

# **HISTORY MATTERS**

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An Undergraduate Journal of Historical Research



**Volume 20**

**May 2023**

**Appalachian State University**

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University '06*

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## Foreword

Eric Burnette  
Appalachian State University

**S**ometimes good ideas are like good songs—they can drop out of nowhere and then take on a life of their own; and somehow, twenty years later, they’re still being sung.

I started *History Matters* because I was frustrated there wasn’t anywhere to submit undergraduate scholarship, and I figured other students at other colleges must feel the same way. That turned out to be right.

I was very lucky to be at Appalachian State, with its wonderfully supportive history department. Neva Specht (now Vice Provost) was the American history professor in whose class I’d written the paper I wished I could publish. She was always a great mentor for me, and she suggested I connect with Michael Moore, whose *Britain Since 1850* class I had thoroughly enjoyed, and who had been the editor of *ALBION*, a well respected journal of British history, for many years. He was very receptive to the idea of an undergraduate history journal, and very generous with his time and counsel. “I’ve been trying to think of what to call it,” I told him one day. He took a beat and said “It could be as simple as ‘History Matters.’” And that was it. I asked my good high school friend Sarah Hancock to draw the bristlecone pine tree for the logo—a tree almost as old as recorded history. We decided to publish online in order to expand our reach.

With Dr. Moore and Dr. Specht's support, the department chair Michael Krenn also came on board. He gave me the use of a desk in a large room that was full of old computers, but it was right across the hall from Dr. Moore, which made it easy to pop in and ask him questions. It was Dr. Moore who suggested that I recruit other students to help edit the journal. So I reached out to classmates Matt Manes and Heather Brink. Matt and I were sophomores, and Heather was a freshman on track to graduate in three years. They both had high standards, great instincts, and a solid work ethic—all vital to the success of the journal. We all spent many hours huddled over a computer, copyediting, content editing, asking questions. They both became good friends.

The first year was a mad dash to get submissions. We didn't get very many, which is why I wrote three book reviews myself to fill out the publication (side note—loads of fun getting to request review copies of books when you're 20 years old). I was also adamant that while undergraduates might be running the journal, faculty would be reviewing the submissions, just as they would any other academic submission. This was going to be a quality publication.

It was enough for the first year. "You three managed to publish something better than any of us thought you would," Dr. Moore told me.

Once we had something to show, the idea of an online-only, undergraduate history journal was less weird than it might have sounded in the abstract. I wanted to expand in year two. So Heather and I made a recruiting trip to Asheville and Cullowhee to get UNC-Asheville and Western Carolina professors on the review board. And we blanketed history professors across the country with calls for submissions. It worked—we had more submissions the second year.

By year three, we were humming—66 submissions from 25 colleges and universities. *History Matters* has never looked back.

It's not an exaggeration to say I poured my heart and soul and everything I had into *History Matters*. It's still one of my favorite things I've ever done. But the thing that is most gratifying is that it has kept going for so long through the

efforts of students and professors I have never met and had nothing to do with. Student editors whose passion, dedication, and hard work remain the foundation of publishing high quality undergraduate scholarship.

The band changes, but the song remains the same. It's a good song.

Here's to another 20 years.

**Eric Burnette** (History, Political Science, Spanish '06) was the founding Editor of *History Matters*. He is currently Director of Organization Effectiveness at Humana and was previously Director of Innovation for the city of Louisville, KY. He is a member of the North Carolina Bar and holds a Juris Doctor and Master of Urban Planning from the University of Louisville.





**“The Accused Plants about Five Acres”  
The Limits of Land Ownership in Defending the  
Character of Poor Whites in Antebellum  
Upcountry South Carolina<sup>1</sup>**

Ellie McKinney  
Occidental College

**J**ames Woodruff was one of many poor white southerners who stood trial for vagrancy during the antebellum period in Spartanburg County, South Carolina. A father of six who maintained a small plot of farmland, Woodruff did not fit the image of the typical, urban, highly mobile, southern vagabond.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the trial, his primary defense centered on his effort to plant one acre of corn and cotton. Witnesses asserted that “his crop consists of a potato patch and a small cotton patch,” and that he “tends about one acre of land in potatoes and cotton.”<sup>3</sup> By claiming

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<sup>1</sup> *Support for this project was provided by an Academic Student Project Research Travel award from Occidental College.*

<sup>2</sup> Keri Leigh Merritt, “‘A Vile, Immoral, and Profligate Course of Life:’ Poor Whites and the Enforcement of Vagrancy Laws in Antebellum Georgia,” in *Southern Society and Its Transformations 1790-1860*, eds Susanna Delfino, Michele Gillespie, and Louis Kyriakoudes (Missouri: University of Missouri, 2011) ProQuest eBook Central.

<sup>3</sup> “James Woodruff,” Spartanburg District, South Carolina, Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, Vagrancy Trials, 1834, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH).

to work his own land, Woodruff asserted, as best as he could, his adherence to the southern social expectations that prioritized masculinity and independence. However, these efforts would ultimately fail to protect him from a vagrancy conviction, and Woodruff would be found guilty of the crime in 1834. While his sentence is unknown, his conviction revealed how in the upcountry, material possessions did not guarantee social power, rather for many poor whites like Woodruff, it was character that dictated their social position.

Transient, jobless, and often landless, those deemed “poor white trash” failed to maintain the ideals central to the planter presumption of universal white superiority. Poor whites were not simply marred by their economic disadvantage, but their character was believed by elites to debase the foundations of white superiority.<sup>4</sup> The justification and maintenance of chattel slavery was contingent on elite whites’ ability to uphold a rigid, racialized, social order, but poor whites undermined this system. As the southern United States emerged as a slave society in the early nineteenth century, the preservation of chattel slavery dictated all economic, political, and social decisions. Historian Ira Berlin asserted, “In a slave society... slavery stood at the center of economic production, and the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations.”<sup>5</sup> For the non-enslaving white population, land ownership could legitimize their investment in the institution of slavery. Yeoman farmers, who successfully worked land were perceived as “masters of small worlds,” reinforcing within their homes the southern idealization of mastery that came to exemplify to both whiteness and masculinity.<sup>6</sup> Poor whites, however, did not have the economic capacity to

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<sup>4</sup> Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

achieve this degree of independence, which more consequentially could mean they had little stake in the institution of slavery. Woodruff's attempt to both assert a claim to land and demonstrate his effort to plant crops illustrated an understanding among poor whites of the social power associated with landed independence. His guilty verdict, however, revealed the centrality of character in dictating the social position of poor whites in the South Carolina upcountry.

This study centers land and land ownership to examine how poor whites engaged with the southern slave society. In recognizing how property ownership often stood as the material divider between landless poor whites and property-owning yeomen, I first survey opportunities for poor whites to become landowners by claiming “vacant” land.<sup>7</sup> In the rural upcountry, poor whites' ability to navigate the rigid social hierarchy was limited by the declining availability of vacant land coupled with elite planters' monopolization of remaining property. Given the concentration of landed wealth amongst the elite population, this study then asks to what degree were poor whites able to use claims to land to defend themselves against vagrancy convictions. The economic position of poor whites undermined their ability to declare independence through land, and their experiences in the courtroom subsequently exposed the relationship between character and class in antebellum South Carolina. In culmination, this study argues that the social position of poor whites was dictated not

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<sup>7</sup> I have opted to put the word “vacant” in quotes as while the land was legally classified by colonial governments as vacant, it was inhabited by the Cherokee and Catawba Nations who were violently displaced by white settlers. For more on Indigenous removal in South Carolina see James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact Through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 2010), ProQuest Ebook Central; Gregory D. Smithers “Indigenous Histories of the American South During the Long Nineteenth Century,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 14, no. 2 (2016): 129-137; William L Ramsey, *Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South*, (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), ProQuest Ebook Central.

by their material possessions, but their character and ultimately their ability to uphold elite expectations of both whiteness and masculinity.

## Historiography

In the scholarship on the antebellum South, non-elite white populations maintain an extremely small portion of the literature. While the history of poor whites has been revisited in recent years, there are few studies that exhaustively explore the poorest white southerners. The earliest examinations of poor whites emerged in the mid-twentieth century and developed as the Great Depression sparked new interest in the history of common people.<sup>8</sup> Preliminary examinations of non-elite whites concluded that southern society was composed of only three distinct social classes: elite planters, poor whites, and the enslaved, a dramatic oversimplification of southern social order. Further, early studies were limited by their assumption of cross-class white unity. The aggregate poor white population was examined as a homogenous, collective group, with strong adherence to white supremacy that tethered them to the planter class. The concept of a *herrenvolk* democracy, where poor whites were believed to be part of a “social consensus broadly resting on white racism” emerged from initial examinations of poor whites.<sup>9</sup> Scholars recognized that poor whites were ostracized by elite observers, however, the assumption of universal white identity dominated early literature.

While primary scholarship studied non-elite whites as a collective group, Frank Lawrence Owsley’s *Plain Folk of the Old South* pivoted attention towards the non-elite, but landowning

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<sup>8</sup> See Paul H Buck, “The Poor Whites of the Ante-Bellum South,” *The American Historical Review* 31, no. 1 (Oct. 1925): 41-54, . <https://doi.org/10.2307/1904501>; Avery O. Craven, “Poor Whites and Negroes in the Antebellum South,” *The Journal of Negro History* 15, no. 1 (Jan 1930): 14-25 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2713896>.

<sup>9</sup> David Brown, “A Vagabond’s Tale: Poor Whites, *Herrenvolk* Democracy, and the Value of Whiteness in the Antebellum South,” *The Journal of Southern History* 79, no. 4 (Nov. 2013): 802.

class of yeomen.<sup>10</sup> He argued that most non-elite whites were not poor, landless, tenants but were instead landowning farmers who admired and aspired to attain the success of the elite planter class. Owsley utilized “church records, wills, administration of estates, county-court minutes, marriage licenses” and more to develop his intervention into the literature.<sup>11</sup> Owsley’s work challenged the overly simplistic assumption that the South was a society divided into just three social classes. In addition, by strengthening the connection between lower class yeomen and elite planters, Owsley also furthered the acceptance of a southern herrenvolk democracy. However, his almost complete disregard for the influence of the institution of slavery on yeoman populations compromised his argument.<sup>12</sup> While his differentiation between poor whites and yeoman sparked greater interest in the landowning, non-elite class, his study reinforced the assumption of southern white unity.

Later studies of the yeoman class conducted by historians Stephanie McCurry and Lacy Ford offered notable contributions to the scholarship on southern class, gender relations, and household dynamics.<sup>13</sup> A central debate across the scholarship on yeoman was how to differentiate the population from both poor whites and the elite class. For example, Ford classified yeoman as owning as many as five enslaved people, while McCurry argued that yeomen could own upwards of fifteen slaves but were distinguished from elite enslavers “by the plain fact that they worked the land with their own hands.”<sup>14</sup> While yeomen’s direct relationship to slavery was contested, the scholars generally agreed that yeomen had landed property while poor whites did not. McCurry and Ford

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<sup>10</sup> Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949).

<sup>11</sup> Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South*, 51.

<sup>13</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*; Lacy K. Ford Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*; McCurry, *Masters of Small World*, 48.

offered significant contributions to the study of non-elite classes, however, they ultimately furthered Owsley's assumption that all non-elite whites were tethered by their whiteness to the planter class. As Lacy Ford asserted, "white skin was ordinarily enough to entitle the small minority of propertyless and economically marginal whites to recognition as independent citizens."<sup>15</sup> It was evident that yeomen, through their domestic endeavors and public engagements were socially more like planters than they were like poor whites, but the scholars' assumption of universal white solidarity would be challenged by later examinations of poor white southerners.

Most recently, scholarship has begun to shift towards a more explicit study of poor, landless white southerners and these explorations have begun to deconstruct, rather than maintain, the assertion of universal white identity in the antebellum South. Stephen West first contributed to this revised history by presenting new insight into the yeomen class, paying particular attention to the differentiation between landowning and landless farmers.<sup>16</sup> West challenged the argument that all those recognized as yeomen were landowning farmers and asserted that in upcountry South Carolina, "roughly half of all non-slaveowning white farmers owned no land."<sup>17</sup> Building upon West's analysis, scholars Keri Leigh Merritt and David Brown maintained that the realities of poor white populations challenged the presumption of a herrenvolk democracy and the universality of whiteness during the antebellum period.<sup>18</sup> Brown, for example, made the prominent assertion that "the value of whiteness varied dramatically according to wealth, family connections, and community

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<sup>15</sup> Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 363.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen A West, *From Yeoman to Redneck: in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1850-1915* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, "A Vagabonds Tale"; Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Merritt, "'A Vile, Immoral, and Profligate Course of Life.'"

standing.”<sup>19</sup> One of the biggest challenges facing the study of poor whites is the lack of primary written accounts from the population. To reconcile this, Merritt and Brown drew from a wide range of primary documents, including newspapers, state court documents, slave narratives, and the biography of Edward Isham (an “archetypal vagabond”).<sup>20</sup> Merritt and Brown demonstrated how the specific study of poor whites, distinct from yeomen, complicated the understanding of class relations and whiteness in antebellum society. While previous scholarship maintained the assumption of a unified white southern identity, these scholars demonstrated how poor whites undermined and even threatened the racialized and gendered social hierarchies crucial to southern social order.

While scholars have explored both poor white and yeoman populations separately, little scholarship exists on the intersection between the two classes. Therefore, this study seeks to expand the literature on both poor whites and yeomen by examining the population that walked the line between these two classes. David Brown asserted that “the idea that all white men were equal in the Old South was repeated like a mantra by proslavery politicians.”<sup>21</sup> In recognizing how universal white identity was used to justify and maintain the institution of slavery, this study seeks to further understand the boundary between whites with an identifiable stake in the maintenance of chattel slavery and those who threatened it. This study then uses the unique position of land ownership in southern society to explore the degree to which character, more than material holdings, dictated elite perception and action toward poor white populations.

## Methodology

Focusing on three upcountry counties: Spartanburg, Anderson, and Pickens between 1820 and 1850, this analysis

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<sup>19</sup> Brown, “A Vagabond's Tale.” 836

<sup>20</sup> Brown, “A Vagabond's Tale.” 807; Merritt, “*Masterless Men*,” 26-27.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, “A Vagabonds Tale,” 836.



looks to understand the social position of poor whites during a period of evolution. Located in the northwest corner of the state, the upcountry, a predominantly white region, dominated by small, independent farmers, was slow to experience the transition into a plantation dominated, slave society.<sup>22</sup> According to Lacy Ford’s extensive examination, in 1840, whites made up 75 percent of the total population in Spartanburg, 69 percent in Anderson, and 80.5 percent in Pickens.<sup>23</sup> This was a sharp distinction from the coastal lowcountry that was dominated by an enslaved Black majority.<sup>24</sup> 1820 to 1850, however, was a period of change within the region as available land declined and the institution of slavery expanded. While the enslaved Black population grew in the upcountry, the region was never ruled by plantations. Whether landowning or not, the region was dominated by small farmers. Poor whites rarely emerge in the archival record, but the large proportion of whites coupled with slavery’s slow growing influence on the region makes the upcountry an ideal location to explore the shifts and particularities of poor white southern life.

This analysis begins with an aggregate study of vacant land claims to examine the degree to which poor whites were able to assert a class position that reflected elite enslavers expectations. Following the 1784 South Carolina General Assembly Bill “An Act for Establishing and Granting the Vacant Lands Within this State,” individuals were able to lay claim to vacant land for the cost of office fees and surveying.<sup>25</sup> These plats detailed the owner, amount of land, and a hand drawn boundary map of each property. Collected from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), this study examines over 1,100 plat records from Spartanburg, Anderson, and Pickens counties recorded

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<sup>22</sup> Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*.

<sup>23</sup> Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> South Carolina, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, vol. 5, eds Thomas Cooper, and David James McCord (Columbia, S.C: A.S. Johnson, 1839), 41-42.

between 1817 and 1847. Unlike census records that denoted only names and total amount of land owned, these records provide more substantial insight into the characteristics of registered land. In addition, the records expose how land accessibility changed over time by specifying the year land claims were made. Finally, when cross referenced with census records, plat documents can be used to understand the economic position of those with the means to purchase vacant land from the state.

Poor whites' relationship to land cannot be understood through plat records alone, though. Therefore, this study also utilizes vagrancy trials from upcountry South Carolina. These records were also collected from the SCDAH and are noteworthy because vagrancy was a crime almost exclusively taken up against poor whites during the antebellum period. They are also one of the few primary documents where the voices of poor whites were recorded. Further, vagrancy was a peculiar crime that, when examined in conjunction with sources from elite populations, including Daniel Hundley's *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, demonstrate how enslaver ideas permeated the actions and treatment of non-elite populations. Poor whites did not fit neatly into the South's racialized social hierarchies, but as they worked to navigate the antebellum slave society their realities were tinged by planter insecurities and the reaching influence of the institution of slavery.

### **Land Ownership and the Foundations of White Masculinity<sup>26</sup>**

White male independence stood in sharp contrast to the growing enslaved Black population who, due to the institution of slavery, experienced violent dehumanization, forcing them into a position of extreme dependency. Within the southern slave society, white masculinity, and in turn the character of poor whites, was judged in relation to mastery. As historians

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<sup>26</sup> This section draws on data from the following collections, L 04014 Anderson County (S.C.). Commissioner of Locations, Plat

Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover asserted, “In the eyes of whites, black men were the antithesis of honor and mastery – dependent, acquiescent, externally controlled.”<sup>27</sup> Idealized white southern character was developed in opposition to raced conceptions of femininity, where white men maintained not only patriarchal authority but also racial supremacy.<sup>28</sup> White men were expected to be masters of their plantations, their households, the enslaved, and their families, holding a position of unrivaled authority. As Friend and Glover explained, “Men’s refusal to be mastered by others and their insistence on mastering slaves... lay at the heart of antebellum southern political culture.”<sup>29</sup> Maintaining their position as “master” was possible not only in a plantation setting, but as Stephanie McCurry prominently claimed, also within the household.<sup>30</sup> McCurry argued that at its core, the relationship between whiteness and masterhood was constructed upon the domination of others, not uniquely authority over the enslaved. She explained, “Masterhood was a complex identity, literally engendered in independent ‘freemen’ by virtue of their personal domination over the dependents in their own households.”<sup>31</sup> Whether a master of a plantation or

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and History (SCDAH), Columbia, South Carolina: L 53005 Pendleton District (S.C.). Commissioner of Locations, Plat books, 1802-1828, Microfilm, SCDAH, Columbia, South Carolina; L 39003 Pickens County (S.C.). Commissioner of Locations, Plat books 1828-1882, Microfilm, SCDAH, Columbia, South Carolina; L 42008 Spartanburg County (S.C.). Plat books, 1802-1870, Microfilm, SCDAH, Columbia, South Carolina.

<sup>27</sup> Craig Thompson Friend & Lorri Glover, “Rethinking Southern Masculinity: An Introduction,” in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, eds. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), xi.

<sup>28</sup> Kathleen M Brown. *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) ProQuest eBook Central.

<sup>29</sup> Friend & Glover, “Rethinking Southern Masculinity,” X.

<sup>30</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

<sup>31</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 226.

a “small world,” white men were expected to uphold ideals that privileged both whiteness and masculinity.<sup>32</sup>

Among non-elite white men, land ownership allowed them to become “masters of small worlds,” legitimizing their independence, and in turn their whiteness and masculinity.<sup>33</sup> In South Carolina, the relation between landownership and power was codified in the earliest laws of the state. Until 1810, only white men with over fifty acres of land were able to vote in elections and only residents with an “estate of five hundred acres of land and ten negroes” could be elected to the House of Representatives.<sup>34</sup> Even with the emergence of universal white male suffrage in 1810, the relationship between property ownership and power was engrained in the social foundations of the state. Upcountry South Carolina was a predominantly agricultural society, so self-determination was contingent on residents’ ability to grow their own crops. As Stephen West articulated, “Those without land lacked the independent access to the means of subsistence that came with owning a farm.”<sup>35</sup> Dependency stood in opposition to white masculinity and landowners, much like elite enslavers, could maintain an unquestionable hold on their independence. Lacy Ford uncovered that in 1850, 75 percent of all household heads in upcountry South Carolina were identified by census takers as farmers.<sup>36</sup> In the upcountry, land stood at the center of non-slaveholders’ attachment to enslaver ideals and demonstrated their ability to uphold both patriarchal authority and white supremacy, fundamental assumptions in the endurance of chattel slavery.

For non-elite whites, land ownership allowed them to maintain a position as “master,” even without acting as enslavers, and asserting claims to vacant land was a central strategy for ownership in the upcountry. The South Carolina upcountry was the last region in the state to be formally settled

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<sup>32</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

<sup>33</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

<sup>34</sup> S.C. Const. 1790. Art. 6, 7, 8.

<sup>35</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 75.

by colonists. Settler expansion into “vacant” land in the South Carolina upcountry was the result of the violent forced removal of the Cherokee and Catawba nations from their native land.<sup>37</sup> By 1777, Indigenous nations had been almost completely uprooted from the region and the South Carolina government then began quickly dividing up the now-uninhabited territory.<sup>38</sup> “An Act for Establishing the Mode and Conditions of Surveying and Granting Vacant Lands Within this State” allowed residents to purchase vacant lands from the State for the cost of office and surveying fees.<sup>39</sup> Between 1817 and 1847 over 1100 vacant plats were laid out to those looking to inhabit the upcountry.<sup>40</sup> Claiming vacant land was by no measure the only strategy to become a landowner. Landowners also purchased land from each other, for example. However, as one of the last formally settled regions in South Carolina, claims to vacant land revealed who was, and was not, able to access this dominant method of land acquisition.

Land ownership could legitimize white identity, but in the 1830s opportunities for non-elite whites to claim vacant land rapidly declined. As depicted in Table 1, the number of plats registered in the upcountry fell during the late 1830s and 1840s.<sup>41</sup> The precise reason behind this reduction is beyond the scope of this study, but the combination of federal policy, changing land availability, and shifting economic conditions all contributed to the evolving accessibility of vacant land. For example, there were two sharp drops in the number of plats laid out, the first occurred between 1821 and 1825, likely a response to the economic panic and depression that began in

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<sup>37</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Merrell, *The Indians' New World*.

<sup>39</sup> Wade Dorsey, “State Plats for Land Grants 1784-1868 Now Available Online,” South Carolina Department of Archives and History, last modified June 2, 2021, <https://scdah.sc.gov/news/2021-06/state-plats-land-grants-1784-1868-now-available-online>.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson County, Pendleton District, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat books.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson County, Pendleton District, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat books.

