

”

spectacle of a vanishing world.”<sup>43</sup> During these displays, Native people were not allowed to speak up for themselves, but rather they were pawns in the continuation of the American narrative of the “vanishing Indian” trope. However, over time, Indigenous voices have been brought to the forefront to voice their concerns. A clipping from *The Indian School Journal* includes a section titled “The Indian is No Longer a Vanishing Race.”<sup>44</sup> This piece was written by superintendent Dr. Lawrence W. White of the Lac du Flambeau Indian School in Wisconsin who states: “The title of this pathetic piece of statuary was ‘The End of the Trail.’ . . . In a word, it pictured the last of a dying race.”<sup>45</sup> The choice to call the statue a “pathetic” piece of artwork clearly demonstrates the sentiments and feelings that were felt by the community towards this piece of work. This article was written in 1970, close to the time of the Civil Rights Movement. This was a time for advocacy and calling out the oppressive powers that continued to plague communities of color. It is hard to ignore how this statue continues to reopen the wounds of the past for Native Americans, especially when it is coming directly from their mouths.

#### DESTINED FOR VISALIA

### Famed Indian Statue to Be Joined by 'Twin'

BY CHARLES HILLINGER

Times Staff Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY—Caesar Contini has completed his plaster mold of the 17-foot high, 17-foot long statue and shipped it off to Italy to be bronzed.

The mold-maker, the sculptor, and the place where the original model of the figure will be enshrined share the common thread of uniqueness.

Contini, 62-year-old, fifth generation mold-maker from Greenwich Village, is the only person in America making plaster models for bronze castings of large statues.

He has a backlog of work that he cannot conceivably finish in his lifetime.

As for the statue, it is the West's best-known work, James Earle Fraser's "The End of the Trail."

Depicting a defeated Indian warrior slumped over on his worn-out horse, it is symbolic of the ruthless conquest of the continent.

Fraser's 55-year-old statue has the same impact as Robert Rushmore's, says Dean Krael, director of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame here. "It ranks with the statue of Lincoln in Washington, D.C."

Krael considers the statue the greatest symbol created by man

with relationship to the changing of the past.

A large exhibit hall is being built to house the work at the Hall of Fame on Persimmon Hill, overlooking the Oklahoma Capital.

Fraser won a gold medal at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 for his statue, entered in competition with 1,500 others.

The sculptor, who created the design for the Indian-head nickel in 1913, had hoped his work would be cast in bronze and placed in Presidio Park, overlooking San Francisco Bay.

Please Turn to Page 21, Col. 1

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Figure 9. Charles Hillinger, “Famed Indian Statue to be Joined by ‘Twin,’” *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1970

However, hearing a cry for help from Native peoples has not been influential enough, and this is a reoccurring theme in American history. This type of disregard can be seen in figure 9, an article from the *Los Angeles Times* that came out in the same year, 1970. These pieces discuss the advocacy that was taking place during this time to have the

original *The End of the Trail* statue replastered and put on display in The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. Up to \$140,000 was being offered to make this happen, which is close to \$1.2 million in today's currency. As Native Americans were speaking up and using their voices to advocate for a change and to bring awareness to the harms of this statue, simultaneously individuals were attempting to preserve it and place it on display in a national museum. This dichotomy just goes to show how disregarded Native Americans are today, and this is a direct consequence of the "vanishing Indian" trope. This disrespect can still be seen, as this piece has continued to be commodified and circulated in great quantities today.