	1816-20	1821-25	1826-30	1831-35	1836-1840	1840-47
Total Number of Plats Registered	334	151	232	300	91	52
Number of Plats Less Than 50 Acres	62	50	44	34	28	23
<i>Proportion of Plats Less than 50 Acres</i>	18.6%	33.1%	19.0%	11.3%	30.1%	44.2%
Number of Plats Less Than 10 Acres	7	10	6	7	11	7
<i>Proportion of Plats Less than 10 Acres</i>	2.1%	6.6%	2.6%	2.3%	12.1%	13.5%

Table 1: Source: Anderson County, Pendleton District, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat books.

1819 and the second occurred in 1836.<sup>42</sup> This later decline is most notable in understanding the opportunities for poor whites to claim land. The Specie Circular Act of 1836 asserted

<sup>42</sup> Anderson County, Pendleton District, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat books.

that the government "would only accept gold or silver for land sales," which almost completely barred poor whites from land ownership as they relied on credit to purchase property.<sup>43</sup> This act when coupled with the declining supply of vacant land, suggested that if poor whites were to possess land, they had to acquire it through alternate means. Historian Lacy Ford's census analyses argued that in the upcountry "more than 80 percent of all farmers were landed proprietors," but the shrinking availability of vacant land in the upcountry indicates that this claim is likely incomplete.<sup>44</sup> West further undermined Ford's assertion, finding that in Pickens district 75.2 percent of all agricultural households owned neither land nor slaves, and in Spartanburg 65.2 percent were landless.<sup>45</sup> Despite assertions by both historians and the elite population that land ownership was a possibility for most upcountry whites, the plat records suggest that it was likely an impossible ideal for most lower-class white citizens.

Not only was vacant land becoming less available in the late-antebellum period, but few residents were able to lay claim to small plats of land. The amount of land claimed by individuals in the upcountry varied from plats as large as 1000 acres to as small as one acre; however, out of the 1100 plats laid out in Anderson, Spartanburg, and Pickens counties, only 48 were for land less than ten acres.<sup>46</sup> As demonstrated in Figure 1, the number of plats less than fifty acres in size decreased steadily over time, despite fluctuations in the total number registered. Since poor whites would not have had the economic capacity to possess more than 50 acres of land this highlights how most of those claiming vacant land were not poor whites but elites and yeoman. These findings were echoed by West who argued "among those who did not have a direct stake in the peculiar institution, the landed property that was supposed to be the basis of white men's vaunted independence

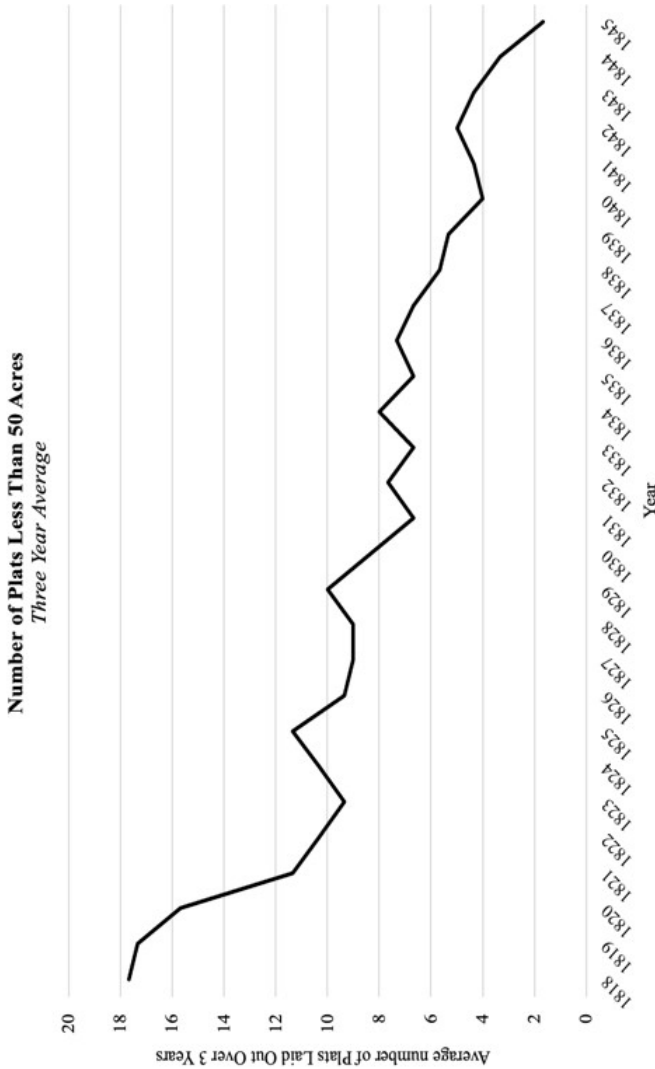
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<sup>43</sup> Merrett, *Masterless Men*, 47.

<sup>44</sup> Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson County, Pendleton District, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat books.

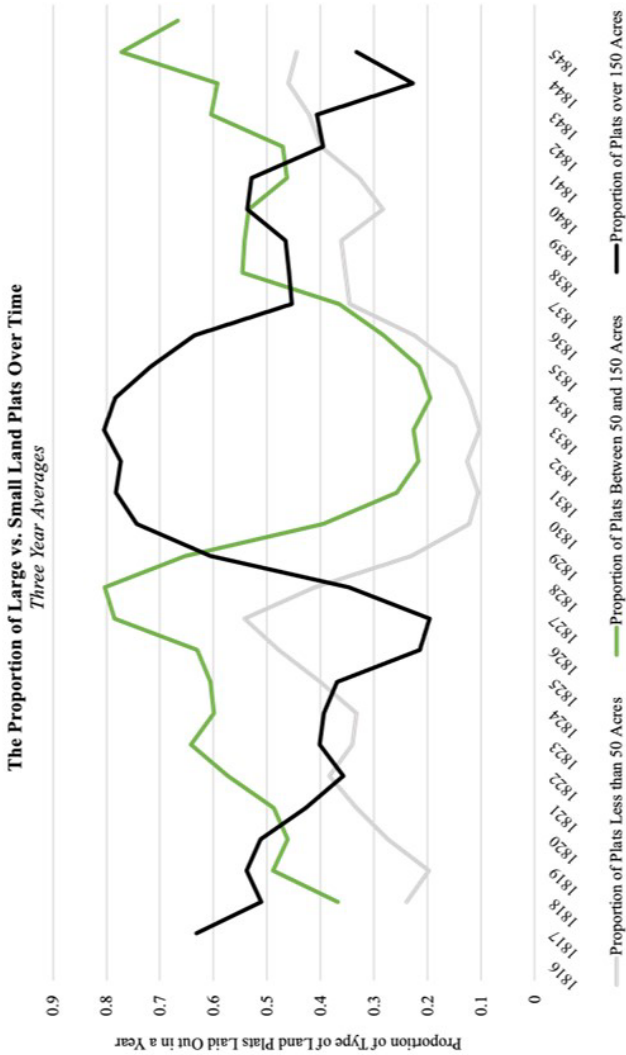


**Figure 1:** Source: Anderson County, Pendleton District, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat books.

was more the exception than the rule in the Upper Piedmont.”<sup>47</sup> Although the upcountry was dominated by small farmers, the lack of a significant number of small plats supports West’s claim that landownership was a rarity for most poor whites. Although the proportion of small plats increased after 1836, this was likely the result of the declining availability

<sup>47</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 35.





**Figure 2:** Source: Anderson County, Pendleton District, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat books.

of uninhabited land coupled with the Specie Circular Act making it more difficult for most people to accrue the resources necessary to purchase large amounts of land. It was not likely that these trends illuminated poor whites gaining newfound access to small plats of unclaimed land.

Further supporting the assertion that small land claims after 1836 were not made by poor whites, many of those registering small plats were doing so to gain access to natural

resources, not to establish a self-made farm. Surveyors responsible for outlining land drew maps that included natural markers like trees, rocks, and rivers to denote the boundaries of one's property, and these maps provided white southerners with an explicit declaration to the land that was legally theirs.<sup>48</sup> These maps also uncovered how many small land claims provided elite classes an opportunity to acquire more valuable land, gaining access to prized resources like rivers. Stephanie McCurry asserted that in lowcountry South Carolina, the planter class had the privilege to monopolize higher value land. She explained, “Yeoman clustered on the poorest land... bounded by the forks of swamps and the sandy ridges that rose between them. Not one was to be found on the rivers.”<sup>49</sup> She noted this pattern in the lowcountry, however, the plat records reveal a similar trend in the upcountry. In the 1840s in Anderson County, Joseph Cae, Pete Achree, and Joseph Young all claimed between two and twelve acres of land along prominent rivers in the country.<sup>50</sup> Cae, for example, declared ownership of a twelve acre strip of land on either side of the Saluda River in Anderson County, one of the longest rivers in the state.<sup>51</sup> As the upcountry population grew and available land continued to decrease, these claims demonstrated how elites monopolized the most valued land in the upcountry. In these records, a small amount of land did not suggest someone had less economic strength, instead, the claims revealed an elite strategy to maximize their hold on desirable property.

Claiming a small piece of land along a river did not intrinsically suggest that an individual had economic authority, but when cross referenced with census records, it is revealed that many of these individuals, despite claiming only small amounts of land, enslaved Black labor. In Spartanburg County, for example, John Trale laid claim to a one-acre plat of land in

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<sup>48</sup> Dorsey, “State Plats for Land Grants 1784-1868 Now Available Online.”

<sup>49</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 27.

<sup>50</sup> Anderson County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat book, 36-56.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat book, 36-56.

1821. Sandwiched between four other large properties, Trale’s one acre plat contained a substantial portion of Dutchman’s Creek.<sup>52</sup> The specific value of titled access to this creek is not known, but Trale was listed in the 1830 census as enslaving three people, demonstrating his economic capacity despite owning a small portion of land.<sup>53</sup> Trale was not “poor white trash,” and while the land he owned was small, it was not without resources. Further, by asserting ownership of three enslaved people, Trale demonstrated how the amount of land claimed did not dictate the social position of a non-elite white. He was also not an anomaly within the plat records. Samuel Morrow claimed seven acres on land in 1821 and was listed as enslaving 8 people in the 1830 census.<sup>54</sup> John Glenn claimed three acres in 1837 and was listed in the 1830 census as enslaving seven people.<sup>55</sup> These men exposed the economic capacity needed to gain vacant land further establishing how landownership was not a possibility for most of the white southern population.

While it is possible that non-elite classes legally claimed land in other ways, the volume of land plats and near complete exclusion of non-enslaving whites from this method of owning land indicates that landownership was beyond the realm of possibility for most poor whites. But even without formal means to access land, poor whites in the upcountry continued to work in agriculture, either as tenant farmers or on land not legally claimed but socially recognized. Tenant farmers did not have complete ownership over their land, but West argued, “They appear... to have commanded the labor of their family

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<sup>52</sup> Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat book, 305.

<sup>53</sup> 1830 U.S. Census, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, (handwritten), digital image, Ancestry.com, (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 15 April 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication 0022505, series: M19; roll: 171; Page: 312.

<sup>54</sup> Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat book, 305; 1830 U.S. Census, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, database with images; 312.

<sup>55</sup> Spartanburg County, Commissioner of Locations. Plat book, 305; 1830 U.S. Census, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, database with images; 312.

subordinates in much the same way as landowning farmers.”<sup>56</sup> Although poor whites do not show up in these land records, it does not mean that they were not working land in ways that tied them to the ideals utilized in the justification of chattel slavery. Owning land was idealized in the antebellum South, but economic limitations pushed poor whites further into the fringes of society. Unlike previous assertions that land ownership tethered all non-enslaving white populations to the institution of slavery, an analysis of land plat records shows that poor whites were largely unable to formally access even small amounts of land. Ultimately, their inability to acquire land undermined their opportunity to hold a position as a “master” and elite whites saw this reality as a threat to basic conceptions of whiteness and masculinity.

### **Land Ownership and the Defense Against Vagrancy**

The endurance of southern slave society was contingent on elite whites’ ability to maintain a rigid social hierarchy that viewed white men as the ultimate “master.”<sup>57</sup> But poor whites, who relied on others for employment, sustenance, and even survival, did not sustain elite expectations of either whiteness or masculinity. Poor whites did not have the economic opportunity to claim independence, let alone masterhood, and this reality frustrated elite planters who believed poor whites degraded the moral character associated with whiteness. Alabama lawyer and author Daniel Hundley presented a scathing description of “poor white trash” from the perspective of the elite. He asserted that the “chief characteristic” of poor whites was their “laziness.”<sup>58</sup> He continued by declaring that “[poor whites] are about the laziest

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<sup>56</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

<sup>58</sup> Daniel Robinson Hundley, 1860, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, Documenting the American South. (University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: 1999), 262 <https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/hundley/hundley.html>.

two-legged animals that walk erect on the face of the earth.”<sup>59</sup> Hundley’s perception of poor white’s was not revolutionary, instead it mirrored an enduring stereotype of poor whites. Lawyer and planter William Byrd was one of the first to depict poor whites in this light when in 1728 he declared that the poor whites, “loiter away their lives... with their arms across, and at the winding up of the year scarcely have bread to eat.”<sup>60</sup> Elite white southerners’ depictions of poor whites suggests that in antebellum South Carolina, to be characterized as a poor white not only meant that an individual lacked material possession, but also that their character failed to reflect elite ideals.

In southern slave society, the maintenance of the institution of slavery permeated all legal decisions and vagrancy law was no exception. Codified in 1787, the South Carolina law titled, “An Act for the Promotion of Industry, and for the Suppression of Vagrants and other Idle and Disorderly People” provided the legal grounds for the prosecution of poor whites’ for virtually any behavior that did not conform to elite ideals.<sup>61</sup> South Carolina vagrancy law was loose in its classification of vagrants, asserting “all persons... who have no visible or known means of gaining a fair, honest, and reputable livelihood... shall be, deemed vagrants.”<sup>62</sup> The elite policymakers did not define precisely what dictated a “fair, honest, and reputable livelihood,” but it was implied within the law as everything from gambling and drunkenness to simply “leading idle and disorderly lives” was viewed as criminal.<sup>63</sup> According to Merritt, vagrancy laws were notorious for

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<sup>59</sup> Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, 262.

<sup>60</sup> William Byrd, 1841, *The Westover Manuscripts: Containing the History of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina; A Journey to the Land of Eden, A.D. 1733; and A Progress to the Mines*, Documenting the American South. (University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: 2001), 27-28.

<sup>61</sup> South Carolina, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* Vol. 5, 41-42.

<sup>62</sup> South Carolina, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* Vol. 5, 41.

<sup>63</sup> South Carolina, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* Vol. 5, 41.

allowing “slaveholders to justify the lengthy jailing of suspicious people – whether because of their habits, their occupations, their beliefs, or their resistance to the established hierarchy.”<sup>64</sup> Poor whites were not charged with vagrancy because elite planters disliked their behavior, rather, poor whites behavior demonstrated that they had no stake in maintaining the social expectations necessary for the preservation of the institution of slavery and this was a serious concern for the elite class. Vagrancy laws were used strategically in southern slave society and as the southern political situation grew increasingly unstable, the role of vagrancy evolved to focus almost exclusively on controlling poor whites.

Though South Carolina’s vagrancy law was developed in 1787, most cases in the upcountry occurred after 1830, when political instability heightened elite fears and desire for control. The combination of the Denmark Vesey insurrection scare in Charleston in 1822, the nullification crisis of the 1830s, and the infiltration of abolitionist literature into the southern states exacerbated planter insecurities regarding their hold on society.<sup>65</sup> Despite heightened instability, there was a simultaneous aspiration among South Carolina politicians to present a unified pro-slavery political front in the face of increasingly anti-slavery northern pressures.<sup>66</sup> The political context of the late-antebellum period had significant consequences for the non-slaveholding population, whose failure to adhere to elite character expectations threatened the foundations of the southern society that elites were seeking to uphold. Efforts to control the character of poor whites were intensified by the rise of vigilante organizations in South Carolina that sought to not only protect the institution of

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<sup>64</sup> Merritt, *Masterless Men*, 182.

<sup>65</sup> For more on late-antebellum political instability see: Stephen West, “Forging a ‘United People’” in *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 46-65; Sinha Manisha, *Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>66</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 48; Manisha, *Counterrevolution of Slavery*.

slavery from anti-slavery political pressures but also preserve "the Deep South's hierarchical status quo."<sup>67</sup> As desires for secession grew more authoritative, fears of political and social disunion meant "the actions of vigilantes shaped the character of the separatist mobilization, limiting the boundaries of discourse and silencing dissent."<sup>68</sup> Political and social white unity was essential to pursuing a separatist movement, but as many non-elite whites failed to adhere to elite expectation of whiteness, poor whites experienced increasing surveillance and their character was more frequently and aggressively questioned.

The precarious political situation of the 1830s coincided an increase in the conviction of vagrants in the upcountry. In this predominantly agricultural region of South Carolina, the execution of vagrancy law diverged from the urban lowlands. Merritt asserted in her study of Georgia vagrancy that, "by definition, vagrants owned no property and thus had nothing to lose."<sup>69</sup> In South Carolina, however, vagrancy law was more comprehensive and any man failing in the "maintenance of himself and his family" could be found guilty of the crime.<sup>70</sup> Further, the law also declared that "all persons who shall be able to work, and occupying or being in possession of some piece of land, shall not cultivate such a quantity thereof... shall be, deemed vagrants."<sup>71</sup> Not only did the law assert that all able citizens needed to work the land they owned, it assumed male authority over "himself and his family."<sup>72</sup> This was consequential in the upcountry region where most of the population was tied to land through agriculture. Unlike the lowcountry where most vagrants were transient, landless, and

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<sup>67</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 47-53; Merritt, *Masterless Men*, 277.

<sup>68</sup> West, *From Yeoman to Redneck*, 47.

<sup>69</sup> Merritt, "A Vile, Immoral, and Profligate Course of Life," 27.

<sup>70</sup> South Carolina, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* Vol. 5, 41.

<sup>71</sup> *South Carolina, The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* Vol. 5, 41.

<sup>72</sup> South Carolina, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* Vol. 5, 41.

living on the fringes of society, most of the cases of vagrancy in the upcountry were taken up against white, male, heads of households. Of the twelve cases of vagrancy documented in Spartanburg County between 1830 and 1852, for example, only one man was described as single.<sup>73</sup> Through their ties to land, upcountry vagrants seemingly held a distinct social position from urban vagabonds, but their ultimate conviction as vagrants challenged assumption that only the poorest whites were recognized as a threat to the southern social order.

As men tried for vagrancy attempted to prove their capacity as household heads and even "masters of small worlds," they used land ownership as the primary defense of their character. Unlike the typical urban vagrant, Spartanburg residents and convicted vagrants Mavre Littlefield, John Moore, and James Woodruff all had some land and a place they called home.<sup>74</sup> Several witnesses in their trials attested to having visited or eaten at their residences. One witness testifying in Littlefield's case explained, "he helped Littlefield plow near a day. He planted one or two acres in corn but was taken sick in May and did not tend the corn."<sup>75</sup> While a witness in Moore's case maintained that he "thinks the accused plants about five acres."<sup>76</sup> The descriptions of the defendants' attempts at agriculture highlight that while not a complete and functional farm, these men had some piece of property that outsiders recognized as theirs. When echoed by additional witness claims including one who explained he "[had] eaten at [Littlefield's house] several times, always saw plenty" the role of land in differentiating between yeomen and poor whites is less clear.<sup>77</sup> Littlefield, Moore, and Woodruff's ability to even attempt to plant one or two acres of land or host a neighbor

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<sup>73</sup> Spartanburg District, Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, Vagrancy Trials, 1829-1860, SCDAH.

<sup>74</sup> "Mavre Littlefield," Spartanburg District, Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, Vagrancy Trials, 1841, SCDAH; "John Moore," Spartanburg District, Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, Vagrancy Trials, 1828, SCDAH; "James Woodruff," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH.

<sup>75</sup> "Mavre Littlefield," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH.

<sup>76</sup> "John Moore," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH.

<sup>77</sup> "Mavre Littlefield," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH.



for dinner indicated that held property of some kind, whether formal or informal, a reality could have prevented them from being convicted of vagrancy. But all three of these men were found to be vagrants and their cases challenge the assumption that possessing land superseded one's presumed character.

For men accused of vagrancy in the South Carolina upcountry, the arguments against them focused on their moral character and laziness rather than a lack of material possessions. Prominently, the assertion that poor whites were lazy and lacked necessary industry permeated the upcountry trials. In Littlefield's 1841 case, numerous witnesses cited how he was able to work but chose to not.<sup>78</sup> One asserted Littlefield was "able to work as common people," while another maintained that he thought "[Littlefield was] able to work," while a final witness confirmed that he did not "know of his working."<sup>79</sup> Of the more than twenty witnesses who testified in Littlefield's trial, a majority of them cited his lack of industry as indicative of his guilt.<sup>80</sup> This was true across the trials of those accused of vagrancy as John Moore faced similar accusations with one witness claiming that "[Moore]... has not done enough to make a support," while James Chastain in Anderson County had a series of six witnesses make the simple assertion that "he [did] not work."<sup>81</sup> As expressed by Daniel Hundley and William Byrd, the perceived laziness poor whites was a persistent frustration among the elite class.<sup>82</sup> Their resentment reflected how a lack of industriousness seemingly forced poor white men into a position of dependency that subverted the ideals of white masculine identity.

With such rigid social expectations, poor white men's assertions of land possession would not be enough to overcome their perceived lack of authority within their households. Witnesses in James Woodruff's trial repeatedly

<sup>78</sup> "Mavre Littlefield," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH.

<sup>79</sup> "Mavre Littlefield," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH.

<sup>80</sup> "Mavre Littlefield," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH.

<sup>81</sup> "John Moore," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAH; "James Chastain," Anderson District, Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, Vagrancy Trials, 1829-1860.

<sup>82</sup> Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, 262.

cited his inability to provide for his family as reflective of his guilt. One witness asserted, "[Woodruff] is not an industrious man and his family has had plenty to suffer," while another exclaimed, "[Woodruff] has neglected his family willfully."<sup>83</sup> Mavre Littlefield was also condemned for failing to support his family with one witness maintaining that "he thought [Littlefield's] family is in suffering circumstances."<sup>84</sup> Stephanie McCurry argued that the yeoman class was able to ally themselves with elite planters due to their shared "definition of manhood rooted in the inviolability of the household, the command of dependents, and the public prerogatives manhood conferred."<sup>85</sup> But the men accused of vagrancy in the upcountry, despite occupying land and a home, were excluded from a yeoman status by their inability to maintain the masculine assumption of household superiority. These men claimed to work land, arguing that their efforts to support their family was undermined by sickness, limited time, or a lack of resources. But their assertions proved insufficient in court. John Luinn from Spartanburg County, however, used his ability to support his family as the basis of his innocence and was ultimately one of the only examples of a man acquitted for vagrancy in the upcountry.<sup>86</sup> In his trial, witnessed prominently described how he, "he supplied his family with a reasonable portion of bread and coffee and sugar."<sup>87</sup> For Luinn, his measurable effort to support his family justified his innocence and nudged him into the yeoman class. The consistent attention paid by witnesses to the experiences of these men's families highlighted the centrality of mastery in distinguishing between poor whites and yeomen.

Failure to support one's family was damning evidence of a white man's position as a vagrant, but even more consequential was that these men were forced to depend on their wives for

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<sup>83</sup> "James Woodruff," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAAH.

<sup>84</sup> "Mavre Littlefield," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAAH.

<sup>85</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 304.

<sup>86</sup> "John Luinn," Spartanburg District, Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, Vagrancy Trials, 1852.

<sup>87</sup> "John Luinn," Vagrancy Trials, SCDAAH.

survival. Stephanie McCurry explained that within the southern slave society, “Dependence on women was unmanly (even in love), where manhood orbited around the display of independence. Hence, arguments about female submission not only naturalized slavery; they confirmed masculinity.”<sup>88</sup> But the economic situation of poor whites meant that often these men relied on their wives and families for survival. Their position as fathers was frequently cited in witness testimony as, for example, Woodruff was repeatedly described as having “a wife and four children.”<sup>89</sup> The attention paid to these men’s familial positions underscored a recognition of the social expectations for white men. For those accused of vagrancy, the independence that was assumed to accompany working as many as five acres of land was disregarded if the man depended on his wife for survival. One witness in John Moore’s case asserted that he did “not work enough to maintain his wife,” while a witness in Woodruff’s case asserted that to their “knowledge, the wife of Woodruff sifted wheat bran for bread to keep her children alive.”<sup>90</sup> In the eyes of the law, men were deemed vagrants not only because they could not maintain their families but also because their failings as men forced their wives to preserve their families, undermining the unquestioned authority of white manhood.

Unlike the lowlands where planter elites served as witnesses against possible vagrants, those engaged in upcountry trials were the defendants’ social peers, highlighting how between those of a seemingly similar economic position, character stood as a central divider between classes. Aaron Bishop, for instance, was a witness testifying in Littlefield’s case and was listed in the 1840 census as having seven children between the ages of one and seventeen, no enslaved people,

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<sup>88</sup> Stephanie McCurry, “Producing Dependence: Women, Work, and Yeoman Households in Low-Country South Carolina,” in *Neither Lady nor Slave: Working Women of the Old South*, eds. Michele Gillespie and Susanna Delfino (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 218, ProQuest eBook Central.

<sup>89</sup> “James Woodruff,” Vagrancy Trials, SCDAAH.

<sup>90</sup> “John Moore,” Vagrancy Trials, SCDAAH; “James Woodruff,” Vagrancy Trials, SCDAAH.

and two adults working in agriculture.<sup>91</sup> Sarah Owens was another witness with a similar background. In the 1850 census, she was listed as the wife of A Owens who together had seven children and enslaved no people.<sup>92</sup> This is a notable diversion from cases of vagrancy in cities where Merritt explained, “elites could use vagrancy laws to lock away anyone who posed a threat to the southern system.”<sup>93</sup> In upcountry South Carolina what divided the witnesses from the accused was their potential to advance in the raced and gendered social hierarchy. Bishop and Owens were likely “masters of small worlds,” operating their small farms in ways that mirrored the power structures on plantations.<sup>94</sup> Littlefield, Woodruff, Moore, and Chastain, however, failed to meet any marker of white social aspiration. While materially, their holdings were similar, upcountry vagrants’ inability to support their children and wives indicated to outsiders a disinvestment from the assumptions of white masculine superiority essential to uphold the institution of slavery.

## Conclusion

In 1857, northern abolitionist Hinton Rowan Helper’s prominent appeal to the poor white southerner would be aggressively banned in all southern states. In this book he proclaimed poor whites “are now completely under the domination of the oligarchy, and it is madness to suppose that they will ever be able to rise to a position of true manhood, until after the slave power shall have been utterly

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<sup>91</sup> 1840 U.S. Census, Southern Division, Spartanburg, South Carolina; (handwritten) digital image, Ancestry.com, (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 15 April 2023); citing NARA microfilm publication 0022511, roll: 515; page: 235.

<sup>92</sup> 1850 U.S. Census, Spartanburg, South Carolina; (handwritten) digital image, Ancestry.com, (<http://www.ancestry.com>: accessed 15 April 2023); citing *Records of the Bureau of the Census*; Record Group Number: 29; Series Number: M432; Residence Date: 1850; Home in 1850: *Spartanburg, South Carolina*; Roll: 858; Page: 253a.

<sup>93</sup> Merritt, “A Vile, Immoral, and Profligate Course of Life,” 29.

<sup>94</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*.

overthrown.”<sup>95</sup> The “overzealous reaction to Helper’s ideas” suggested that while whiteness unquestionably protected poor whites against the violence of chattel slavery, within the South’s racialized social hierarchy poor whites were unable to achieve the “true manhood” to which Helper alluded.<sup>96</sup> When the institution of slavery ultimately ended, poor whites found themselves increasingly able to acquire all the social, economic, and political privileges associated with whiteness. The Homestead Act allowed them to formally acquire land while the newly liberated Black population would become the South’s new class of vagrants.<sup>97</sup> Poor white’s social position was precarious as southern white identity maintained a “performative character” in which whiteness was measured not only by skin color but also in one’s investment in the maintenance of chattel slavery.<sup>98</sup>

In the South Carolina upcountry, poor whites’ relationship to land underscored not only their uncertain social position, but also their acute awareness of the social expectations of the elite class. An extensive examination of historic land plats exposed how despite previous assertions, landownership was likely an impossible ideal for poor whites to attain in the late-antebellum period. Whether rented, owned, or simply occupied, many men accused of vagrancy claimed to work their own land, asserting their desire for independence and an attempted adherence to the moral codes justifying the institution of slavery. Being deemed a vagrant, however, not only reflected a man’s material possessions but also his character. Urban vagabonds lived at the fringes of southern society and their habits of gambling, drinking, and fighting made them easily identifiable as disinterested in the preservation of the institution of slavery. Upcountry vagrants, however, attempted to work their own land in ways which

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<sup>95</sup> Hinton Rowan Helper, 1857, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*. Documenting the American South. (University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001) 382, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/helper/helper.html>.

<sup>96</sup> Merritt, *Masterless Men*, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Merritt, *Masterless Men*, 328.

<sup>98</sup> Brown, “A Vagabonds Tale,” 836.

could have maintained the ideals of mastery and independence. But these men were still found guilty of the crime. Thus, the distinction between yeomen and poor whites, those with a stake in the preservation of slavery and those without, was not easily defined because character was not easily quantifiable. Poor whites like James Woodruff maintained a paradoxical position in southern slave society where their economic situation, undermined their material opportunities, which in turn, undermined their character. It is impossible to know for certain Woodruff's opinions on chattel slavery, but what is ultimately revealed is that to the elite class attempting to preserve a rigid, racialized, social hierarchy, anyone not actively engaged in the preservation of white masculine supremacy and the institution of slavery was ultimately a threat to its foundations.

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## Photography, Identity, Power

### William Henry Jackson and the American Colonial Gaze

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**Figure A:** John Gast, *American Progress*, Painting, 1872, (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division), <https://www.loc.gov/item/97507547/>

**A**s the most famous American artwork on Manifest Destiny, almost every student in the United States has seen John Gast's *American Progress* (1872) in their history class. One could not get through an American education without discussing this image. In the classrooms of the past, it was taught in a celebratory way, while today it is used more critically. Here, Miss Columbia, the female personification of the United States, embarks for the dark and mysterious American West from the bright and sunny east.

American Indians and the animals of the ‘natural world’ flee the Wild West as settlers bring their markers of ‘white civilization’: railroads, schools, telegraphs, and agriculture. Gast’s well commercialized and remembered painting turned print tells a celebrated story of white Americans’ movement westward and the conquering of an alien landscape.

*American Progress* is one of the most relevant pieces of visual culture from the settling of the American frontier, but considering the importance of photography to the history of the modern American West, a painting should not be the sole evidence for analyzing the history of America’s internal empire. I argue that William Henry Jackson’s photography across his entire career tells a similar story of *American Progress*.<sup>1</sup> Jackson’s photographs hit every beat and subject of Gast’s famous painting, and he provides even more information to study the White Gaze and processes of Orientalism on American Indians, the American West’s landscapes, and settler development. Reading Gast’s painting left to right, we see American Indians running away from white ‘civilization’ on horseback and out of the frame to make way for settlers. In both Jackson’s photographs and Gast’s painting, American Indians are presented as existing in a primitive past. For example, both present them as half-naked, without modern

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<sup>1</sup> William Henry Jackson (1843-1942) was “The Pioneer Photographer,” famous for his picturesque views of railroads, American Indian life, and impressive landmarks of the American West. Born and raised in New York and a Union Civil War veteran, Jackson traveled westward until he opened his first photography studio in Omaha, Nebraska in 1867. Following this, Jackson joined geologist Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden in the U.S. Geological Survey, and from 1870 to 1878. His 1877 *Descriptive Catalogue of Photographs of North American Indians* gave critical information about American Indian civilizations and people across the entire United States. His work was placed in museums and exhibitions, giving the public his interpretation of indigenous peoples in the American West.

He then became a commercial photographer for the railroad and tourism industries. In the 1890s, he traveled across North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia with the World’s Transportation Commission, and his images of the progress of “civilization” and development were displayed at the Field Columbian Museum in Chicago in 1898.

saddles or weaponry, and living in unremarkable homes. Also, both artists' works show white 'civilization' conquering open landscapes and nature; the buffalo flee out of frame and disappear to make way for ox-pulled plows and cultivation. Another similarity rests within the center plains in *American Progress*, alongside the majority of Jackson's landscapes, which are limitless and open for the taking. This sets up the fourth and final stage of American settlement in the White Gaze, a glorious development marked by industry and tourism.

Photographs spanning William Henry Jackson's long career tell the story of settler colonialism, revealing racial ideologies that continued the slow death of American Indian nations and ending with the close of the American frontier. The first step in this process was the Orientalizing and Othering of North American Indian nations, cultures, and individuals. Jackson did this in his private business and working for the federal government on the Hayden Expedition of the U.S. Geological Survey. By presenting indigenous people as subaltern and uncivilized, image-makers of the frontier like Jackson made them seem undeserving of claim and rights to the land. Instead, the 'progressive' and 'industrious' United States would bring civilization to the promised land. This brings us to our second stage in Jackson's colonial image-making: the assertion that the American West's landscapes were open for the taking and ready to be developed. Even moreso, Jackson presented American Indians as a vanishing race who would no longer need the territory. If the land was perceived empty of human presence, then there would be no fears of displacing a foreign entity when developing the land and reaping its natural resources. This was the exact purpose of the U.S. Geological Survey, which documented American Indian nations, and sent information on newly 'discovered' geographical features to its 'friends,' generally large businesses, magnates, and investors. In the final stage of Jackson's career out West, these magnates hired him to advertise white developments of tourism, railroads, and mining. The Orientalizing of American Indians was not just an ideological project, it directly facilitated the settlement of the American West and the extermination of indigenous cultures

and peoples in North America. By the time Jackson left Denver to go abroad and back to the American East, the United States Census and historian Fredrick Jackson Turner famously declared the frontier closed. Jackson was there to witness and take part in the project of settler colonialism from after the Civil War until the very end, leaving us with tens of thousands of images in the process.

## Theoretical Framework

Photography plays an essential role within the study of United States history, especially in respect to the settlement of the American frontier. When the daguerreotype was invented in 1839, Americans were laying claim on vast stretches of land from Texas to Oregon. By the end of the next decade, camera “operators” were working past the Mississippi River with tripods, chemicals, and silver plates. Adding to the already vivid collective imagination of the West, photographs helped Easterners visualize “a fabled place of fantastic topography, exotic peoples, [and] the place where the nation’s future would unfold.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, while America’s future seemed glorious to the white majority, expansion and Manifest Destiny meant the displacement and erasure of indigenous people perceived as primitive.

The theoretical concept of the White Gaze is essential to studying the intersection between photography and race, especially in the American West. The racial biases of artists and audiences permeate photographs of American Indians, frontier landscapes, and development. In his influential *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture*, scholar Martin A. Berger argues “images do not persuade us to internalize racial values embedded within them, so much as they confirm meanings for which the discourses and structures of our society have predisposed us.”<sup>3</sup> Prejudices against peoples of the Americas

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<sup>2</sup> Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 1.

have been in the white colonizers' minds since Columbus' arrival. Visual culture created under the White Gaze brought racial bias along with it. So, photographs did not create racist ideologies; instead, they reflected the thoughts and ideas that were already embedded in the collective's memory. Needless to say, the White Gaze does not mean that all whites had an identical worldview and lens, but it maintained that racial ideologies were easily shared, especially across visual culture. When looking at visual culture, these ideologies are recognizable and consistent.

The White Gaze on North American Indians has been extensively studied in recent historiography. Many European historians studied transatlantic perceptions of American Indians, but they tended to focus on Indian nations around the American Revolution. The 100th anniversary of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition seems to have sparked deeper Americanist interest in the White Gaze; the Smithsonian institution paid homage to the original exhibition and its controversial Indian exhibit.<sup>4</sup> Three years later, in 1979, historian Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. released *The White Man's Indian*, now considered one of the most important studies on the white view of the many indigenous North American civilizations. From Columbus to the present, Berkhofer and other scholars have argued there were three major trends in how whites define American Indian life: "(1) generalizing from one tribe's society and culture to all Indians, (2) conceiving of Indians in terms of their deficiencies according to White ideals rather than in terms of their own various cultures, and (3) using

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<sup>4</sup> "Centennial Exhibition, Indian Exhibits," Photographic Print (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1876). Smithsonian Institution Archives Record Unit 95 Box 61 Folder 5, [https://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris\\_sic\\_8249](https://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_sic_8249) (accessed August 4, 2021). ; PBS., "People & Events: The Centennial Exposition of 1876," *American Experience*, [http://www.shoppbs.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/grant/peopleevents/e\\_expo.html](http://www.shoppbs.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/grant/peopleevents/e_expo.html) (accessed August 4, 2021). ; Judy Braun Zegas, "North American Indian Exhibit at the Centennial Exposition," *Curator* 19 (1976): 162-173.



moral evaluation as description of Indians.”<sup>5</sup> The White Gaze also tends to view American Indians as being in/from the past, for conjectural history placed them in a ‘previous stage of civilization.’ This myth continues into our current media where Indians are still placed in a fictitious past, so few Americans think of the millions living and working in modernity.<sup>6</sup>

When American Indians are defined in opposition to these white ideals, white society is at the same time defining themselves. If the indigenous peoples are said to be living in the past as a dying ‘breed,’ then white society is telling itself that they live in the progressing present, looking toward the future: “Only civilization had history and dynamics in this view, so therefore Indianness must be conceived of as ahistorical and static. If the Indian changed through the adoption of civilization as defined by Whites, then he was no longer truly Indian according to the image, because the Indian was judged by what Whites were not.”<sup>7</sup> When white society thought itself industrious and progressive, they also defined the American Indian as indolent and backwards. This binary opposition between Native and white Americans is an essential fact of the White Gaze.

While today’s anthropologists and ethnologists are still reconciling with their disciplines’ racist pasts, the modern day is still rife with these misrepresentations. We see it in American sports, where American Indians are mascots who are presented as fixed in a mythological, warrior past.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the American Museum of Natural History’s controversial statue of Theodore Roosevelt triumphing over a Black man and American Indian man depicts the indigenous man in 1600s Plains garb. The creators of the statue, and by extension the society that created them, generalized Indian culture as indistinguishable in different spaces. In actuality, New York

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<sup>5</sup> Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to Present* (New York, NY: Random House, 1979), 25-26.

<sup>6</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 29.

<sup>8</sup> My high school *alma mater*, Council Rock High School North (Newtown, PA), still uses “Indians” as a mascot.

City's American Indians were living in the modern present, some constructing the Empire State Building, George Washington Bridge, and Chrysler Building. Ignorant because of the White Gaze, the sculptors constructed a more 'exotic' looking American Indian man. These misrepresentations harm over 6.79 million American Indians by jeopardizing their culture's right to exist in modernity. The trends historians outlined on the White Gaze and the American Indian persist.

Orientalism is highly similar to the White Gaze framework. While world historians have adopted the ideas in Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism*, Americanists have not tended to use Orientalism as a framework to analyze American imperialism, whether internal or external. I suggest that Orientalism is not a purely European affair; rather, white society in the United States 'Othered' indigenous North Americans as justification for conquest. While the geographic regions and people in these two contexts are different, the process of turning imperially-biased knowledge into the power to govern through empire is mostly the same. Using Said's postcolonial critique as a lens both places America's settler-colonialism in an international context and reaffirms the fact that internal empire is still empire.

Said outlined the patterns and processes of Orientalism in 1978. First, Orientalism is the academic tradition of studying the real or perceived differences between "the Orient" and "the Occident. Next, the accumulation of knowledge on the Orient, typically filled with errors and ideological misconceptions, was a powerful tool for domination by the Occident. Said argued that the academic discipline allowed Europe "to manage--and even produce--the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period."<sup>9</sup> Most of all, Orientalism allowed Europe to define itself in opposition to its perceptions of the East. If 'Oriental' people and cultures were primitive, violent, and irrational, then it meant to the Orientalists that their own Western culture was civilized, peaceful, and marked by reason. In this sense, the

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<sup>9</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 2-3.

Orientalist framework fits perfectly within the concept of the White Gaze directed at American Indians described above.

If Orientalism and the White Gaze are both similar and important, why have American historians not placed the two concepts in serious conversation with each other? The most obvious answer is that the original analysis of Orientalism was specific to conceptions of the people in the Eastern hemisphere. Regardless, it is still uncommon for historians to study American gazes of the Middle and Far East. These studies are limited to seeing antisemitism and anti-Islamicism within all of the Americas, not just the States.<sup>10</sup> Beyond this, Orientalism would be useful to view internal colonization in an international context, which is not common.<sup>11</sup> Some want to bring the postcolonial framework of *Orientalism* into Americanists' conversations. John Carlos Rowe's "Edward Said and American Studies" provides an excellent example of this desire: he "stressed U.S. imperialism as a twentieth-century development," scholarship before its release already "examined the 'internal colonialism' of slavery, American Indian genocide, manifest destiny, and sustained conflicts with other colonial powers in North America."<sup>12</sup> Rowe proposed there must be a closer relationship between postcolonial studies and American ones, especially because it stands as today's largest empire. Because both Orientalism and the White Gaze investigate the making of the Other, American studies should not be limited to using the latter.

This project heavily utilizes photographs as primary sources. They require special attention and processes to understand them and distill meaning. Philosopher Walter

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<sup>10</sup> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Genealogies of Orientalism and Occidentalism: Sephardi Jews, Muslims, and the Americas," *Studies in American Jewish Literature* (1981-) 35, no. 1 (2016): 13-32. (Accessed June 29, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Hoxie, "Retrieving the Red Continent: settler colonialism and the history of American Indians in the US," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6, 1153-1167, 1154, 1158.

<sup>12</sup> John Carlos Rowe, "Edward Said and American Studies," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2004): 33-47, 36-39, (Accessed June 29, 2021). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40068214>.

Benjamin famously argued that mechanical reproductions made by a camera are not reality: “[they comprise] certain factors of movement which are in reality those of the camera, not to mention special camera angles, close-ups, etc.”<sup>13</sup> This observation may seem obvious to us today, but many in the nineteenth century saw photographs as unquestionable snippets of reality.<sup>14</sup> Examining what is excluded from the frame is equally important as what lies within. The method of publishing is also important, whether the photographs were displayed in museums, travel guides, informational catalogs, or postcards. Analyzing a photograph requires knowledge of the creator, the context of production, the subject, its audiences, and their respective biases. Like any other source, a picture is never objective.

The convergence between Orientalism and photography has been extensively studied as a promising topic in postcolonial studies. Colonial photography needs careful consideration because it reveals intersections between many different gazes. Sociologist Jane L. Collins and anthropologist Catherine A. Lutz explored these intersections within National Geographic, which shares many similarities to Jackson’s Survey and commercial photography. They defined seven unique gazes: of the photographer, institution/magazine, reader, non-Western subject, Westerns with locals in pictures, many mirrors or cameras in pictures, and the academic gaze. The institution’s gaze asks how photographs are edited and curated, while the non-Western subject’s gaze and expression questions the right of the viewer to observe. All of these gazes reveal the exercise of power in photography, and this power is based on social context, not a universal or essential quality within an image. The explicit western gaze of experts, scientists, and government officials demonstrates this power:

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” trans. Harry Zohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1969). <https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/benjamin.pdf> (accessed January 31, 2021).

<sup>14</sup> Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 43-44. ; David Prochaska, "Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal," *African Arts* 24 (1991): 40-47.

“The gaze, in its lack of reciprocity, *is distinctly colonial*. The Westerners do not seek a relationship, but are content, even happy, to view the other as an ethnic object.”<sup>15</sup> The historical frameworks of Orientalism and photography apply phenomenally to studying photographs of American Indians and the settling of the American West. Some Americanists already use this lens of colonial photography, but do not acknowledge the importance of Orientalism and postcolonialism in their studies.

### **Orientalizing the North American Indian**

When William Henry Jackson took portraits of American Indians in the field and the studio, he Orientalized them in ways that matched Said’s model. First, he treated them as an attraction; selling exoticized and fetishized images of Indians was his business’ main product and essence. Second, Jackson extensively studied them, using his implicit power of an Orientalist observer to catalog the Other. Thirdly, he designated American Indian people into two general groups: ‘good’ Indians and ‘bad’ ones. The former shedded their ‘Indianness’ through assimilation, while the latter were defined as thieving and violent savages. The key difference between the two groups was their reactions to the presence of white society, or to Jackson as a photographer himself. Still, his evaluation of both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Indians was based on the Othering and Orientalizing of indigenous society.