### Why Do You Keep Beating a Dead Horse?: The Continued Commodification of the Statue and Its Effects

*The End of the Trail* by James Earle Fraser continues to stand as a representation of America that can be interpreted in multiple ways. This statue has different meanings for different groups, but its commodification tells a story in itself. Professor of art history Robert L. McGrath explains in his piece "The Endless Trail of *The End of the Trail*,"

No less puzzling than the deployment of mounted Indians as totemic museum guardians is the bizarre afterlife of Fraser's immortal image of "The Vanishing American." More relentlessly commodified than any other work in the American artistic canon, *End of the Trail* has

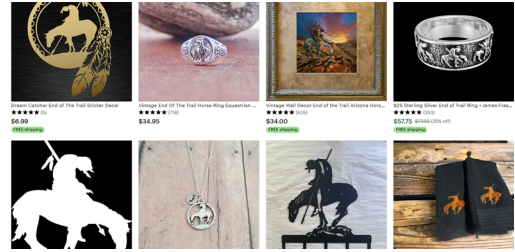


Figure 10. Etsy Shop Images.

attained a greater status in the world of commercial schlock than *Mona Lisa*, *The Last Supper*, or Michelangelo's *David*.<sup>46</sup>

To reinforce this point, as seen in figure 10, one can jump onto online selling platforms such as Etsy and eBay and see that there are many types of memorabilia still being created that depict *The End of the Trail* statue. Some items that can be found include earrings, belt buckles, lamps, wall décor, framed paintings, kitchen towel sets, and even mini bronzed replicas of the original piece. The prices of these items range from \$5 to over \$1,000. The financial gains acquired from these sales, as well as the large demand for these pieces, demonstrates how this statue still holds some form of significance and value to people today. One way to gauge how valued a historical product is takes "into account both the context of its production and the context of its consumption."<sup>47</sup> The consistent commodification, however, has impacts on the different communities that continue to reappropriate the image of *The End of the Trail*.

The constant selling of *The End of the Trail* today, in both American cowboy culture as well as Native American culture, has many consequences. In McGrath's article, he discusses the implications of the constant commodification and sales

of this statue. When discussing how Native Americans resell this piece, he states that “while the economic benefits to Indians engaged in such self-stereotyping for tourist consumption are obvious, such practices of ‘remythification’ do little to broaden the understanding of Native American culture.”<sup>48</sup> It was interesting to learn how members of the Native American community utilize metaphorical weapons that have historically been used against them to symbolically harm the Indian in more ways than one for their own financial gain.<sup>49</sup> It is unclear if this is done intentionally to bring awareness to Native Americans’ past, or if they have decided to play into the stereotypes formed against them to make a living. Whatever the reason may be, the commercialization of this piece continues to perpetuate the “vanishing Indian” trope, thus metaphorically killing Native Americans with each sale that is made. This type of remythification also allows space for American cowboy culture to stay alive and continue to herald white cowboys as heroes and protectors of the frontier. The keepers of white cowboy culture continue to uphold this statue as a trophy for their conquests, continuously perpetuating and contributing false narratives to people’s collective memory of the past.

This symbol has been mass produced, parodied, and commodified beyond belief, and it is easy for its meaning to be interpreted differently and taken out of context. Throughout my own journey of studying this statue, I originally thought that this piece was created to bring awareness to the perilous plight and hardships that Native Americans had to endure at the hands of their colonizers. I was also misled by the title, *The End of the Trail*, and believed that it was connected

to the Trail of Tears. However, I was later thrown for a loop when I realized that the original piece was placed on a grand display in the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. It wasn’t until I began to do very intentional research that I realized the true purpose of this statue and that it’s actually very harmful to Native communities as it perpetuates the trope of the “Vanishing Indian.” This made me question how many other people have an inaccurate interpretation of the purpose and intent of this statue. It also made me realize that I would never have gone further into learning more about the statue if I didn’t have to, so how many other people make assumptions about this piece and don’t take the time to learn more? This reminded me of Nguyen’s statement that “memory adjusts, memory conforms to what we think we remember.’ Mutable and malleable memory calls for an ethical sense, a guide on how to remember in fitting ways.”<sup>50</sup> *The End of the Trail* raises awareness around what gets commemorated, how it is commemorated, and why it should be commemorated. Our memories around what should be remembered in history and how it should be remembered can easily be lost in translation, and that is why we must strive to achieve a “just memory” that attempts to include all different perspectives of a historical event.<sup>51</sup>