After he worked and traveled on a transcontinental journey to California, William Henry Jackson settled in Omaha, Nebraska and founded the Jackson Brothers’ Studio in 1867. When he was not in the studio making portraits of American Indians he hired, or helping Omahans photograph their properties and families, he was traveling to American Indian reservations and communities. Equipped with tripods, lenses,

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<sup>15</sup> Jane Collins and Catherine Lutz, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes: The Example of National Geographic,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 134-49, 135, 139, 142, <https://www.oca-student.com/> (accessed January 30, 2021).

plate holders, silver nitrate and other chemicals, Jackson ventured in his wagon-turned portable darkroom on a mission to create and sell 'Indian portraits.'<sup>16</sup> Creating Indian portraits for commercial sale was at the center of Jackson's business model, and they were the main attraction of his early work at his namesake studio. Othering American Indians was inherent to the product of 'Indian portraits.' Jackson was able to make a living by exoticizing American Indians and using their image to attract customers.

Jackson's storefront sign (see Figure B below) both proves the commercial promise of American Indian photography and shows how Jackson exoticized indigenous people. The original illustration by F.O.C. Darley, titled *When Pawnee Meets Sioux*, depicts two Indian soldiers fighting on horseback. The man on the right seems to be the noble hero of the story, as he sits on a mythical white horse with a stoic face. The combatant on the leftward black horse attacks with an aggressive visage. The latter is likely to be the Dakota ("Sioux") man given the sign would match Jackson's opinions of both tribes from his *Descriptive Catalogue*: the Pawnee's "inveterate foe, the Sioux, harassed them continually; drove them repeatedly off their reservation, and despoiled their villages. This warfare and disease soon reduced them to half their former number."<sup>17</sup> This sign suggests that American Indian people would be either a vanishing hero or a violent villain, and little in between. As we will later see, Jackson often differentiated between

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<sup>16</sup> At the time, 'Indian portraits' were a common field of commercial photography. American Indian subjects were incentivised to visit a studio to pose in exchange for cash or material payment, or a photographer would go directly to American Indian nations and reservations. These images were sold as souvenirs, postcards, and decorations for white buyers.

Peter B. Hales, *William Henry Jackson and the Transformation of the American Landscape* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1988), 29, 67.

<sup>17</sup> William H. Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue of Photographs of North American Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), 64.

which Native tribes he perceived noble and others which were violent.

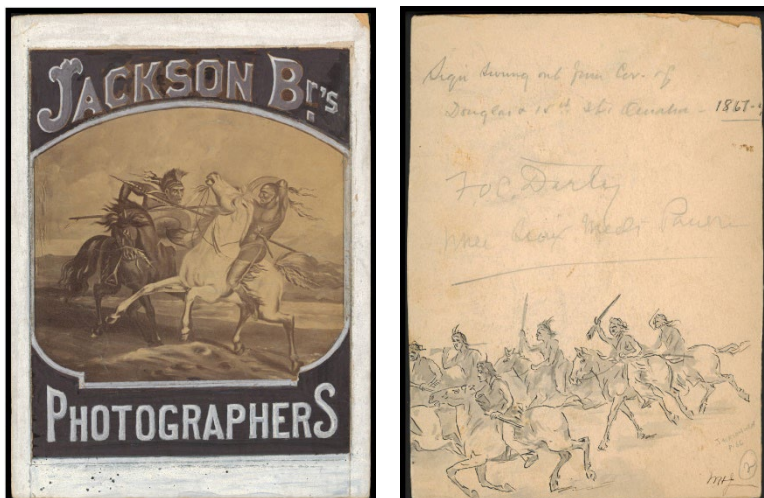
What is more important about this sign, however, is the fact that Jackson used American Indians as an exotic attraction to increase business (Figure B). The two soldiers are depicted as being in ancient warfare, isolated in blank scenery. Instead of using guns, they fight with spear and shield, which fits the Orientalist trend of placing native people in an ahistorical and static past.<sup>18</sup> On the back of the image there are outlined sketches of other horse riders on the charge, but these ones are holding guns. It is interesting that Jackson's photographs never depicted American Indians as violent, but they are brutally fighting on the forefront of his brand image. The two horsemen are also without saddles, signaling their placement in a primitive past. Jackson sold the mental image of Indian violence and primitivism to the public, and he was not the only one "who sought this particular niche in the image market, [as] Indian imagery as commodity was a phenomenon that lasted well into the twentieth century."<sup>19</sup> Some like Thomas A. Easterly showcased their 'Indian portraits' in galleries, and others like the later Edward S. Curtis sold volumes of photo books about *The North American Indian*.<sup>20</sup> The fact that a passerby Omahan would see Jackson's sign and enter for Indian prints proves how Jackson and similar artists turned American Indian likenesses into an attraction.

Jackson's commercialization of American Indian people and myths was not just limited to his photography. It penetrated through both of his autobiographies, *The Pioneer Photographer* (1929) and *Time Exposure* (1940), which were based on his diaries. Jackson begins both of these narratives with his migration westward from 1866-67, abandoning his romantic engagements in Vermont for a commission as a "bull-

<sup>18</sup> Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, 29; Said, *Orientalism*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Rachel M. Sailor, "Collecting Indian Portraits: Governor Kirkwood, William Henry Jackson, and the Nineteenth-Century Photographic Album," *Great Plains Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2014): 257-73, 261, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24465541> (accessed June 22, 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 212-218.



**Figure B:** (L) Jackson, William H. *Jackson Br's Photographers*. Sign swung out from Cor. of Douglas and 15th St. Omaha. Ink, wash, and tempera on albumen print on card stock (17 x 12.5 in). Omaha, NE: 1867. (R) Original image "When Pawnee Meets Sioux" by F.O.C. Darley. From Brigham Young University: L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library. <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/Jackson/id/2202/rec/1> (accessed August 20, 2021).

Courtesy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

whacker" who drove the wagon-train forward.<sup>21</sup> Jackson's first encounters with peoples of the Americas were filled with white myths of native primitiveness and violence. In *Time-Exposure*, he wrote about a dangerous Native population, but he never interacted with violent indigenous people either before or after a treaty was signed, proving he prioritized a dramatic narrative over historical accuracy. His memoirs and diaries show he feared Indians while bull-whacking the Great Plains towards California, then Omaha. He wrote on travel security: "In the dangerous Indian country in Montana and upper Wyoming very large [wagon] trains were not uncommon. But trains of two or even three hundred wagons were really eight or ten

<sup>21</sup> Trains of bull or ox-wagons were the main modes of transportation into the American West before railroads. Jackson worked as a "bull-whacker" who worked in shifts to move the train along.



separate trains traveling close enough together to discourage attack.” Similarly he noted that the guards were not only tasked with watching the grazing cattle but also for marauding Indians. His fear makes sense considering the White Gaze, and he recalled hearing reports of killings and scalplings almost every day.<sup>22</sup> After all, American media was covering the military engagement and war with many American Indian nations from the imperial perspective.

Jackson also feared the supposed inclinations towards theft among American Indian people. This myth is potentially based on the Western ideal of private property over community and general collectivism, where the Other’s behavior is assumed to be in its most evil and anti-civilized form. Jackson recounts taking his required Henry rifle and Remington pistol on the Survey, which every member had to carry in case of hostile Indians in uncharted regions.<sup>23</sup> He found thievery a likely event in any Indian encounter, so he kept his revolver, boots, journal, and sketchbook close by his side at night.<sup>24</sup> Similarly when trading with Navajo Indians for food, they apparently “looked with covetous eyes upon our equipment of saddles, cantinas, and aparejos. Since we had heard much of their thieving propensities, we took extra precautions to have everything made of leather as near to us as possible when we made our beds for the night.”<sup>25</sup> Jackson’s fears of Indian thievery and violence is understandable given the Orientalist image of American Indians in contemporary popular culture and literature. Generally, the “agents of civilization” of Western settlers would resolve conflicts between noble townspeople and marauding Indians. Also, a hundred of years of captivity narratives starring ‘uncivilized’ Algerians or American Indian ‘savages’ were popular with whites on both sides of the Atlantic. Even after the North American Indian was declared benign following the 1868 treaty with the Dakota (“Sioux”), which set up the modern reservationist and isolationary

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<sup>22</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 108, 113, 117.

<sup>23</sup> Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 55.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 121.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 154.

policies, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Congress of Rough Riders* famously continued narratives of “‘wild’ Indians acting their savage images.”<sup>26</sup> Because Jackson created his self-narrative to be entertaining and profitable, it makes sense that he *hinted* at popular conceptions of Native violence despite never experiencing it. While Jackson told his readers “there was no telling what the irresponsible young bucks might do,” his true personal experiences begged to differ.<sup>27</sup>

In Jackson’s Orientalist narratives and photography, American Indians were not only violent, but they were also simple and undignified. In his Omaha Studio, he constructed stage sets that matched Eastern American myths of Indian life; he placed straw, boulders, and branches in front of a poorly painted backdrop to create an imaginary natural setting.<sup>28</sup> Rachel M. Sailor points out how his *Descriptive Catalogue of Photographs of Native Americans* had “multiple views of the sitter, often frontal and in profile, ‘captured for eternity in strange poses that were not of their own making.’”<sup>29</sup> The photograph below of Num-Payu shows that this practice continued outside of the studio. Also within it, where the backdrop was neutral, the subject would stand on Victorian patterned rugs scattered across the floor. So, there was either a disconnect between the American Indian’s clothes and the Western studio or they were placed in a facade of the natural world, influencing white society’s imagination of an ‘authentic’ North American Indian.

Jackson also used Native clothing as a marker of civility, and he paid particular attention to nakedness as a sign of primitivity. In his drawn illustration of O-Hun-ga-Nuzhe or *Standing at the End* of the Omaha tribe, he described the man as “a brave, nearly nude, decorated with ‘war-paint’ and astride a characteristic Indian pony.” However, O-Hun-ga-Nuzhe was

<sup>26</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 95-101.

<sup>27</sup> Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 141.

<sup>28</sup> Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 29.

<sup>29</sup> Here, Sailor quotes Richard W. Hill, “Developed Identities: Seeing the Stereotypes and Beyond,” in *Spirit Capture: Photographs from the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Tim Johnson, 41 (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998). ; Rachel M. Sailor, “Collecting Indian Portraits,” 263.

far from nude, only shirtless with a substantial pair of shorts. Jackson also falsely made a connection between decorative paint and war. He made no note of the Omaha tribe in conflict in his *Descriptive Catalogue*.<sup>30</sup> Regardless, this conflation is important. He recorded many instances of nakedness among Native children. When reflecting on his westward migration, crossing a Wyoming river, he “came a band of about fifty Cheyenne Indians, making the crossing at the same time--big braves on little horses, squaws leading the pack ponies, dogs and papooses perched on top, and other juveniles paddling along in nature’s garb only.”<sup>31</sup> However, while his frontier crew crossed that same river naked, he did not refer to them as in nature’s garb. Instead, they were only naked to get the crossing job done. His team was not an extension of nature, but he thought the Cheyenne were.

Regarding indigenous women in his field photography and autobiographical narratives, Jackson tended to exoticize and fetishize American Indian women he came across. Recalling his journey to the Moqui pueblos (Hopi nation) in many sources, Jackson took an extreme interest in a Hopi woman, Num-Payu or *Harmless Snake* (Figure C). As number 983 in his *Descriptive Catalogue*, he describes her bun-styled hair as a sign of her maidenhood. He called her a comely young maiden, and then described ethnologically how “after marriage the hair is allowed to hang down the back, or is gathered in a small knot at the back of the head.”<sup>32</sup> His interest in her provides evidence for Said’s claim that *Orientalism* was an exclusively male providence, where the male-power and travel fantasy portrays women as creatures to be described and won.<sup>33</sup>

His sensual descriptions of her do not end there. In his first autobiography *The Pioneer Photographer* (1929), he remembers her visage fondly:

She was short of stature and plump, but not unbecomingly so. Her eyes were almond shape, coal

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<sup>30</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 52-53.

<sup>31</sup> Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 104.

<sup>33</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 207.



**Figure C:** William H. Jackson, “984. Num-Payu,” Photograph, (c1872). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00865](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00865) (accessed July 17, 2021).

*Courtesy of Princeton University Library Special Collections*

description and portrait of Num-Payu. First is his explicit linguistic linkage of American Indian style to the non-West and the Orient. But this hairstyle was unique to Hopi women, uninfluenced by the Orient. Jackson used the word Oriental to describe her nation’s style as exotic and ethnically different from his ‘standard’ of white culture. Secondly, he connects her lighter complexion to her beauty. Jackson makes a similar

black, and possessed a voluptuous expression, which made them extremely fascinating. Her hair was arranged in that characteristic Oriental manner, peculiar to her tribe, which denoted her a maid. (...) Her complexion was much lighter than that of her family, and every movement of her head or exquisitely molded hands and arms or bare little feet was one of faultless grace.<sup>34</sup>

There are a few things to note about his

<sup>34</sup> William H. Jackson and Howard R. Driggs, *The Pioneer Photographer*, ed. Bob Blair (Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2005), 156.

equation when describing Dakota-Mandan women in his catalogue.<sup>35</sup> To Jackson's White Gaze, fair is beautiful, maybe because it distracts them from finding Otherness, and that closer to white was seen as more civilized. Similarly, Jackson found signs of virginity attractive, whether it be Num-Payu's hair or Dakotan celebrations of sexual purity via ceremony. His ideal of Oriental women, as was typical of the Orientalist gaze, was "passive, seminal, feminine, even silent and supine."<sup>36</sup> We see this in the way he posed Num-Payu, sitting passively below a door frame. As a photographer, he has the power to make her submit and present herself before him as he wanted her to do, not as she might have chosen for herself. He wrote both descriptions of Num-Payu five and fifty-seven years apart from his last meeting with her, yet he remembered her body almost as if he was her long-lost lover. In fetishizing Num-Payu for her 'white' attributes, he made her his own *Miss Saigon*. The male gaze of Orientalism is explicitly clear in Jackson's male travel fantasy, and he capitalized on this by turning Native women such as Num-Payu into an exotic attraction.

Moral judgements of American Indians were not limited to Jackson's autobiographies. They pervaded his more 'scientific' *Descriptive Catalogue*, where assimilation always took precedence over 'Indian savagery.' In description "1071. Auguste" of the Pembina Band of Ojibwe Indians, he makes note of his "reputation of being a miserable, worthless Indian, unwilling to work, and adhering with great tenacity to the heathenish customs of his tribe."<sup>37</sup>

Jackson printed this portrait, but the photographer is unknown.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting how Jackson ascribed meaning to others' work (only one third of the Catalogue's portraits were Jackson's own). The stereotype of the indolent Indian also

<sup>35</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 138.

<sup>37</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Photographer unknown, likely William H. Jackson, "1071. Auguste," Photograph, (1860-1877). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00030](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00030) (accessed July 25, 2021).

showed how white society valued its Protestant work ethic. Also, Jackson does not speak more about these “heathenish customs,” but he pointed out how Auguste abandoned the Catholic faith after he was baptized. To Jackson, Auguste’s rejection of the white religion was the rejection of assimilation and “civilization.” Jackson’s approval of an individual Native man depended on the subject’s acceptance of white presence and ways.

Later in the *Descriptive Catalogue*, Jackson describes the Comanche people with the least respect of all described tribes. He first called them warlike and predatory, and claimed their traditions and history vague. After all, why would white society care about a people seemingly without a culture and heritage? He quoted the notes of W. Blackmore, a prominent ethnologist on American Indians who focused his work on “hostile tribes.” Jackson agreed with Blackmore’s assertion that the Comanche were fierce and untame savages who ate raw buffalo flesh and drank its warm blood. Blackmore called them Arabs and Tartars of the desert, nomadic and stout.<sup>39</sup> This is an incredibly explicit use of Orientalism to describe and Other American Indian people, again suggesting how important Orientalism is to studying colonial relations in the U.S. settler state. Afterwards, Jackson quoted explorer and painter George Catlin: “In their movements they are heavy and ungraceful, and on their feet one of the most unattractive and slovenly races I have ever seen; but the moment they mount their horses they seem at once metamorphosed. (...) A Comanche on his feet is out of his element, and comparatively almost as awkward as a monkey on the ground without a limb or branch to cling to.”<sup>40</sup> Jackson perpetuated the myth of the primitive and violent

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<sup>39</sup> Jackson does not cite Blackmore’s work while quoting him, but it seems to be from *A brief account of the North American Indians and particularly of the hostile tribes of the plains; principal Indian events since 1862; causes of Indian wars; Indian atrocities and western reprisals; and war of extermination now being waged between the white and red men. An Introduction to Col. Richard Irving Dodge's Hunting Grounds of the Great West*. Chatto & Windus, London, 1877. This came out the same year as Jackson’s *Descriptive Catalogue*.

<sup>40</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 71-72.

American Indian by citing these men. Claims of bloodthirstiness, dirtiness, and equations to animals were staples of the classic myth of the primitive American Indian. Compared to tribes who were more assimilated and acceptant of white “civilization,” the Comanche were treated as fiends of nature. Jackson clearly preferred Natives who left their nomadic world to join white society.

This was not the only way Jackson fit into Said’s model; he also extensively catalogued American Indians as a self-proclaimed expert in the field of their study. Knowledge as power is one of the core arguments in *Orientalism*: “knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control.”<sup>41</sup> To know the Other is to have power over the other, and this principle is at the core of Jackson’s aforementioned *Descriptive Catalogue of Photographs of North American Indians*. This guide accompanied a photobook of 1,083 images of more than 25 tribes produced by the U.S. Geological Survey. Each numbered image corresponds to an entry in the descriptive catalogue, but not all entries are detailed. Heather A. Shannon points out why the dual nature of this source is so important: “even in the instances in which Jackson provides biographical information, the physical separation of image and text in self-contained volume hampers subject identification and recognition of historical context. Jackson’s catalog was intended as an inventory of a collection.” It was “a record of a vanishing race, or even as an ethnologist’s checklist of objective data.”<sup>42</sup> While Shannon describes the objective data present in the collection, these sources are highly subjective in both their data and more importantly, its subtext.

In his prefatory note, William Jackson outlined his reasons and goals for the *Descriptive Catalogue*. His purpose was based

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<sup>41</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 36.

<sup>42</sup> Heather A. Shannon, “Photographs of the 1862 Sioux Revolt: From National Sensation to Ethnographic Documentation,” *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 67, no. 2 (2006): 290-313, 313.

on his belief that American Indians were a dying race: “Now that the tribal relations of these Indians are fast being successively sundured by the process of removal to reservations, which so greatly modifies the habits and particularly the style of dress of the aborigines, the value of such a graphic record of the past increases year by year.”<sup>43</sup> Jackson did not write about the death of the North American Indian; instead, he told of the disappearance of their way of life and movement towards ‘civilization, marked most explicitly by their change in “habits” and clothing. He then proceeded to go through Native civilizations, placed together by language group, with a short description of each. He also documented individuals, taking note of their age, height, as well as their chest and head circumference.<sup>44</sup> By this time, phrenologists and French geneticist Francis Dalton (half cousin of Charles Darwin) believed that the circumference of the head had a direct link to both physical and mental ability. Similarly, Thomas Hurley Huxley wrote that a larger chest meant a better man, more likely to win “the prizes of life with the best women.”<sup>45</sup> So, Jackson’s ethnology engaged in the same practices of phrenology as geneticists and eugenics, some of whom were seeking evidence of physical white supremacy. He gave them a litany of new information and data, as well as moral judgements of Native people to compare to the ‘scientific’ data.

Jackson’s favorability of each tribe in the catalogue seems to have a direct relationship with their supposed acceptance of white ways and presence. Photo/entry “663. Washakie” (Figure D) is quite glowing, “This well-known chief is a man of more than ordinary ability, and his record as a steadfast friend of the white people has come down to the present time without a blemish. He is now advanced in years, but still retains

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<sup>43</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, III.

<sup>44</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 22

<sup>45</sup> William B. Provine and Elizabeth S. Russell, “Geneticists and Race,” *American Zoologist* 26, no. 3 (1986), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3883010> (accessed July 11, 2021): 857-87, 860-861.



his vigor, and his influence over the tribe.”<sup>46</sup> Washakie signed both the Treaty of Fort Laramie and the Fort Bridger Treaties, ceding land to white settlers in exchange for annuities and promising peace for the U.S. military. He also approved of boarding schools for young American Indians, and joined the Church of Latter Day Saints after his longtime friend Brigham Young’s death.<sup>47</sup> Jackson’s photograph of Washakie is exceptional because of its aura of respect. Even disregarding Washakie’s clean record of white relations, Jackson approved of him on a personal level. This approval came from the Chief’s acceptance of Jackson’s business:

The presence of Chief Washakie and his band of Shoshone Indians at this place was most fortunate, for Dr. Hayden was anxious to have as many photographs as possible of the Indians. About seventy lodges of the Shoshone band had been pitched not far away. Ordinarily there might have been serious objections on the part of the superstitious red man, but with the help of the officers of the camp and their interpreters, the way was made easy by first getting old Washakie to pose for his portrait, then grouping him with his head chiefs. After this, we had free run of the Indian camp, making as many views as we cared to have.<sup>48</sup>

In Jackson’s portrait of Washakie, the subject posed with dignity in Western clothing and a hat in front of a Tipi. Compared to Jackson’s photographs in similar settings, the interior of the home is hidden. Washakie gazes into the distance away from the camera, appearing to be presenting himself rather than being posed, which is quite different from his studio photography. Jackson also framed the image to make his tent seem large and important, which was far from his

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<sup>46</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 75-76.

<sup>47</sup> Museum label, “Chief Washakie Statue,” Washington, D.C., Capitol Visitor Center, *Architect of the Capitol*, <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/chief-washakie> (accessed July 28, 2021).

<sup>48</sup> Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 60-61.

norm, especially in later years.<sup>49</sup> This photo commands a great deal of respect, where Washakie “is bestowed upon the viewer, to be examined, commented upon, *appreciated*.”<sup>50</sup> Still, Jackson is the observer where Washakie remains the observed, maintaining the colonial norm of Jackson having power as the surveyor. Jackson could only make his profit if the tribe allowed him to make portraits. Washakie’s aforementioned “influence over the tribe” was Jackson’s ticket to capitalizing on their image.

Alongside Chief Washakie, one of Jackson’s most glowing judgments was of a Delaware man named Black Beaver. Jackson approved of Black Beaver’s full embracing of white ways through assimilation. Black Beaver was a more experienced man, and he served as a captain in the United States Army. In Jackson’s portrayal of him, Black Beaver responded positively to white presence, “being a remarkably truthful and reliable man, he was much sought after as a guide, and accompanied several expeditions.”<sup>51</sup> He seemed to be the ideal Indian with whom a white surveyist like Jackson would want to work. Jackson was particularly impressed with his large farms under cultivation and substantial frontier buildings. In his catalogue portraits by Alexander Gardner, he wears a western button up, overcoat, and kerchief; on his lapel sits a pin of the American flag, possibly from his service as a veteran. His hair is noticeably short.<sup>52</sup> Jackson thought highly of this “full-blooded Delaware” who wore no signs of his tribal

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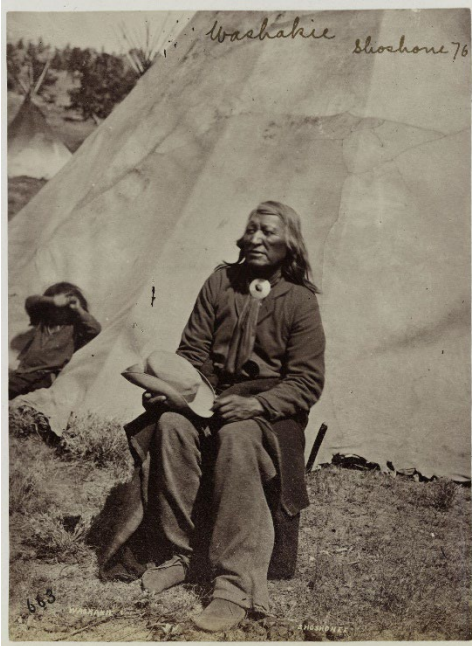
<sup>49</sup> Often, Jackson posed Survey figures between the lens and a house to showcase how small their living quarters are. Similarly, he would have full families sit in closed-off positions within tents. His use of the lens to augment Washakie’s tent is highly unusual.

<sup>50</sup> Emphasis in original. Here, Hales is writing about a similarly posed photograph, “Standing Hawk and Squaw” (1868). Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 37.

<sup>51</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 12-13

<sup>52</sup> Alexander Gardner, “181-2. Black Beaver,” Photograph, (1872). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00045](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00045) (accessed August 21, 2021).

heritage. That is, Jackson respected this Native man only as he stands fully assimilated. Black Beaver fully accepted white presence and assimilation, and this is why Jackson regarded him above the rest.



**Figure D:** William H. Jackson, “663. Washakie,” Photograph, (1870). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00694](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00694) (accessed July 21, 2021).

*Courtesy of Princeton University Library Special Collections*

While on “missionary to the Indians,” Jackson paid for permission to use their likenesses in his photographs. They would “pose for [him] by the hour for small gifts of cash, or just for tobacco or a knife or an old waistcoat. And I in turn was able to sell the pictures through local outlets and by way of dealers in the East.”<sup>53</sup> His business paid well, and he found this deal to be mutually beneficial for himself and his photographic subjects. The Pawnee, Omaha, Winnebago, Poncas, Otoe, and Osage tribes were within a hundred miles of his Omaha studio. When their members were in the city, he persuaded them to come into his gallery and pose. He wrote that “[i]t was no unusual sight to have the reception room filled with groups of blanketed squaws, papooses, and bucks, willing for a small recompense to brave the ‘bad medicine’ of the camera.”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 173. ; Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 31.

<sup>54</sup> Jackson and Driggs, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 42.

The ability to brave this “bad medicine” of the camera separated the good and the bad in Jackson’s mind. He was not the only one to use this term; an 1889 column in the Yakima Herald in Washington state crudely described Native fear of the camera. In “Washington’s Shrewdest and Thriftiest Indians, the Yakimas,” the author tells of a Philadelphia tourist drawing his kodak on a Yakima man. The “red man (...) threw up his hands and shouted: ‘Ugh! Ugh! Picture no good. Bad medicine.’” The two men reportedly traded blows before the Yakima man ran off “at full speed with an occasional whoop.” The article further mocked the tribe’s “primitive” ways of medicine and their spiritual practices.<sup>55</sup> The author presented the Yakima man as inarticulate and illogical, limited to grunts and fragmented sentences. This proves how far-reaching white myths of Indian superstition in the face of photography were. In this myth, American Indians were not modern and scientific. They were primitive, ignorant, and unwilling to learn.

The racist myth of the superstitious Indian was rampant both when Jackson was in the field and writing his autobiographies in the twentieth century. In *Time Exposure*, Jackson’s 1940 autobiography, he writes of Pawnee people considering his one-horse studio ‘bad medicine.’<sup>56</sup> When comparing Chief Ouray and Chief Peah’s responses to Jackson’s presence at the Los Pinos Indian Agency of the Ute Indians in his 1929 autobiography, *The Pioneer Photographer*, it is clear Jackson preferred Ouray who accepted him. He interviewed the chief of all Utes, Ouray, in his own home. This was one of the few formal interviews, as Ouray was a distinguished character of a tribe known to be friendly to white people. He called Chief Ouray “a steadfast friend of the whites, and has never lifted his hand against any of them, though some of his people have at times been on the point of making war.”<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Uncle Sam’s Wards, “Washington’s Shrewdest and Thriftiest Indians, the Yakimas.” *Yakima herald*, Oct 3, 1889. ; Michelle M. Jacob, and Wynona M. Peters. ““The Proper Way to Advance the Indian”: Race and Gender Hierarchies in Early Yakima Newspapers.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 26, no. 2 (2011): 39-55.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 173-174.

<sup>57</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 79.

He found Ouray's wife "comely" and noticed their matching arrays of beaded jewelry. Jackson noted the simple furnishings of Ouray's residence: a rude couch, Navajo blankets, and few scattered stools.<sup>58</sup> Jackson's description of the home in his catalogue is different. Ouray was quite wealthy from breeding horses and sheep, and he even had a carriage with a driver. Jackson considered his comfortable house to be in "a somewhat civilized style."<sup>59</sup> Jackson's narrative-based *The Pioneer Photographer* and his *Descriptive Catalogue* had different goals and were written far apart from each other. The Catalogue is the more accurate source, for Jackson went for a more exotic retelling of his experience in his autobiography. Regardless, Jackson respected Chief Ouray because Ouray accepted Jackson's company as a white surveyor.

William Jackson portrayed the young Ute chief Peah (*Black-Tail Deer*) as superstitious and inarticulate, similar to the Yakima Herald. Peah and his men protested Jackson and his camera, apparently pulling at the tripod legs and removing the darkening cloth from over Jackson's head. According to Jackson, Peah and his crew "protested that 'Indian no sabe picture'--'make 'em all heap sick--all die--pony die--papoose die.' They would listen to no explanation whatever." Peah did not see much harm in taking a picture of men, but he ordered Jackson not to include women, children, and horses.<sup>60</sup> Jackson portrayed Peah as ignorant, aggressive, and irrational. Again, Jackson's narrative story differs from his observations in the *Descriptive Catalogue*. Peah had to have been literate because he was a delegate to Washington D.C. to sign an 1868 treaty, yet Jackson made him nearly unintelligible in the memoir. He called Peah "very adroit and ambitious, and possessed considerate ability," but limited him to an obstruction to make his story more dramatic.<sup>61</sup>

Jackson misrepresented Peah to draw on myths of Native backwardness to which his Eastern audiences were already

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<sup>58</sup> (Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 120-121.

<sup>59</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> Jackson, *The Pioneer photographer*, 122.

<sup>61</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 82.

exposed. He made himself the hero of his story, prevailing against the bad native adversary of Peah: “By some conniving, in which we were assisted by the agent’s wife, we got a capital negative of Peah’s papoose. I tried to get his squaw, but when the chief observed what we were doing, he ordered her away most peremptorily.”<sup>62</sup> In reality, he disobeyed his subject’s wishes for the sake of profit and “knowledge.” So, it makes sense that Peah responded with further obstruction. Jackson’s disrespectful disregard for Native wishes shows he perceives his superiority as a surveyor. He believed the “rational” needs of white knowledge were more important than respecting the will of American Indians. Peah interrupted the “timeless authority of the observer,” but Jackson still made his images of the Papooses, reasserting the Orientalist power of the observer.<sup>63</sup> Clearly, Jackson preferred Ouray to Peah because the Chief allowed him to freely express his superiority as the one behind the lens.

Jackson’s preferable considerations of Black Beaver, Chief Ouray, and Chief Washakie disclose his Orientalist approval of assimilation. They were examples of ‘Good’ Indian individuals. Jackson extolled Black Beaver’s Delaware nation especially in his *Descriptive Catalogue*. “In 1866, by a special treaty, they received and divided the funds held for their benefit, took lands in severalty, and ceased to be regarded as a tribe. They have given up their Indian ways and live in comfortable houses. Many of them are efficient farmers and good citizens.”<sup>64</sup> The best way for American Indians to gain Jackson and white society’s approval is through assimilation. Image “471. [Omaha] Indian Carpenters Building Houses for the Tribe” (Figure E) from the U.S. Geological Survey’s government catalog shows what the United States expected from its ‘good’ Indians. Here, Ten Omaha men in Western-styled clothing work industriously to raise a Western-style house, choosing to “fall in step with progress by adopting the white man’s way.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 122.

<sup>63</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 164, 247.

<sup>64</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 12.

<sup>65</sup> Billington, *Land of Savagery*, 106.



**Figure E:** William Henry Jackson, “[Omaha] Indian Carpenters Building Houses for the Tribe,” Photograph c1868. Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00491](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00491) (accessed June 2021).

*Courtesy of Princeton University Library Special Collections*

Building school-houses for white instruction on reservations was a top priority for the U.S. federal government, and it helped them continue their goal of stripping ‘Indianness’ and culture from the American West. By accepting white ways and presence, colonization would take place “with honor,” where indigenous children would no longer run free half-naked in a natural state. Instead, they would be raised without their ‘Oriental’ qualities that the U.S. government and white citizens looked down upon. As we will soon see, the assimilationist narrative would lead to the extermination of American Indian culture and nations.

## **The Vanishing Race in the Promised Land**

William Henry Jackson’s photographs that are devoid of American Indians reveal a great deal about attitudes towards Indian removal. His images of the Western American



**Figure F:** William H. Jackson, “general view of the Cañon of the Mancos, 1874,” Photograph. (1874). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00936](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00936) (accessed August 20, 2021).

*Courtesy of Princeton University Library Special Collections*

landscape tell interconnected stories about the ‘inevitable’ disappearance of the American Indian and the golden opportunity for white development. Easterners viewed the American West as a *tabula rasa*, devoid of equal civilization or development. The U.S. Geological Survey’s discovery of ancient ruins added reason to believe the already occurring disappearance of American Indian populations was already in motion. These narratives took the blame of genocide away from the United States government and placed it on natural phenomena. This turned the land into *Terra nullius* (territory without a master), an empty land ready for economic development to utilize the land for its natural resources and bring white society Westward.

Whether the land was defined by endless plains, skyscraping mountains, or bone-dry deserts, the noticeable lack of an Indian imprint reaffirmed the American West as a blank slate for white civilization. Jackson’s photographs of landscapes were impressively empty and alien to white, Eastern observers. His “General View of the Cañon of the Mancos” (Figure F) shows a deep and endless grass valley, surrounded



by cliffs that become faded in the straightforward distance. Stylistically, he shot landscapes in sweeping 5-by-8 rectangles with significantly less sky, as the clouds would not appear clearly. The only signs of life are two lone horses buried in the lower corners while four white survey members surround and sit on top of a central boulder. Jackson depicted his survey members as dramatic actors observing nature's power, an artistic trope in his many shots of the landscape.<sup>66</sup> The bordering rocks funnel the viewer's vision to the men in the center, so the surveyors were the subject instead of the land.

It was an obvious fact to white Americans that vast stretches of land lay undeveloped, and the surveyors thought this land was bestowed on citizens of the Republic in the same way John Winthrop envisioned his City on a Hill over two centuries prior. Jackson extolled *Terra nullius* as a "sheer miracle. Free land? There had been no such thing in the old countries for so many centuries that the very idea was fantastic (...) the kindly Homestead Act of 1862, which gave land to anyone who would take the trouble to farm it and live on it."<sup>67</sup> The empty and epic horizons reveal Nature's grandeur, and it speaks to Western ideals of opportunity.

European and American conceptions of *Terra nullius* were often unfounded, but it made sense in the Western legal legacy of the Discovery Doctrine. Under this legal doctrine, European states could create titles on the basis that their explorers 'discovered' that territory.<sup>68</sup> Where Western governments wrote the laws about ownership, they were announcing that 'primitive' nations could not legally own large swaths of territory. Under contemporary international law, Europeans did not recognize native people and governments as equal to their own. In the Western legal tradition, discovery, occupation, and industrialization decided who had land rights and governmental jurisdiction, not history and culture on

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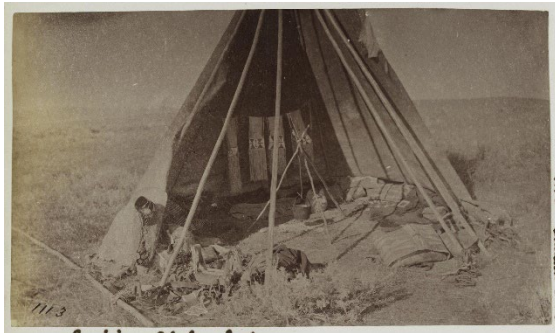
<sup>66</sup> Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 72-84.

<sup>67</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 102.

<sup>68</sup> Steve Newcomb, "Five Hundred Years of Injustice," *Shaman's Drum* (Fall 1992), 18-20. [http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm\\_art.html](http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm_art.html) (accessed August 21, 2021).

native terms. Another key legal term was *Terra nullius*, which was different from the legal grounds of *vacuum domicilium*, when land was completely free of human activity. *Terra nullius* was a specifically Western conception, for indigenous people would define their usage of the land differently: “What to White eyes appeared empty or underutilized according to European practices was seen as owned and fully utilized according to tribal custom and economy.”<sup>69</sup> The perception of underutilization of the land is particularly Western. Where nomadic American Indian nations would require large swaths of land to settle in accordance with nature’s seasonal and migratory rhythms, Western industry would settle more permanently for resource-based enterprises like mining. Europeans and white Americans defined *Terra nullius* via the norms of modern capitalism; American Indians would never describe the land as such.

American Indian usage of the land was not a significant concern for the United States government because of their views of underutilization. It was even less so for the near future, as the Eastern consensus of the American Indian future was bleak: indigenous peoples were ‘naturally’ doomed for extinction. Jackson’s photography reflected that fact, and most of his views of American Indian



**Figure G:** William H. Jackson, “1113. Indian Dick’s Lodge,” Photograph, (1878). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00700](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00700) (accessed August 20, 2021).

Courtesy of Princeton University Library  
Special Collections

<sup>69</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 120.

settlement were devoid of life. Jackson shows North American Indian settlement as desolate and abandoned in images “1113. Indian Dick’s Lodge” (Figure G) and “1025. House of the Captain, Shempopave” (Figure H). Both homes are isolated in their photographs with no men or other buildings around, taking up a majority of the frame. The landscape on the edges are flat with either grass or dirt, respectively. The Hopi (Moqui) Captain Shempopave’s home appears to be boarded up where



**Figure H:** William H. Jackson, “1025. House of the Captain, Shempopave,” Photograph, (1875). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00872](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00872) (accessed August 20, 2021).

*Courtesy of Princeton University Library  
Special Collections*

ravaged by small-pox, famine, and subsequent abandonment, their population declined from 8,000 in 1855 to 1,500 by 1877.<sup>70</sup> Jackson cited abandonment as the main reason for these statistics, and his photographs of these two occupied homes mirror this rationale. So, not only were the open landscapes empty and for the taking, but also seemingly vacant indigenous homes told white Americans that it was their turn to overtake and rule the land.

Photograph number “1113. Indian Dick’s Lodge” is more complicated both because his encampment appears more temporary and Jackson created surrounding images. Inside the

Easterners would expect windows to be. The only hints at life are the stack of ready firewood and the Captain's name in the title. Jackson noted the disappearance of the Hopi nation in the accompanying *Descriptive Catalogue*:

<sup>70</sup> Jackson, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 103-104.

flayed open Teepee, tattered blankets surround a small, manufactured cauldron over an extinguished fire pit. The following image, “1114. Indian Dick and his Family at his Home,” portrayed Dick and his unhappy looking family’s life as pitiable and impoverished. Jackson depicted Dick’s home as destitute and savage either with or without his presence, which was incredibly interesting considering Dick was a white man living among American Indians. Dick was not a Bannock man by birth; he had a lighter complexion and wore Western clothing. However, his wife and eight children were full-blooded American Indian. According to Jackson, “Indian Dick has lived among Indians as far back as he can remember, and was probably a captive from some massacred emigrant outfit. He is now married into the Shoshone tribe.”<sup>71</sup> Because Jackson was unable to imagine why someone would want to live in the society of the Other, he also assumed Dick was captured during a massacre with no evidence. Also, given how Jackson refers to “Indian Dick,” his perceived ‘Indianness’ is not a biological quality, but a social one. In the same way the peoples of the Americas would lose their titled ‘Indianness’ through assimilation, Jackson revoked Dick’s whiteness through his declared name and definition. So, it makes sense that Jackson represented Dick’s home as impoverished and abandoned. Jackson made American Indian life look unsustainable and in its final days, matching the general assumptions of white society and its gaze.

The desolate nature of these images matched the United States policy of “expansion with honor,” which was contingent upon the ‘consent’ of indigenous people. Because all Indians were presumed alike, whites thought the Indians would cede

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<sup>71</sup> William H. Jackson, “1114. Indian Dick and his Family at his Home,” Photograph, (1878). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00701](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00701) (accessed August 21, 2021). ; William H. Jackson, “1110. Indian Dick and Werwush,” Photograph, (1878). Princeton University Library, Special Collections: *Photographs of North American Indians, 1840-1879*, [https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054\\_c00697](https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/WC054_c00697) (accessed August 21, 2021).

their lands in three ways: “they (1) could withdraw westward easily and resume their migratory ways, or (2) would die of disease or other natural causes as White society approached, or (3) would become ‘civilized’ and thus disappear as Indians.”<sup>72</sup> These photographs suggest that the homeowners were the only ones in their tribe to refuse to leave, living isolated and unsustainable lives in remote dwellings. A lack of community would make hunting impossible to subsist upon, but the community was still there, just not in Jackson’s frame. Surrounding images in the collection are similarly devoid of life outside of a few horses, buildings, and portraits. These photographs played into the existing idea that American Indian life would disappear, and that the process already started.

Perhaps Jackson’s most horrifying photograph is “161. A Collection of Buffalo, Elk, Deer, Mountain-Sheep, and Wolf Skulls and Bones Near Fort Sanders” (Figure I). This was Jackson’s last photograph of the 1870 season, and its hints towards the extinction of the American Indian were incredibly disturbing. We do not know who built this trophy out of “the abundance of game that once abounded on these plains,”<sup>73</sup> but it could be Jackson or someone from the Army Corps at Fort Sanders that haunts the background. Historian Peter B. Hales, one of Jackson’s biographers, asserts that this picture is “both a testimonial to the variegated species of animal in the West and an image of death. What is most disturbing, however, is the ambiguity of the picture. Is this a description of the Darwinian hostilities of nature, hostilities that will end when man has come to the West—or is it a premonitory image of the hand of man on the landscape?”<sup>74</sup> Given that the story of the American buffalo and American Indian nations were highly interconnected, the loss of the land’s animal population by the U.S. military’s hunting practices starved Indian nations. This

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<sup>72</sup> Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 152.

<sup>73</sup> Ferdinand V. Hayden and William H. Jackson, *Descriptive catalogue of the photographs of the United States Geological Survey of the Territories for the years 1869 to 1875*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1875), 20.

<sup>74</sup> Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 93.



**Figure I:** William H. Jackson, “161. A Collection of Buffalo, Elk, Deer, Mountain-Sheep, and Wolf Skulls and Bones near Fort Sanders. Albany County, Wyoming,” Photograph, (1870). National Archives: *Series: Hayden Survey, William H. Jackson, Photographs, 1869-1878*, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/516956> (accessed August 21, 2021).

*Courtesy of Princeton University Library Special Collections*

image is symbolic of the extinction of the men and women that the United States’ people and government anticipated.

William Henry Jackson and the U.S. Geological Survey’s 1874 ‘discovery’ of ancient ruins added a deeper pseudo-historical claim to American Indian disappearance. Finding these cliff-dwellings in the Canon of the Mancos (nearly stumbling upon what would become Mesa Verde National Park in 1906) was the highlight of Jackson’s career. His presentations of his ‘discovery’ were more important than the journey itself. Survey member and publicist Ernest Ingersoll

was the first to report on the findings, and his publishings on the ruins were more myth than history, but demonstrate a typical Orientalist perspective:

Formerly the aborigines inhabited all this country we had been over as far west as the head waters of the San Juan, as far north as the Rio Dolores, west some distance into Utah, and south and south-west throughout Arizona and on down into Mexico. They had lived there from time immemorial-since the earth was a small island, which augmented as its inhabited multiplied. They cultivated the valley, fashioned whatever utensils and tools they needed very neatly and handsomely out of clay and wood and stone, not knowing any of the useful metals, built their homes and kept their flocks and herds in the fertile river bottoms, and worshiped the sun. They were an eminently peaceful and prosperous people, living by agriculture rather than by the chase. About a thousand years ago, however, they were visited by savage strangers from the North, whom they treated hospitably. Soon these visits became more frequent and annoying. Then their troublesome neighbors -ancestors of the present Utes- began to forage upon them, and at last to massacre them and devalue their farms; so, to save their lives at least, they built houses high upon the cliffs, where they could store food and hide away from the raiders left. But one Summer the invaders did not go back to their mountains as the people expanded, but brought their families with them and settled down. So driven from their homes and lands, starving in their little [homes] on the high cliffs, they could only steal away during the night, and wander across the sheerless uplands.<sup>75</sup>

Ingersoll claimed to have received this history from their guide, who told them that the aborigines were driven out by

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<sup>75</sup> Ernest Ingersoll, "Discoveries of Ancient Stone Houses and Remains of Indian Life," *New-York Tribune*. (New York, NY), Nov. 3 1874, 3, <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn83030214/1874-11-03/ed-1/> (accessed July 21, 2021).