One may look at this sculpture and view it as a representation of events that have occurred in the past which are irrelevant to today; however, Trouillot reminds us that “the past does not exist independently from the present.”<sup>52</sup> Even though this piece was originally created back in 1894, *The End of the Trail* statue and the white American cowboy culture that it continues to perpetuate still linger

to colonize and silence the Indigenous peoples of America today. This statue serves as a constant reminder that white settlers had the privilege to take over the frontier lands by force and still enjoy the fruits of their murders, while Native Americans are frozen in a perpetual state of being metaphorically colonized and forgotten through media, art, and literature. *The End of the Trail* currently sits in The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, maintaining the myth of the “vanishing Indian” trope with every visitor that stands to spectate this grand sculpture. *The End of the Trail*, its circulation, and the negative effects that it has on Native Americans should be utilized as a teaching moment to bring awareness to how “these facts are not memory but are interpreted, revived, and placed into stories by memory’s mechanisms, stories that change from time to time to suit the interests of the living.”<sup>53</sup> Statues and memorials as forms of commemoration can be seen as a good start for remembering the past, but they often silence so many voices in the process. Moving forward, I hope that we can use *The End of the Trail* as a learning device to ask more intentional questions about historical figures, images, and statues. One of the first steps in learning to develop “just memory” is to reshape our thought process to not take what we see at face value or only learn history from the victor’s perspective, but rather ask ourselves whose story is not being told and why.

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# Meet the Authors

**Markus Albihn***He/him/his*

Markus Albihn was a transfer student to California State University, Fullerton and quickly found a home in the American Studies department. He recently graduated with his Bachelor of Arts in American Studies and a minor in Liberal Studies and is now a first-year graduate student in the American Studies department. Albihn's research interests include media and communication history, textual analysis of film, critical pedagogy, identity formation, power, fandoms, subcultures, and culture as a whole. Albihn has eventual plans of becoming a professor in an interdisciplinary field and plans on applying for PhD programs after his completion of the Master's program at CSUF.

**Jamie Blanke***She/her/hers*

My name is Jamie Blanke. I completed my undergraduate work from Cal State Fullerton in 2018 with the honor of Summa Cum Laude in History and a minor in American Studies. I will be graduating with my master's in American studies in Spring 2025. I want to teach Ethnic Studies at the community college level. I hope to make the world more inclusive and accepting of people from all walks of life.

**Eva Amarillas Diaz***She/her/ella*

Eva is a second year in the American Studies MA program. Her research focuses on the intersections of online extreme misogyny, far-right ideologies, and algorithm bias. Through an analysis of American conservatism and a history of technology framework, her research aims to contextualize digital based violence, highlight this violence as part of longer US historical trends of violence, and brainstorm solutions to create a safer and more inclusive digital space. Eva's research is rooted in Black, Chicana, and Indigenous feminism, critical race theory, and critical digital studies. She practices activist scholarship and looks forward to working with community organizations and scholars within this field of research.

### **Amanda Endres**

*She/her/hers*

Amanda is a 2024 graduate of California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), with degrees in American Studies and Criminal Justice. As a biracial individual of Asian and European descent, she is deeply invested in applying her understanding of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender within the criminal justice and educational systems to support minorities and disadvantaged populations. Amanda is passionate about creating pathways for equity and empowerment through her work and education. In addition to her career in law enforcement and with CSUF Auxiliary Services, Amanda is the owner of a small sole proprietorship and strives to make a meaningful impact in her local community.

### **Alexis Fisher-Davis**

*She/her/hers*

Alexis Fisher-Davis completed her undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton in 2024, receiving BA degrees in Criminal Justice and American Studies. She became a national Alpha Phi Sigma | The Criminal Justice Honor Society member during her undergrad as well. Her decision to take on American Studies as a major resulted from a growing interest in witnessing the fluidity and diversity of the coursework and its investigative aspect into the ideas, beliefs, and experiences of Americans and the American Identity. Since graduating, she has been working for Cal State Fullerton as an Administrative Analyst utilizing the skills that American Studies had helped her refine, including critical thinking, empathy, research, and communication.