“American Aztecs” and vandals. Their guide was uncredited with their ‘discovery,’ suggesting that whites would only credit discovery and exploration to themselves. This story came from a traditional Moqui (Hopi) myth of a great battle with 10,000 warriors, staining the red rocks with the unalterable blood of the 2,000 slain.<sup>76</sup> There is a sad irony to Ingersoll’s story, for he speaks about the extinction of an American Indian nation at the hands of Ute Indians who were contemporarily dying at the hands of white expansion. This story of a noble, developed, peaceful yet vanished nation is more important in the Orientalist context.

The idea of indigenous civilizations falling from greatness was commonplace in Orientalist literature, and Ingersoll retells the story of ‘once great Oriental civilizations’ like Egypt in the Americas. To the Orientalist, “the modern Orientals were degraded remnants of a former greatness; the ancient, or ‘classical,’ civilizations of the Orient were perceivable through the disorders of present decadence.”<sup>77</sup> These cliff houses were thought of in the same way that the pyramids were seen as the last remnants of a great civilization, fallen from grace. Jackson’s photography of the find supported this, and he saw it as a great symbiosis between Native men and nature. In fact, he used animal imagery to declare this: “perched away in a crevice like a swallow or bat’s nest, it was a marvel and a puzzle.”<sup>78</sup> While the people of this heroic past may have created impressive ways to live in a dangerous and dry environment, he described them as just another piece of the environment and animal kingdom. But it was clear the White Gaze viewed itself as

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<sup>76</sup> William H. Jackson, *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson, Frontier Photographer, to California and Return, 1866–67; and with the Hayden Surveys to the Central Rockies, 1873, and to the Utes and Cliff Dwellings, 1874*. Saturday September 12, 1874. Ed. LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1959), 316-319.

<sup>77</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 86, 233.

<sup>78</sup> William H. Jackson, *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson*, Wednesday September 29, 1874, 309-310. ; Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 127.



commanders of the natural world, and by extension, American Indian people.

The ruins' abandoned quality corroborated the aforementioned conceptions of *terra nullius*. To white observers, these relics of civilization-past suggested that American Indians had no place in the American West's present. The 'discovery' of the ruins gave the United States more evidence that the land was open for the taking. Moreso, Ingersoll blamed the fall of these civilizations on American Indian people, suggesting that they lost the right to govern the land. Because the United States had the resources and capital to re-develop this region to its former glory, they thought they had the *duty* to undertake this glorious Orientalist task. While the U.S. government published the survey's findings for every business in America to jumpstart the development of the region, Jackson and other members of the Hayden Survey were eager to show their 'discoveries' to the curious public.<sup>79</sup>

It seems Jackson was planning for exhibitions from the moment he 'found' the cliff-ruins. While doing field work at the new archaeological site, Jackson worked extensively both behind the camera lens and outside it. Jackson and his comrades measured the houses, wondering if they had been temples, and he sketched them in great detail in one of his many notebooks.<sup>80</sup> His sketches of the pueblos and the surrounding mountains are spatially impressive, and he took great care to detail them. These sketches served as the guidelines for the detailed models he and fellow survey member William Henry Holmes would construct for the exhibition. At the *Casa del Eco* in Hopi (Moqui) territory, they collected artifacts from the sandstone where the Canyon de Chelly ends, the Chinle: "Glazed pottery (mostly fragments), hallowed stone grinding basins, ax heads, arrow tips, and spear

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<sup>79</sup> Ferdinand V. Hayden and William H. Jackson, *Descriptive catalogue of the photographs of the United States Geological Survey*.

<sup>80</sup> William H. Jackson, Sketchbook, "Indian Pueblos," 1874, Box 8, Folder 4, William Henry Jackson Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, New York. ; Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 233.

points abounded. Only our need to travel light kept us from departing with an immense haul.”<sup>81</sup> He transcribed “hieroglyphics,” cave and cloth paintings of horsemen hunting deer under anthropomorphized suns into his notepad, noting the colors and key details of each for later re-creation and display.<sup>82</sup>

Jackson presented his findings at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, the first World’s Fair held within the United States, on the nation’s 100th anniversary.<sup>83</sup> The North American Indian Exhibit at the Expo was the brainchild of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Office of Indian Affairs, and the Smithsonian Institution. The primary objective for Assistant Secretary to the Smithsonian Spencer F. Baird was to create an outstanding ethnological and archeological exhibit, presenting a good impression and enlightening the public about Indians, who Easterners thought were primitive and barbaric.<sup>84</sup> While sounding well intentioned, this exhibit did little to change white perceptions of Indian inferiority.

The debate on whether to create an inanimate exhibition or a live one was intense. Baird pushed to have American Indian representatives, and he wanted to invite the “most intelligent” or educated Americans from the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory, or the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole nations. Knowing that American Indian behavior would reflect upon the federal government, Baird would want them to comply with a 13-point checklist, where “the individuals selected had to be more white than Indian. Each family head had to be influential in his tribe, speak English, have a pleasant disposition, be the ‘cleanest and finest looking,’ and have a wife ‘well skilled in household arts,’ a clean child, a dog, and a pony. They should bring with them samples of housing, utensils, and “implements of superstition

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<sup>81</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 238.

<sup>82</sup> William H. Jackson, Sketchbook, “Indian Pueblos,” 1874.

<sup>83</sup> The official title was The International Exhibition of Arts, Manufacturers, and Products of the Soil and Mines, but it was more commonly referred to as the Centennial Exhibition.

<sup>84</sup> Judy Bruan Zegas, “North American Indian Exhibit at the Centennial Exposition,” *Curator* 19 (1976): 162-173, 163.

and religion.”<sup>85</sup> The exhibition’s directors only wanted those that fit the image of a ‘good Indian’ to attend, but this directly conflicted with their exhibits’ own goals. In the end, the proposed invitations were canceled, but the committee’s planning reveals a great deal about the White Gaze on peoples of the Americans.

Baird did not include the more ‘civilized’ tribes in more settled areas of the countries, the reason being “their mixture with whites and negroes and their adoption of their manners and customs renders them less interesting as objects of ethnological display.” The organizers simultaneously wanted to show off Indian culture in a vacuum untouched by white influence and refused those who were deemed uncivilized. Petitions requesting Indians to come were rejected out of fears that the exhibition would become a sideshow, and they only would allow their presence if they were under absolute control of government offices, which they were. While some Indian families were invited, the organizers refused funds for travel and permission to stay near the fairgrounds at Fairmount Park. Still, over 300 Americans from 53 tribes camped on the Centennial grounds farther away. But they were only visitors and not a part of the exhibit. They needed Congressional authority to leave their reservations to visit, and they were generally the aristocracy of Eastern American nations.<sup>86</sup> Racist visitation policy not only prevented Western Indian people from representing themselves, but it also turned the exhibit inanimate.

The inanimate nature of the North American Indian exhibit at the Centennial Exposition peddled the idea that Americans were a vanished race. The organizers’ narrative prioritized stories of assimilation over extinction, so they displayed artifacts from the past and present. The differentiation between native past and present was not

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<sup>85</sup> Robert A. Trennert, “The Indian Role in the 1876 Centennial Celebration,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 1, no. 4 (1976): 7-13, 9-10.

<sup>86</sup> Zegas, “North American Indian Exhibit,” 163-64 ; Trennert, “The Indian Role in the 1876 Centennial,” 9-10.

temporal, but based on perceived levels of integration with 'progressive' white society. Baird contradicts himself regarding his desire to invite assimilated and English-speaking Americans and to present artifacts from the most uninfluenced and remote nations. This contradiction is based on the contemporary belief in conjectural history and peoples moving from primitivity to civility. Artifacts collected by existing government agencies showed the life of Indians on reservations, and they were generally contrasted with objects from the least influenced tribes. According to an Annual Report for the Smithsonian, the exhibit was meant "to reconstruct the past history of the different races of man," and grant "an opportunity of studying those tribes of Indians which have come least under the influence of civilized man."<sup>87</sup> This is conjectural history at its most clear. Regarding narratives of primitivism, organizers placed the American Indian presentation alongside the Smithsonian's famous natural history exhibits, as was F.V. Hayden's geological findings on his surveys. Because indigenous artifacts were placed near taxidermies of a 15-foot Walrus, polar bears, fish, rocks, and minerals instead of new technology like Alexander Graham Bell's telephone, they were limited to being perceived as a part of the natural world.<sup>88</sup> In other words, "the Indians were essentially displayed as specimens, not as human beings who maintained a different life-style."<sup>89</sup> Throughout the exhibition, the white ideal of assimilation and progress took precedence over showing the real lives of American Indians. This makes sense because white Americans believed that assimilation would lead peoples of the Americas to shed their 'Indianness.' If not, they were relics of the past on an empty and transforming landscape, overtaken by the tides of time. Within this white narrative, the choice was theirs: civilize or get

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<sup>87</sup> Trennert, "The Indian Role in the 1876 Centennial," 7, 10. ; Smithsonian Institution, *Annual report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution ... for the Year 1876* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1876) 10, 34. ; Zegas, "North American Indian Exhibit," 169.

<sup>88</sup> PBS, "People & Events: The Centennial Exposition of 1876."

<sup>89</sup> Zegas, "North American Indian Exhibit," 171-172.

left behind, redirecting the blame of cultural genocide from white development to ‘Indian aversion to change.’

William Henry Jackson’s additions to the exhibit further supported the image that Indian life and culture was disappearing. Jackson and the Hayden Expedition brought many photographs and artifacts from the American Southwest, and tribes from Arizona, Utah, and Colorado were the most represented in the Expo. Jackson created models of the cliff-ruins and *reportedly* abandoned Hopi pueblos with fellow survey member William Henry Holmes, who became an archaeologist and ethnologist for the Smithsonian after the Survey disbanded.<sup>90</sup> He recounted building and presenting clay models based on his sketches with Holmes in his autobiography:

I spent the best part of six months shaping clay to exact scale models, forming the molds, casting the finished objects in plaster, tinting them to their colors in nature, and assembling the whole. When the fair opened, this display attracted more attention than the many photographs and all the rocks and relics of Dr. Hayden’s career. It drew almost as many visitors as Dr. Alexander Graham Bell’s improbable telephone.<sup>91</sup>

The models told the same story as his images of their real life counterparts, a story about the tragic fall of the American Indian from greatness. The overhead miniatures revealed complex and seemingly planned cities of brick and mud, some with water flowing through the middle. The models of the cliff-houses were framed in a vertical format similar to his images.

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<sup>90</sup> Because he wrote his *Descriptive Catalogue* while preparing and presenting the Indian exhibit, Jackson’s 1877 narrative of the abandonment of the Hopi Nation would have penetrated the exhibition’s narrative and commentary. Jackson, *The Pioneer Photographer*, 149 ; Zegas, “North American Indian Exhibit,” 171.

<sup>91</sup> These models still exist today in the Smithsonian archives, the American Museum of Natural History, and private collections. By law, the Smithsonian received ownership of many U.S. materials from the Centennial Exhibition.

Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 243.

This made both the ruins and their models appear miniscule and on the verge of collapse. These models and their accompanying images were symbolic of the perceived decay of American Indian civilization. Popular reviews continued this message: “Newspaper accounts abounded with phrases such as ‘other remains of the aboriginal races of this continent,’ ‘a large collection of relics,’ and ‘whose remains are found in the Western and Southern States.’”<sup>92</sup> Visitors to Jackson and Hayden’s award-winning presentations and display departed with confidence that North American Indians were a race of the past.<sup>93</sup>

The inanimate nature of Jackson’s photographs, artifacts, and models corresponded to the exhibit’s subtextual message that through either assimilation or ‘natural’ disappearance, American Indians were the vanishing race that had fallen from previous greatness. This was good news to many visitors who received word of Sitting Bull’s victory over General George Custer at the Battle of Little Bighorn as the Exhibition continued.<sup>94</sup> Displaying American Indians as museum antiques under the grand imperial setting of a World’s Fair was nothing short of a show of power. The Exhibit’s proclaimed mission was to preserve and protect the material culture and history of the North American Indian, but it was really a tactic of domination. While Jackson and Baird showed off a ‘dying’ Native culture in the East, United States soldiers were actively and literally killing it in the West. Just like in the Orientalist’s Rome and Alexandria, all great civilizations must fall before an outside force could save them; better yet if they became the new *Terra nullius*.

### **Advertising Development in Jackson’s Commercial Age**

The United States and its people could develop the West with a clean conscience if they imagined American Indians were

<sup>92</sup> Trennert, “The Indian Role in the 1876 Centennial,” 12.

<sup>93</sup> Jackson and Hayden presented together, both winning bronze medals at the Centennial for their exhibit.

<sup>94</sup> PBS, “People & Events: The Centennial Exposition of 1876.”

primitive, assimilated, and/or vanished from the landscape. The previous sections were concerned with ideas, which are important in their own right. But, all of these aforementioned racial biases led to the project of Western development and settler-colonialism. If Americans believed American Indian nations and peoples had a right to the land, then the Hayden U.S. Geological Survey and similar commissions would not exist because it would be a foreign government examining past its legal purview. But the United States only applied the discovery doctrine to similar European empires, so private enterprises were given free reign in the American West.

In the 1880s, the wealthy entrepreneurial class paid William Henry Jackson handsomely to photograph the glories of development in the growing region and promote business across and around Colorado. Bent on seeing markets arise in the American West, rich men hired Jackson to create advertisements for railroads, tourism, and settlement. Jackson held a direct stake in transforming what he once portrayed as free, open, and rugged landscapes to something closer to American Eastern 'civilization.' By 1893, historian Fredrick Jackson Turner and the U.S. Census Bureau famously declared the frontier closed. To white eyes, the West was finally won.

In 1878, the future of the Hayden Geological Survey was uncertain. The Hayes executive branch and Congress slashed budgets all across the federal government, and Jackson's top salary with the Survey only reached \$175. Because private commissions made the majority of his annual income of \$2,500 to \$3,000, Jackson left the Survey in 1879. By this time he had made a name for himself across the West and within a Gilded-Age government highly influenced by private interests. James Stevenson was the right-hand man of Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden of the Geological Survey's fame. Stevenson helped Jackson jumpstart his commercial career, placing him in contact with railroad magnate Jay Gould. Gould was a Robber baron: "around 1880, in his own person, he *was* the Missouri Pacific, the Kansas Pacific, and the Central Pacific. And both the Denver Pacific and the Denver & Rio Grande, wherein lay my immediate interest, were almost his private property." Gould was amazed with Jackson's 1869 photographs along the

Union Pacific Railroad, and he was in desperate want of advertising not only for his railroads but also for their destinations. Through a massive commission, Gould secured Jackson's income and place in the commercial sphere, "after all, it was a matter of money."<sup>95</sup>

Jackson had to sell the American West as a desirable place to settle. Luckily for Jackson, development in the American West was a project long before the 1880s, and the exponential nature of expansion led to an explosion of growth. Jackson was based in Denver, which saw around 650% population growth between 1870 and '80 with nearly 31,000 people settling there. Ten years later, the city reached 106,713 residents, nearly 30 new settlers every day.<sup>96</sup> Again, these people would not be moving westward if they believed American Indian nations had sovereignty over the land; moreover, Colorado would not have received statehood in 1876. Jackson also saw the Yellowstone Park he 'discovered' become an attraction by 1878, with rangers, tourists, and a cavalry detachment to defend against remaining Indians.<sup>97</sup> In settled Colorado, Jackson's duty no longer was to 'scientifically' document the geography; instead, he was employed to sell the West to tourists, internal migrants, and businessmen looking for opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, and further development.

Jackson's first major commission was with Gould's Denver and Rio Grande (D&RG) Railroad in 1881. He travelled with Survey friends Ernest Ingersoll and Thomas Moran in a private car, with another whole parlor car converted into a rolling darkroom.<sup>98</sup> Photographing 'civilization' in the

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<sup>95</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 251-255.

<sup>96</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium, Colorado* (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1924).

<https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/06229686v1-7ch05.pdf> (accessed August 2, 2021).

<sup>97</sup> President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act into law on March 1, 1872, protecting over 2 million acres and creating the world's first National Park. Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 248-249.

<sup>98</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 253 ; Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 144.





**Figure J:** William H. Jackson, “On Marshall Pass above Mears,” Photograph, glass negative (8 x 10 in.), c1881-1886, Denver Public Library, Digital Collections: *History Colorado, William Henry Jackson Collection*, <https://digital.denverlibrary.org/digital/collection/p15330coll21/id/8237/rec/164> (accessed August 20, 2021).

West, Jackson depicted railroads, industry, and attractions from the unique gaze of a paid tourist. This point of view permeated his images, and his checks for commission kept his physical views of development beyond favorable. Because the purpose of his images changed, he further favored the picturesque over the descriptive. His ‘80s photographs were published in dozens of illustrated books, some printing engravings and others facsimiles. They were sold as tourist souvenirs in Colorado, and most recounted railroad itineraries that paired stations with nearby places of interest. Jackson’s job was to photograph not only the locomotives but also their destinations.

Jackson’s “On Marshall Pass above Mears” shows a D&RG locomotive and passenger train cruising through a deep and mountainous landscape. Men and women in suits, hats, and dresses or skirts pose on the tail of the passenger car, separated from the soot-covered operators. Jackson showed that the West was both a space for dedicated laborers and experience-seeking tourists who could invest into its future. It

was commonly held that the American West was synonymous with opportunity, both in the East and in Europe.<sup>99</sup> This image (Figure J) promises democratic settlement for people of all economic classes, which was precisely Jay Gould's goal. He wanted to sell a vision of the West that would entice Easterners to visit and then settle, boosting the customer base for his railroads.

In this image, the attraction is not the empty landscape free of the vanished indigenous peoples, but the railroad journey through it. The train's text "Denver & Rio Grande" proclaims *how* visitors can tour the alien Rockies from the faded town and buildings in the background. Jackson also celebrates the apparent harmony between nature and industry, both highly valued in the twentieth-century United States.<sup>100</sup> It seems this photo and others like it "served to introduce a vision of the West as recreation to a large and lucrative Eastern marketplace. As the railroad served the urban-industrial matrix with raw materials--coal, iron ore, precious metals--so also it would serve by providing an escape from the human consequences of urbanization and industrialization."<sup>101</sup> Railways more commonly served industrial routes, but Gould and Jackson wanted visitors to see trains as more personal tools. In Jackson's photographs turned advertisements, the locomotive transformed into a gateway for experiences, equating the epicness of the destination and the journey.

Jackson's images advertised Colorado destinations in a litany of souvenir books like *Gems of Northwestern Colorado* (c. 1885) and *The City of Denver, Its Resources and Their Development* (1891-92). Chain & Hardy, the leading Denver booksellers, financed many of Jackson's projects during this period before he incorporated as W. H. Jackson Photograph and Publishing Co. in 1892.<sup>102</sup> These books are incredibly rare and hard to access today. *Rocky Mountain Scenery* (c. 1887) was produced by Gould's Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Company, and it has

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<sup>99</sup> Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 228-229.

<sup>100</sup> Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 61

<sup>101</sup> Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 145

<sup>102</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 258

full-page reproductions of Jackson's images of places of interest along the railway.<sup>103</sup> He photographed man-made destinations like Denver's Broadway Theatre to natural wonders like the Balanced Rock in Colorado Springs' Garden of the Gods.<sup>104</sup> The respite of the American West brought Eastern comforts to an incredible landscape without fears of encountering vanished, 'primitive' peoples.

While working for various railways near Colorado, Jackson also received commissions from dozens of hotels that learned the value of advertising local destinations alongside themselves. Jackson mechanically reproduced the "Colorado Hotel & Bath House" (Figure K) from the Denver & Rio Grande depot. The hotel and mountainous background picturesquely complement each other, and many at this time believed development augmented the American West's inherent beauty. According to Nathaniel Pitt Langford, Yellowstone's first superintendent, the natural world once "adorned with villas and (...) ornaments of civilized life" would possess "adaptabilities for the highest display of artificial culture, amid the greatest wonders of Nature that the world affords (...) Not many years can elapse before the march of civil improvement will reclaim this delightful solitude, and garnish it with all the attractions of cultivated taste and refinement." Development did not solely excite those with an economic interest; many believed civilization made the environment even more gorgeous. The Colorado Hotel and Bath House did exactly this, adding a slide, fountain, and pool deck next to the natural hot spring. The 'civilized' landscape was also

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<sup>103</sup> Harrell, *William Henry Jackson: An Annotated Bibliography*, 35-36.

<sup>104</sup> William H. Jackson, "Broadway Theatre, Denver," Photoprint, collodion (16 x 21 in.), c1880-1890?, Denver Public Library: *Special Collections*, <https://cdm16079.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15330coll22/id/61895> (accessed August 20, 2021). ; William H. Jackson, "Balanced Rock, Garden of the Gods," Photoprint, albumen (16 x 21 in.), c1880-1890?, Denver Public Library: *Special Collections*, <https://digital.denverlibrary.org/digital/collection/p15330coll22/id/61736/rec/8> (accessed August 20, 2021).



**Figure K:** William H. Jackson, “Colorado Hotel and Bath House,” Photograph, glass negative (8 x 10 in.), c1882-1884, Denver Public Library, Digital Collections: *History Colorado, William Henry Jackson Collection*, <https://cdm16079.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15330coll21/id/8566> (accessed August 20, 2021).

architected with even rows of trees, controlled lawns, and proper paths, as “natural wonders needed development to realize the potential of their whiteness.”<sup>105</sup> These hotels added Eastern creature comforts to the previously rugged West for dressed-up guests, allowing ‘civilization’ to triumph over often harsh nature. Best of all, this man-made Eden was only a few hundred paces from the advertised D&RG line.

For those less fortunate than rich tourists, Jackson photographed various industries from paper milling to bottling,<sup>106</sup> revealing the economic opportunity the developed

<sup>105</sup> Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 63-64.

<sup>106</sup> William H. Jackson, “Manitou Bottling Works,” Photoprint, albumin (4 x 7 in.), c1890-1900, Denver Public Library: *Special Collections*, <https://digital.denverlibrary.org/digital/collection/p15330coll22/id/3917/1/rec/1> (accessed August 20, 2021). ; William H. Jackson, “Paper mill”



**Figure L:** William H. Jackson, “The Iron Silver Mine, Leadville,” Photoprint on sheet (4 x 6.5 in.), c1882-1890, Denver Public Library *Special Collections*: WHJ-10163.  
<https://cdm16079.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15330coll22/id/41709>  
 (accessed August 20, 2021).

West provided. Leadville, the ‘sky city,’ was founded by gold prospectors around 1860, but it fell into a lull as gold on the surface was extracted. Fourteen years later, some found rich deposits of lead and silver, so the city boomed.<sup>107</sup> “The Iron Silver Mine [of] Leadville” appears to show ideal industry, with no visible signs of pollution or noise. Depicting cleanliness was essential, as “tourists came West to escape the slag heaps and pollution of the Eastern industrial region, and Jackson’s patrons and clients were anything but interested in seeing such destruction replicated in images of the west.”<sup>108</sup> Still, the exploitation of the land spoke to the white goals of progress. Jackson photographed Leadville’s mines nobly because the White Gaze saw ripping coal and metals from mountains was the essence of utilitarianism.<sup>109</sup> To white industrial America,

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Photoprint, albumin (4 x 7 in.), c1882-1890, Denver Public Library: *Special Collections*,  
<https://digital.denverlibrary.org/digital/collection/p15330coll22/id/41230/rec/7> (accessed August 20, 2021).

<sup>107</sup> Jackson, *Time Exposure*, 255.

<sup>108</sup> Hales, *William Henry Jackson*, 151.

<sup>109</sup> Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*, 80.

development created jobs, products, and wealth. Jackson's commissioned photographs of mines sold a tasteful image of industry to both rich tourists and prospective prospectors.

William Henry Jackson's commercial age of promoting railroads and their destinations was the result of years of Othering American Indians and discrediting their claims to the land. Jackson had a direct stake in the advertising of industry, development, tourism, and settlement, so it makes sense that Jackson looked upon the American internal empire favorably. This was not the only reason, for development was a part of the cultural zeitgeist of American progress. Once again, this colonial project would only happen if American Indian people were seen as undeserving of rights and claim to the land; even more so if they were conceived as having vanished from the landscape altogether.

## Conclusion

By analyzing the literature and visual culture William Henry Jackson produced across his career, this project has shown how colonial gazes Othered American Indians, facilitating the settling and development of the American West and the baggage that came with it. This project also proves Orientalism as a useful lens to understand relations between the United States as a nation and various American Indian nations from the settlement of Jamestown to the closing of the frontier and beyond. The dualistic nature of Orientalism also emphasizes how the American 'nation' defined itself as progressive and savvy, therefore deserving of expansion.

The key findings of this project begin with the dual titles of 'good' and 'bad' American Indian individuals and nations. 'Good' American Indians would assimilate with white America and shed their 'Indianness' while 'bad' ones would continue living on their culture's terms. The perception that both groups would bring the "natural" disappearance of the race and its culture is equally important. The former would incorporate into the empire, and the latter would "vanish" as a result of their "unsustainable" and "rude" way of life. Jackson's landscape photography and 'discovery' of ancient ruins

confirmed that conception. All of this image-making smoothed concerns over development in the American West, assisting the settler-colonial project. If the territory was thought of as an Eden, open for the taking, then it makes sense that the United States took it. It may sound simple, but this project proves that collective racial ideologies precede and allow actions of racial or cross-cultural injustice.

Further research on William Henry Jackson's colonial photography abroad with the World's Transportation Commission from 1895 until 1898 could show how Jackson was an Orientalist in the traditional, European sense. That study could also reveal how publications like *Harper's Weekly: A Journal of Civilization* strengthened public opinion on American Imperialism at the turn of the twentieth century, especially since Jackson was working from the perspective of a colonial tourist.

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## **War at Home**

### **Insecticides in 20th Century American Advertising**

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“The War Developed It. The Army Tested It. The World Read About It. Now Ready for Civilian Use.”<sup>1</sup> These words, printed in the *Henderson Daily Dispatch* in late 1945, announced the arrival of the insecticide DDT as a consumer product. Throughout World War II Americans saw bold headlines and front-line reports of DDT saving American soldiers from death and illness by diseases like malaria for which they had no natural immunity. These headlines established DDT as a tool for “total victory” and as a weapon against typhus in Naples and in military camps to ward off mosquitoes and other illness-carrying insects throughout the rest of the war.<sup>2</sup>

The headlines and reports surrounding DDT over the course of the war primed consumers to readily accept it as the next wonder chemical when it was released for public

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<sup>1</sup> “D.D.T. is Here!,” *Henderson Daily Dispatch* (Henderson, N.C.), Sept. 24, 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund P. Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals From World War I to Silent Spring* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 129-130.

consumption in August of 1945.<sup>3</sup> An article in *The Science News-Letter* from February of the same year announced “More DDT Victories,”<sup>4</sup> and another in September claimed that “DDT Can Wipe out Plagues” and pushed its ability to win “warfares” against insects inside the home.<sup>5</sup> In addition to its success during the war, the way advertisers presented DDT contributed heavily to how it thrived once on the public market. Advertisers framed insects and other pests as enemy invaders, and played on still fresh wartime anxieties towards the “other” and the intrusion of foreign forces onto home soil in their marketing of DDT and other insecticides. These chemicals became weapons that civilian consumers could use to fight in their own war: the war on bugs.

While the postwar attitude towards pest control leaned into the militaristic rhetoric that carried over from the battlefield into homes across America, this had not always been the case. After World War I, when the public still saw insecticides and similar chemicals as too dangerous, advertisers had to choose a different marketing tactic that would reinforce the societal trends of the time. Right after the end of the war, advertising agencies attempted to put a military tone into their advertisements, but the negative public perception of chemical warfare—something many thought had no place in a “civilized world”—and chemical warfare’s intrinsic link with insecticides generated the opposite effect than the one they had intended.<sup>6</sup> Seeing their growing pile of failures, advertisers tweaked their approach and began to sell insecticides as a solution to a multitude of health problems and the key to a clean and inviting home. This adjustment aimed to entice a public enthralled by the national push for cleanliness as a sign of

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<sup>3</sup> David Kinkela, *DDT & the American Century: Global Health, Environmental*

*Politics, and the Pesticide That Changed the World*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 32.

<sup>4</sup> “More DDT Victories,” *The Science News-Letter* 47, no. 7 (1945): 102–102, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3921701>.

<sup>5</sup> “DDT Can Wipe out Plagues,” *The Science News-Letter* 48, no. 10 (1945): 147, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3922283>.

<sup>6</sup> Russell, 61.

American morality stemming from campaigns for the “Americanisation” of immigrants that were seen as unclean.<sup>7</sup> Advertisers eventually moved on to specifically target housewives, who they believed would try almost anything if it meant upholding their social standing and making them appear as truly clean and upright American citizens.

When considering the changes American culture underwent throughout the first half of the twentieth century, insecticides have not been a significant part of the academic conversation. This gap is even more pronounced in the realm of media studies, where scholars have focused more on subjects like fashion trends, health fads, and home goods to examine the social landscape through consumer culture. On the occasion that insecticides are discussed, however, scholars like Edmund Russell, David Kinkela, and Michelle Mart emphasize DDT and present insecticides only within the context of war and politics, without significant discussion of the social implications of the role of advertising in the interwar and postwar insecticide industry.

Edmund Russell, a historian who has focused on the intrinsic connection between war and the environment, has written extensively on chemical warfare and particularly DDT. His book *War and Nature* analyzes the American chemical industry, the influence of World War I and World War II on the insecticide market, and the use of militant rhetoric in some advertising in the interwar period and in much advertising in the postwar period. Unfortunately, where the book very much succeeds in outlining the connection between war and insecticides, it equally neglects the wider social forces at play in the way these chemicals were sold to the public, particularly in the interwar period.

David Kinkela’s *DDT & the American Century* and Michelle Mart’s *Pesticides, a Love Story*—both key texts in the wider body of research on insecticides in American history—do not investigate insecticides in the interwar period outside of a passing mention or reference. This is not unreasonable in the

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<sup>7</sup> Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 136-138.



case of Kinkela, whose book focuses entirely on DDT, which certainly got almost the entirety of its traction because of World War II. The absence is more notable in Mart's case, however. *Pesticides, a Love Story* presents the case that Americans "had been embracing these chemicals since news of them had first burst onto the scene during World War II and continued to do so in the twenty-first century."<sup>8</sup> Thus, each author suggests that insecticides simply were not a part of the consumer market prior to World War II or at best dismisses any involvement as minor in the grand scheme. This goes a step beyond Russell's too brief consideration of social influence beyond war and denies any significance to the interwar period in America's relationship with insecticides by excluding it from analysis. This intense focus on the postwar landscape alone leads scholars to lose increased dimensionality through analysis of the interwar insecticide landscape, and of the role social mores played in driving sales.

The interwar and postwar periods in America required dramatically different ways of thinking about and marketing insecticides to consumers, reflecting the different societal pressures and national trends each respective consumer base faced. This paper intends to examine and explain these differences through contextual analysis of advertisements for insecticides ranging from the late 1910s to the early 1950s, with complementary analysis of herbicide advertisements in the postwar period because of the similar treatment they received. Ephemera like newspaper advertisements or other commercial materials reveal much about the time period in which they are produced, and help us better understand the shifts American society underwent before and because of World War II and how these shifts influenced the way insecticides were marketed. DDT's explosion onto the insecticide scene and the ensuing postwar insecticide boom is well documented by historians like Edmund Russell, David Kinkela, and Michelle Mart. Such an emphasis on DDT's postwar social impact has

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<sup>8</sup> Michelle Mart, *Pesticides, a Love Story: America's Enduring Embrace of Dangerous Chemicals* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), I.

led to a disproportionate focus on insecticides after World War II and a discounting of the landscape of insecticides in the interwar period. The absence of work done around the interwar period and its importance to the relevance of insecticides outside of a simply military context impedes our ability to see the scope of the cultural impact these chemicals had. This paper intends to contribute to filling that gap while also recontextualizing insecticides as representative of the changing American relationship with war and as instrumental to the institution of the individual as a moral building block of postwar American society.

### **Insecticides Before 1920**

To best understand insecticides as they existed in the twentieth century and as we know them now in the twenty-first century, we must first look back at their origins and history leading up to World War I. To maintain a robust agricultural industry, farmers turned to numerous of forms of pest and weed control over the centuries. Those forms eventually culminated in the synthetic chemical solutions we recognize and utilize today. However, these chemicals did not enter the picture until after the push for development caused by the newfound need for stronger and more efficient poisons for both humans and pests that arose during World War I.<sup>9</sup> Prior to the development of those solutions, American farmers relied on natural and mechanical methods of controlling the damage done to their crops in the struggle between man and the forces of the natural world.

Prior to the arrival of the English in North America, the indigenous population had developed a delicately balanced system of cultivation that, for the most part, kept them out of the line of attack from pests—with the assistance of fire to defend against the rest of the problematic insect population. When the English colonizers arrived and saw the vast wealth of resources the land had to offer, they began a process of mass deforestation that fundamentally changed the landscape and

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<sup>9</sup> Russell, 36.

opened their fields up to devastation. Disruption of the native insects' original diet and ecosystem meant they had few options to turn to but the new swaths of food planted by the English.<sup>10</sup> With little knowledge of how to prevent these attacks, farmers in the pre-industrial period relied on word of mouth from neighbors and articles in the agricultural press that described the various methods of pest control others had tried. They started with manual removal by hand or tool, and then moved on to natural repellents like charcoal, salt water, or tobacco; planting their crops on specific schedules that circumvented the insects' life cycles; deploying lures to divert the insects' attention; and manipulating the soil itself by drenching it in boiling water.<sup>11</sup> This continued until the mid-to-late 1800s when the rise of entomology as a profession brought new developments and ideas to the struggle against destructive pests.

Entomologists turned the focus to disrupting the insects' life cycles and introducing natural threats like predatory insects and chickens to fields and gardens everywhere.<sup>12</sup> They also promoted reliance on inorganic chemicals like arsenic. This was an evolution of the natural solutions first used in the 1700s, such as pyrethrum—a mixture of flour, water, and chrysanthemum petals—and hellebore—extracted from a herbaceous flowering plant, diluted with flour, and dusted on crops—which worked alongside substances like soap, potash, nicotine, and sulfur powder.<sup>13</sup> A number of early inorganic chemical insecticides arose from this cultural push, including Paris green—an arsenite popular as a dye in Victorian paint and wallpaper pigments—in 1868, and its cousin London purple in 1878.<sup>14</sup> These substances remained the standard until World War I brought a revolutionary shift in the way chemicals were used and weaponized against both people and pests.

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<sup>10</sup> James E. McWilliams, *American Pests: The Losing War on Insects from Colonial Times to DDT* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 11-13.

<sup>11</sup> McWilliams, 19-24.

<sup>12</sup> McWilliams, 41-44.

<sup>13</sup> McWilliams, 47.

<sup>14</sup> McWilliams, 95.

World War I marked a significant period of change in the attitude of Americans towards the uses of chemicals, but especially to their potential within the agricultural industry. Eager to outshine Germany's chemical advancements and compensate for the loss of German dye product after England blockaded that country's exports, American chemists broke into the dye business and became globally competitive within the span of a few years.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the war increased demand for cotton—a plant that the boll weevil had ravaged for years—and sent entomologists into overdrive searching for a newer and more powerful solution, which they found in calcium arsenate and the first synthetic organic chemical insecticide: paradichlorobenzene or PDB.<sup>16</sup> Entomologists also sought to defend other materials essential to the war effort like castor beans, grain, wood, and cattle, which drove the need for strong chemical defenses against pests even higher.<sup>17</sup> The military introduction of gassing and spraying technology to better eradicate human enemies also contributed to the development of insecticides as it provided scientists with a more efficient way to dispense their products. In fact, the Bureau of Entomology worked closely with the Chemical Warfare Service during this time to see which gases used in fighting could be safely employed as insecticides to combat the spread of insect-borne diseases among troops, since they now had the ability to cover mass numbers of soldiers at one time.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, chemicals that found such success on the battlefield faced harsh criticism on the home front and were a hard sell to the public after the war ended. During the war, gassing presented a more “humane” way to swiftly dispatch enemy soldiers *en masse* and created an additional use for chemicals like hydrogen cyanide and arsenic beyond agricultural insecticides.<sup>19</sup> They were, however, met with caution from the public at the outset despite their efficiency.

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<sup>15</sup> Russell, 18-19.

<sup>16</sup> Russell, 20-21.

<sup>17</sup> McWilliams, 133.

<sup>18</sup> Russell, 47-49.

<sup>19</sup> Russell, 36-42.

In the court of public opinion, gas was seen as a barbaric way to fight a war because of the horrific long-lasting effects suffered by the victims and the callous and detached way of fighting its dispersal methods demanded. It was seen as monstrous, inhumane, and most of all uncivilized.<sup>20</sup> This widespread distaste and distrust necessitated a rhetorical spin that framed the use of chemical insecticides and gases as a source of peace and something acceptable for civilian and domestic use, rather than as a tool of mass murder.<sup>21</sup>

### Interwar America

To sell to consumers in the interwar period, advertisers had to understand how to make their messages stand out among the consumer culture boom that hit America in the early years of the twentieth century. According to historian William Leach, it was evident by 1915 that America was becoming a “Land of Desire” and the “circumstance of material comfort and even of prosperity for most people throughout much of the nineteenth century was being superseded by the idea of possession...by desire rather than fulfillment.”<sup>22</sup> This development only increased throughout the years until it so overwhelmed journalist Samuel Strauss that he coined a term to encompass the hold corporate capitalism had on the American public. First mentioned in 1924 in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Strauss used “consumptionism” as a tool to explore his own feelings on the change the American public was undergoing before his eyes:

The problem before us today is not how to produce the goods, but how to produce the customers. Consumptionism is the science of compelling men to use more and more things. Consumptionism is bringing it about that the American citizen’s first importance to

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<sup>20</sup> Russell, 59-62.

<sup>21</sup> Russell, 13.

<sup>22</sup> William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 190.

his country is no longer that of citizen but that of consumer.<sup>23</sup>

Strauss' concept responded in part to the mass influx of goods to American shores, brought about by new technology that allowed perishable and living items to cross oceans and fill American storefronts; the introduction of chain stores; and a surge in the construction of department stores and other shopping centers throughout the 1920s.<sup>24</sup> These factors all enabled the public to be sucked into the coaxing grasp of consumerism and pulled under the wave of "consumptionism." In order to find success in this new environment, advertisers had to take advantage of the social pressures their target demographic faced, which—when it came to selling to housewives—meant they needed to present a product like an insecticide as a necessity under the moral expectations of cleanliness at the time.

The settlement movement of the 1890s through the 1920s set the standard for said expectations and presented a more regimented and intensive idea of what constituted cleanliness and hygiene than ever before. They based their ideology on the rising push for sanitation standards driven by the growing belief in germ theory.<sup>25</sup> To make maximum community

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Strauss, "Things are in the Saddle," *The Atlantic Monthly* 134, no.5 (Nov. 1924): 579.

<sup>24</sup> Leach, 270-279.

<sup>25</sup> This fear of contaminants that came with germ theory was also supported by the "dust theory of infection" that came around in the same time period as discussed in chapter four of Nancy Tomes' work *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* titled "Disciples of the Laboratory." This theory, based on the work of researcher George Cornet in the late 1800s and furthered by T. Mitchell Prudden, posited that infection came from the dried residues and excretions humans and animals left on surfaces and fabrics to form what we know as dust. This made the indoors appear to present even more of a health risk and introduced the risk posed by bringing in dust from outdoors where any infection produced by strangers could come into the home on a person's shoes or dragging skirts. Just as with germ theory, dust theory put the housewife in charge of keeping the household safe and clean from all polluting threats by establishing the home as the center and root of all infection and disease in families.

impact, college-educated middle-class female members of the movement moved into settlement houses in low-income areas and areas with high numbers of immigrant residents and instructed the wives and mothers there on how to keep what they deemed a clean house. Nurses also worked within the movement to spread the word about hygiene and ways individuals could do their part to assist public health efforts by keeping their environments clean and sanitary. This type of education and outreach spread from the settlement houses into schools and workplaces as sanitation workers, health officials, and manufacturers of sanitation products campaigned for widespread defense against germs and unsanitary conditions.<sup>26</sup> With so much of the responsibility for controlling home sanitation and the personal hygiene of families placed in the hands of housewives, the social climate reinforced the pressure of perfectly performing their presumed duties to their households and painted the “domestic woman as the primary agent of cleanliness and guardian of the home.”<sup>27</sup>

In addition, the ability to keep a home clean and maintain a polished personal appearance served as a measure of respectability, class, and even a sort of moral superiority over those who could not afford to do the same. This polished front marked the success of a household, and an unclean family image reflected not on the family’s reality but on the morality of the housewife.<sup>28</sup> Advertisers used this manufactured vulnerability as grounds for new marketing tactics to raise profits. Those selling insecticides took particular advantage as they had the unique position of providing a solution to a threat to the health of a household that was entirely visible and theoretically manageable, as opposed to the looming invisible threat of germs.

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<sup>26</sup> Juliann Sivulka, *Stronger Than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875 to 1940*, (New York: Humanity Books, 2001), 110-113.

<sup>27</sup> Sivulka, 113.

<sup>28</sup> Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness*, 145-147.

## Interwar Advertisements

Preventol, a product of the Haynes Chemical Company, was one notable insecticide sold in this manner. A 1923 advertisement placed in the *Evening Star* newspaper exclaimed “Don’t Swat the Fly!” in bold lettering below a detailed illustration of a fly that stood in stark contrast to the wall of text that filled the rest of the paper. The text asked how we as a society ever became comfortable simply swatting away flies and leaving “germ-reeking remains” behind. The ad emphasized the crime by the included information that a fly could have up to thirty million bacteria inside as well as outside its body. It then asked the consumer directly to think about their own home “getting its ventilation through screened doors and windows on which billions of germs have been spread with that supposedly splendid device, the fly swatter!” A laundry list of diseases associated with flies followed. Throughout the rest of the text the invisible salesman referred to flies’ disease-carrying capacity again and again and dug it into the ground at the end with a reminder that “modern” homes suffering from fly and other insect infestations when Preventol can save the day “is preposterous.”<sup>29</sup> This clear focus on decontamination and protection of the sanctity of the home can be seen throughout the product’s other advertisements as well.

In two *Charlotte Observer* advertisements from 1919, the tagline “Makes a Clean Home” was placed front and center next to an illustration of the tin which featured an older woman taking a can of Preventol to her kitchen cabinets and a second smaller illustration of a quaint home, making the intentions quite clear. The first advertisement stated “There Are Some Houses In Which Insects Are Unknown” and directly said that the role of insect manager belonged to the housekeeper who used Preventol, “the chemical hand-maiden.” Most notable is the advertisement’s use of the descriptors “convenient, pleasant, sanitary” when referring to the properties of

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<sup>29</sup> “Don’t Swat the Fly!,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), June 19, 1923.



Preventol.<sup>30</sup> Haynes sold it as something meant to ease the duties of a beleaguered housekeeper or housewife and was explicit in its sanitary focus, once again appealing to the consumer pressured to appear as clean and wholesome as possible through whatever means necessary.

The second advertisement aimed to trigger an emotional response through invocation of the housewife's role as protector of her family's health with the words "Your Baby's Health and Insects" printed in large capital letters across the top of the paper. The first sentence of the body text made evident its aim: "The connection between insects and the health of your baby is so close that it is a subject of the utmost importance to you as a responsible parent." It went on to reference vague "recent scientific investigation" that proved insects posed a serious threat to the well-being of infants by way of disease.<sup>31</sup> Here the housewife's ability to fulfill her assigned function was called into direct question, with the only clear proposed solution a continued vigorous application of Preventol to as many surfaces in the home as necessary.

Flit, a product of the Standard Oil Company, pulled housewives in with similar promises to defend the health of their children and illustrations depicting women just like them using the product. One ad featured in the *Arizona State Miner* in 1926 showed a woman with neatly shaped hair wearing an apron tied with a perfect bow pumping Flit into the air of a room—likely her kitchen—and sending fly carcasses scattering across the surface of the table below. Titled "Fly-Flit-Flop," it made the bold claim that flies "breed in filth, feed on filth and bring filth into your home" and lined it up right alongside the gentle reminder that Flit is "clean, safe and easy to use."<sup>32</sup> Another advertisement from the *Indianapolis Times* in 1929 directly called to the housewife consumer with the

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<sup>30</sup> "There Are Some Houses In Which Insects Are Unknown," *Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, N.C.), Sept. 14, 1919.

<sup>31</sup> "Your Baby's Health and Insects," *Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, N.C.), Sept. 21, 1919.