### **Melissa B. Garrison**

*She/her/hers*

Melissa B. Garrison is currently pursuing an M.A. in American Studies at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). She received a B.A. in American studies with a minor in sociology from Brigham Young University in 2016. Her research interests include the American West, Native American studies, popular culture, and public memory. Her paper “Settler Dominance and Indigenous Defiance: Native American Spaces and Places in Modern Television” was awarded the 2023 Earl James Weaver Graduate Essay Prize from CSUF’s American Studies Department. Melissa has served as an editor for two student journals at CSUF: *The American Papers* and *The Welebaethan: A Journal of History*.

**Teddy Hogerhuis***They/them/theirs*

Teddy Hogerhuis is a senior-year undergraduate student at CSU Fullerton. In 2025, they look forward to graduating with their BA in American Studies with a minor in English. Teddy's work often explores audience reception through participation in transformative media and (sub)cultural traditions, frequently focusing on reinterpreted archetypes and subverted allegory. Their favorite academic sandboxes include intersectional queer-crip studies, fanfiction studies, and pop culture studies. The founder and president of the DragClub, Teddy considers just about everything they study to be drag (or at least drag-related). Teddy is currently applying to a variety of interdisciplinary graduate programs at the intersection of media and cultural studies.

**Jesse Lai***He/him/his*

Jesse Lai is a first year American studies graduate student. He has interests in applying theory, and more specifically philosophy, when analyzing American culture. With a background in education, Jesse has written action research on reading curricula using Hegel's dialectic to analyze historical curricula changes. The attempt to synthesize perspectives and experiences was born from his own experience, coming from Chinese and Nicaraguan cultures.

**Alexander Alvarado Martinez***He/him/his*

Alexander Alvarado is a recent graduate of California State University, Fullerton. He received his BA in American Studies with a minor in Political Science. Alex enjoys learning about American pop culture and how it has shifted throughout the decades. Alex plans to pursue a graduate degree in American Studies.

**Carmella Pacillas***She/her/hers*

Carmella Pacillas is a fifth-year undergraduate student majoring in American Studies. She originally majored in Animation but ultimately decided to switch to American Studies after falling in love with the coursework. Her research interests include popular culture, gender studies, and ethnic studies. She doesn't know what to pursue after college but is hopeful for the future. She'd love to thank her amazing parents for always believing in her and supporting her through everything. She would also like to thank her dog, Cranberry, for being her emotional support pet and life coach.

**Josephine Rusli**

*She/her/hers*

Josephine Rusli is a third-year undergraduate student majoring in Psychology and minoring in American Studies. She has a passion for research in mental health and its relationship to contemporary culture. She hopes to pursue a master's degree after graduation.

**Sasha Westerfield**

*She/her/hers*

Sasha Westerfield is an artist specializing in drawing and charcoal and is currently receiving a Bachelors in Illustration at California State University, Fullerton. As someone who is deeply interested in asking questions and living the examined life she is also completing a minor in philosophy. In philosophy she enjoys subjects such as semiotics, linguistics, materialism, and feminism. She also enjoys hikes, and knows that spending time outside is essential for scholarship.

**Vyvyana Woolridge**

*She/her/hers*

Vyvyana Woolridge is a second-year American Studies graduate student. They completed their undergraduate work at California State University, Fullerton, in 2021, where she received a BA in African American Studies and Chicanx Studies. Her academic and research interests are centered around storytelling traditions and the silencing of ethnic communities, institutions and ideals, disparities in living conditions, and inequitable practices within education systems. In the future, she plans to use her degree to become an Ethnic Studies and/or American Studies professor.





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