<sup>32</sup> "Fly-Flit-Flop," *Arizona State Miner* (Wickenburg, AZ), June 5, 1926.

introduction, “What one woman tells another about insects[sic].”<sup>33</sup> An illustration of the upper halves of two women in serious conversation sat at the top right of the ad; below was a veritable wall of text singing the praises of Flit, with the implication that it echoed the words real housewives shared with each other over the fence about insecticides. Again, it focused on the safety of the product and told the consumer: “You don’t have to wonder if your children are safe. You have kept them free from at least one danger – the diseases insects carry.”<sup>34</sup> It then added a sense of validity to its claims by invoking “The Government” and making the unverified claim that insects bring “death” into a home while stating that Flit provides the best avenue to prevent this from impacting the health of the family.

Perhaps the grandest example of this direct appeal to housewives and their ability to care for and protect their children also ran in the *Indianapolis Times* in 1929. In a spread that covered almost the entire bottom two-thirds of a newspaper page, the words “Indianapolis knows how to kill flies and mosquitoes quicker!” jumped out in bold and italicized font.<sup>35</sup> Three illustrations down the left side showed calm and put-together housewives spraying their bedrooms, kitchens, and outdoors with Flit. The body text claimed that the city of Indianapolis lived free from the scourge of insects inside homes because its residents used Flit and compared living with insects to outdated activities like personally pumping water or reading by the dim light of a kerosene lamp. It placed Indianapolis in a position of moral superiority with these statements: “We look out for our children’s health. We know how flies carry disease.”<sup>36</sup> This put in the mind of its audience that the housewives in Indianapolis clearly did a better job fulfilling their duties as protector of their families’

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<sup>33</sup> “What one woman tells another *about insects*,” *The Indianapolis Times* (Indianapolis, IN), July 31, 1929.

<sup>34</sup> “What one woman tells another *about insects*,” 1929.

<sup>35</sup> “Indianapolis knows how to kill flies and mosquitoes quicker!” *The Indianapolis Times* (Indianapolis, IN), July 17, 1929.

<sup>36</sup> “Indianapolis knows how to kill flies and mosquitoes quicker!” 1929.

health and encouraged them to purchase Flit so that they, too, could excel just as the other women of Indianapolis clearly had.

Flit also addressed insects' interference with familial health in earlier ads but homed in on sleep instead of disease. In 1924, the *Evening Star* ran an ad for Flit which depicted an illustration of a planet intended to resemble Earth with oversized houses dotted across its surface and large insects zipping between them and disturbing the peace of the residents within. It confidently announced, "Flies and mosquitoes wrecked the sleep of 10,492,601 people last year," and assured that, though many others fell victim to this fate, anyone with a can of Flit handy would surely enjoy peaceful sleep.<sup>37</sup> The same newspaper ran another ad in 1925 with a similar approach. The body text remained the same, but the featured illustration turned from presenting insects as a threat to the sleep health of the general populous to a more targeted attack on the consumer themselves. Instead of random homes with nothing to pull sympathy from the viewer except for the cartoonish sounds of pain scattered around the globe, this ad displayed a close-up of the events of the earlier one. Here, a couple are trapped in their bed by insects and engaged in a strenuous attempt to chase them away, with the husband standing with one foot in the bed, one foot on the bedside table, sweat pouring down his brow, and a pillow frozen mid-throw. The catchy tagline read: "station ZZZZ broadcasting."<sup>38</sup>

This unique approach seemed to work as advertisers continued to push the sleep angle in other advertisements. The *Brownsville Herald* ran one in 1926 that showed a couple in a bungalow beset by a cloud of insects coating their bodies, the walls, and the hammock the husband sits in. It proposed "days and nights free from mosquitoes" with the help of Flit.<sup>39</sup> Another notable advertisement, also from 1926, portrayed the

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<sup>37</sup> "Flies and mosquitoes wrecked the sleep of 10,492,601 people last year," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), July 10, 1924.

<sup>38</sup> "station ZZZZ broadcasting," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), June 29, 1925.

<sup>39</sup> "Slam! Swat! Wham! An' words that end with - !!" *Brownsville Herald* (Brownsville, Texas), July 15, 1926.

“Movie of an awful night”—a four-panel comic that followed a sleeping man pestered by a single fly, awoken by a few, harassed by many, and, finally, so consumed by a whirlwind of the things that only his head is left visible.<sup>40</sup> In each of the above, the body text of the advertisement remained largely the same and put all the weight on the evocative illustrations placed at the top of every advertisement.

Advertisers in the interwar period preyed on housewives who labored under the pressure of expectations to maintain a pristine and disease-free home not for their own benefit, but to prove their morality to those around them in a tangible way. Disease and unsanitary conditions were the monsters housewives had to face daily as they became more and more aware of the danger germs presented, and their value became inexorably linked to how well they could beat them back. Insects presented a visible stain on their homes that signaled a larger germ-ridden stain on their reputations; knowing this, advertisers represented insecticides like Preventol and Flit as easy and safe solutions that would keep children healthy and give housewives more control. With a few sprays, they could eradicate insects from their homes and restore their pride.

## **Insecticides and Herbicides in World War II**

This emphasis on insecticides’ ability to create a clean and healthy home environment faded as the onset of World War II and America’s involvement brought on a new public perception of them not only as household tools but also as powerful weapons for victory in war. The new need to defend soldiers’ health in foreign landscapes and to create weapons that would lead the United States to victory propelled insecticides and, to a lesser but still notable extent, herbicides into American headlines. Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, commonly known as DDT, over all others became symbolic of the chemical surge due to its success both during and after the war. As healthy American soldiers spread across the globe

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<sup>40</sup> “Movie of an awful night,” *Arizona State Miner* (Wickenburg, Arizona), Sept. 4, 1926.

and encountered new landscapes and unfamiliar climates, they also encountered entirely new insects and the diseases they carried, against which the soldiers had no defenses. In tropical regions, mosquitoes infected scores of civilians and soldiers alike with malaria, filariasis, and dengue fever. People forced to survive in the cities reduced to rubble faced typhus spread by lice that thrived in the cramped and dirty conditions that also fostered the spread of illnesses like dysentery.<sup>41</sup> To combat these diseases and save their troops, the government initially turned to a botanical compound called pyrethrum that had seen success for pest control in the United States and during the Napoleonic wars. They quickly came upon an obstacle to this plan, however, as the majority of pyrethrum came from Kenya and Japan. The war cut off trade with the Japanese and put so much pressure on Kenya to produce it that it became impossible to balance supply and demand. The responsibility of defense against insects then shifted to the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine (BEPQ) who hired Edward Fred Knipping in 1942 to run the BEPQ's laboratory in Orlando which tested DDT to see if it could match and go beyond the efficacy of pyrethrum.<sup>42</sup> It passed the tests with flying colors—lasting four times as long as pyrethrum powders and therefore killing insects for four times as long—and could even be manufactured in the United States, which solved the import problem pyrethrum faced.<sup>43</sup> By 1943, the American military had incorporated it into their range of tools for victory.

After defeating the German forces in Naples, Italy in 1943, Americans discovered that the city's infrastructure had been devastated by the war. This left residents languishing without running water, electricity, or many other necessities that keep a city afloat and, unfortunately for the people of Naples and the soldiers stationed there, typhus-free. The unhygienic conditions and crowded groups of people created the perfect

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<sup>41</sup> Kinkela, *DDT & the American Century*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Kinkela, 15-17.

<sup>43</sup> Edmund P. Russell, "The Strange Career of DDT: Experts, Federal Capacity, and Environmentalism in World War II," *Technology and Culture* 40, no. 4 (1999): 779.

breeding ground for lice, the pest responsible for carrying typhus. September of 1943 saw only 19 cases. Then 25 in October, 42 in November, and a “full-blown epidemic” by December. At the time troops introduced DDT to the mix, around 90 percent of the city’s population had contracted typhus. American officials established 10 delousing stations in January of 1944, a number that increased to 40 by February,<sup>44</sup> and the epidemic ended in March after “1.3 million people were dusted with DDT powder at a rate of 50,000 per day.” After this success in Naples, DDT continued to be utilized by the American military throughout the War as a strong defense against insect-borne illnesses.<sup>45</sup> While much of the louse powder used in the early prevention of typhus in Naples consisted of a mix of old pyrethrum stock, British rotenone power, and DDT, DDT came out as the most popular choice which propelled it into the American consumer consciousness straight through to the end of the war when it shifted to domestic use.<sup>46</sup> In August of 1945, the War Production Board faced an incredible surplus of the chemical so they agreed to allow its release as a commercial product for purchase domestically by civilians. By June of 1945, manufacturers were producing 36 million pounds of the stuff per month as compared to the 153,000 pounds produced throughout the entirety of 1943, demonstrating the success of civilian sales.<sup>47</sup>

World War II also saw great advances in the technology needed to disperse insecticides in vast quantities. The military required tools that could cover wide areas in a short amount of time in order to effectively control pests in large areas, but the Flitguns of previous years—named for the popular Flit—released insecticide “in coarse drops that settled quickly” and made little sense in terms of regular military use.<sup>48</sup> In 1941, however, entomologists employed by the American

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<sup>44</sup> Charles M. Wheeler, “Control of Typhus in Italy 1943-1944 by Use of DDT,” *American Journal of Public Health* 36, no.1 (1946): 127.

<sup>45</sup> Kinkela, 28-30.

<sup>46</sup> Russell, *War and Nature*, 127.

<sup>47</sup> Kinkela, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Russell, *War and Nature*, 122.

government discovered a solution in aerosol mists. According to Russell, the technology for dispersing these gases developed even further and evolved into small aerosol “bombs” in the summer of 1942.<sup>49</sup> This aerosol technology extended beyond bombs into improving the spray guns of the past, which aided in the spraying of Naples, and into the development of planes specifically adapted to spray DDT through the addition of a new nozzle to the preexisting M-10 smoke tanks of the Chemical Warfare Service.<sup>50</sup> This development of insecticide technology echoed earlier developments in the realm of chemical warfare. The use of the Chemical Warfare Service’s planes to spray DDT—and the American propaganda released during this time that compared Japanese soldiers to mosquitoes and pests that required eradication—only strengthens this connection.<sup>51</sup> Propaganda also depicted Axis leaders as insects themselves facing a cloud of insecticide that eerily resembled the poison gases used on the battlefield.<sup>52</sup> The sensationalized link between chemicals that fought insects and chemicals that fought human enemies further solidified DDT’s role as a war hero in the eyes of the public. It also benefited the advertisers that would later portray insects as representative of an oncoming Communist force and set the stage for marketing insecticides as the only true defense American homeowners had against them, updating familiar rhetoric for the postwar era.<sup>53</sup>

Herbicides, too, came into their own during World War II. While not earning the same praise and glory as DDT, they faced a similar reception during the postwar period and received similar treatment from advertisers. In December of 1941, botanist Ezra Kraus went to the National Academy of Sciences and proposed overexposing rice fields essential to the survival of Japanese soldiers to hormone treatments that would

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<sup>49</sup> Russell, *War and Nature*, 122-123.

<sup>50</sup> Russell, *War and Nature*, 134.

<sup>51</sup> Edmund P. Russell, “‘Speaking of Annihilation’: Mobilizing for War Against Human and Insect Enemies, 1914-1945,” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 4 (1996): 1524.

<sup>52</sup> Russell, *War and Nature*, 121.

<sup>53</sup> McWilliams, 202.

kill the crops. Unfortunately, the logistics of using hormone treatments in this manner proved impossible in a military setting by 1943, so Kraus and his fellow researchers agreed that chemical solutions had a better chance of working.<sup>54</sup> Kraus and botanist John Mitchell discovered in summer of 1943 that the synthetic auxin growth regulators 2, 4-D and 2, 4, 5-T both proved highly effective in killing rice and continued to develop it with the intention of using it during war. At the same time, they came to the realization that they had a revolutionary agricultural product on their hands and began to drop hints publicly that these chemicals had potential for use against domestic weeds. Other researchers picked up on this, conducted studies of their own, and had enough success stories that 2, 4-D got picked up for commercial distribution in 1945. The American Chemical Paint Company's Franklin Jones applied for a patent for the use of 2, 4-D as an herbicide and the Company made the "first systemic herbicide produced on a commercial scale" and named it "Weedone."<sup>55</sup>

The imagery of pests and weeds as enemy invaders in need of destruction persisted throughout World War II and colored the public perception of insecticides and herbicides. One advertisement for a Westinghouse aerosol insecticide from 1943 referred to mosquitoes as "menaces" and "unwelcome stowaways" on military planes returning home.<sup>56</sup> DDT came to power as a defeater of lice and countless other insects across battlefields and countries—insects that propagandists used as stand-ins for the Axis powers, with racist depictions of the Japanese as lice. The dispersal method of spraying intrinsically connected insecticides to weapons because they shared technology with dispensers of poison gases that rained death upon enemy soldiers. Herbicides, initially developed as an agent of war intended for the sole destruction of vital enemy

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<sup>54</sup>Nicolas Rasmussen, "Plant Hormones in War and Peace: Science, Industry, and Government in the Development of Herbicides in 1940s America," *Isis* 92, no. 2 (2001): 301-302.

<sup>55</sup>Gale E. Peterson, "The Discovery and Development of 2,4-D," *Agricultural History* 41, no. 3 (1967): 247-250.

<sup>56</sup>"Advertisement 5 -- no Title," *Barron's National Business and Financial Weekly* (1942-1987), Mar 01, 1943.



crops, found new life as agents for maintaining domestic crops and lawns by fighting back weeds. These weeds could not escape the political framing forced onto insects as newspapers and magazines described them as an encroaching threat intending to strangle American plants if something was not done to stop them. This framing took a particularly xenophobic turn when it came to Japanese honeysuckle, referred to by *Better Homes and Gardens* in 1945 as a “Jap invader.”<sup>57</sup> The influence of war on herbicide and insecticide development cannot be overstated and is deeply reflected in the postwar advertisements for these products that displayed just how much martial rhetoric spilled over into the consumer market and American homes and fields.

### Postwar America

According to historian Andrew Shanken, wartime America called on the “citizen to carry out a patriotic duty as a consumer” and redefined the “citizen-consumer” for a new generation to come.<sup>58</sup> Regular people without any connection to the war itself grew victory gardens, rationed, and salvaged materials for the war effort, all things that linked patriotism to personal consumption and gave the women stuck at home a sense of purpose in an otherwise hopeless situation.<sup>59</sup> This patriotic form of consumptionism extended into the postwar period and blossomed under the pressures of the Cold War as advertisers saw a new perceived threat and utilized it as a selling point for their products. The government itself joined in with its own advertising campaigns. In 1946, the War Advertising Council—renamed the Advertising Council after the war—created the “Our American Heritage” campaign. It consisted of a traveling exhibit called the “Freedom Train” that housed and displayed copies of key historical American documents like the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the

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<sup>57</sup> Rasmussen, “Plant Hormones in War and Peace,” 309.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew M. Shanken, “Better Living: Toward a Cultural History of a Business Slogan,” *Enterprise & Society* 7, no. 3 (2006): 501.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew M. Shanken, “Better Living Toward a Cultural History of a Business Slogan,” 501.

Emancipation Proclamation, and the Truman Doctrine. Then-Attorney General Tom C. Clark sponsored the project with the express goal of promoting “indoctrination in democracy” as a preventive measure against foreign thought and “subversive elements” infiltrating American society.<sup>60</sup> This growing anticommunist fervor impacted consumers heavily as it pushed conformity to modern American ideals as a form of protection against suspicions of communist sympathizing, and encouraged them to buy products that best facilitated keeping up patriotic appearances.

One of the more obvious areas where this idea appears is that of suburbia and the lawn care industry. The 1950s saw a suburban explosion as developers carved into the landscape and filled it back up with rows and rows of identical single-family homes with white picket fences and, most importantly, lush green lawns. As the single most visible aspect of the mid-century suburban home, the lawn represented the ability of the family inside to care for their property, stay in step with the appearances of their neighbor’s lawns, and even their discipline and moral code to an extent. Historian Ted Steinberg refers to the trim carbon-copy lawns of the era as “crew-cut” lawns and references an apt quote from Abe Levitt—one of the pioneers of this style of neighborhood—that claimed “men are worth more if their value is high, and an unkempt creature thinks little of others and even less of himself” in regards to American soldiers having to keep their hair cut to a standard length at all times.<sup>61</sup> Even the grass underfoot could not escape martial comparisons which, in turn, meant that the tools used to cultivate it and keep lawns and the homes attached to them insect and weed free would receive the same treatment in advertisements.

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Griffith, “The Selling of America: The Advertising Council and American Politics, 1942-1960,” *The Business History Review* 57, no. 3 (1983): 398.

<sup>61</sup> Ted Steinberg, *American Green: The Obsessive Quest for the Perfect Lawn*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006), 24.

## Insecticides and Herbicides in Postwar Advertising

As those lines of crew-cut lawns grew in scope and number their maintenance was increasingly aided by chemicals like DDT. One company responsible for much of the early violent postwar rhetoric—Sherwin-Williams Paints—emphasized the killing power of their product Pestroy DDT over anything else about it. A liquid coating containing six percent DDT, Pestroy supposedly led the market in long-term killing power. In a fifteen-minute-long promotional video titled “Doomsday for Pests,” Sherwin-Williams demonstrated just how powerful this coating really was. It opened with a variety of animated insects hearing and reading reports on the deaths of their family members and other insects in their communities, then showed all the surviving insects piling into a theater to watch a video warning them of the dangers of the new threat on the street: Pestroy. The insects watched a victory reel of DDT in action during the war, footage of scientists conducting a series of experiments to demonstrate Pestroy’s potency, and animated diagrams of how the insecticide seeped into the feet of the insects that landed or crawled on it and triggered erratic behavior, paralysis, and death. The video ended with a sobering announcement for the insects in the audience: “Pestroy cannot miss, and we insects cannot escape. Remember and take warning. Pestroy kills insects!”<sup>62</sup> With its sensationalized language and aggressive visuals, this commercial presented a harsh reality for insects and an inviting prospect for homeowners everywhere.

Magazine advertisements for Pestroy took an even harsher approach with a new emphasis on the destructive killing power of the product, vastly different from the portrayal of insecticides as insect deterrents and health aids in the interwar period. In the *Evening Star* in 1946, one advertisement referenced the four illustrated insect corpses sandwiched between the text of the headline “They Walk With Death

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<sup>62</sup>*Doomsday for Pests*, Sherwin-Williams Paints, short film, 14:43, 1946, <https://archive.org/details/DoomsdayForPests>.

When They Walk On Pestroy DDT Liquid Coating” multiple times. Twice it made the exact same claim that the product “kills and keeps on killing” and showed the same anatomical diagram used in the film, of an insect’s foot becoming infected with Pestroy.<sup>63</sup> Another from the same year depicted a large can of Pestroy, a housewife painting the walls of her home with Pestroy, and the description of the product as the “transparent insecticide that kills and keeps on killing,” with an addition only a few lines down on the page that reassured buyers that it “destroys them with lightning speed.”<sup>64</sup> A 1947 edition of *Woman’s Day* featured an unidentifiable cartoon insect sprinting from a cloud of bullets under the headline “blitzes bugs!” that placed DDT directly back in the mind of the consumer as the military hero advertisers so prized with its reference to the blitzkriegs of World War II.<sup>65</sup> In 1950, *The Journal* showed a housewife delicately holding one of six different Pestroy products with the headline “Pick Your Killer!” in very large type positioned above her head as if she was the one selling the products and not Sherwin-Williams.<sup>66</sup>

Other companies and products entered the scene in the 1950s and took full advantage of the quickly rising anticommunist rhetoric, employing it in favor of direct World War II-related imagery and language. Where before insects in advertisements only existed as a nuisance in human spaces, they now planned strategic attacks and posed a dangerous threat at all times. These advertisements targeted farmers because their core connection to the nation’s success made them an ideal target for anticommunist marketing.<sup>67</sup> The Shell

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<sup>63</sup> “They Walk With Death When They Walk On Pestroy DDT Liquid Coating,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), July 28, 1946.

<sup>64</sup> “Pestroy with 6% DDT,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), July 15, 1946.

<sup>65</sup> “Advertisement: Pestroy DDT,” *Woman’s Day*, 06, 1947, 102.

<sup>66</sup> “Pick Your Killer!,” *The Journal* (Caldwell, Ohio), April 13, 1950.

<sup>67</sup> This was part of the larger efforts of the Green Revolution to curb the spread of Communism through shows of American agricultural strength. Sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, much funding was put towards the development of agricultural technologies and spreading

Chemical Corporation pushed the war-against-insects narrative hard with their advertisements, describing their preferred chemical Aldrin in 1951 as “another extremely effective weapon for mankind’s ancient war with the grasshopper tribe” within an advertisement that included an image of a farmer’s disembodied hands crushing a pile of grasshoppers between his gloves.<sup>68</sup> Here, the farmer was represented as throwing himself bodily into the fight as a symbol of the herculean task taken on by Shell and Aldrin, once again reminding consumers of their role as civilian soldiers in this supposed battle. Another 1951 Aldrin advertisement from Shell showed a sweating and dehydrated insect crawling along a beach to a palm tree with a sign tacked onto it reading: “Nice try, hopper but we have Aldrin here, too.”<sup>69</sup> The clear message was that Aldrin ravaged the insect population to the extent that they had to escape to a desert island for safety only to meet with certain death there as well. It chased out the enemy, so to speak. Yet one more ad from 1952 featured a massive grasshopper passing over a diminutive United States with his suitcase and looking down with concern at the array of states landmarked that sold Aldrin.<sup>70</sup> Once again, the power of American chemicals fought off an invading force intent on settling in and destroying the landscape.

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American crops throughout the world with the projected intention to supply countries in need of support and the achieved reality of giving America a perceived moral high ground. Researchers Felicia Wu and William P. Butz make note in “The Green Revolution” that Norman Borlaug, one of the core scientists behind the Green Revolution, won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 which demonstrates that the Nobel committee looked at agricultural success and prowess hand in hand with the fostering of international peace and security.

<sup>68</sup> Little Aldrin Kills Many Grasshoppers!,” *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), March 15, 1951.

<sup>69</sup> “Aldrin,” *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), July 1, 1951.

<sup>70</sup> Keep Moving, Hopper...Aldrin’s Here!,” *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), May 15, 1952.

Aldrin breaks down into its sister chemical with a very similar chemical structure: Dieldrin.<sup>71</sup> The Shell Chemical Company put out advertisements for it as well and, as with the emphasis on Aldrin's ability to keep "Hopper" moving and out of American fields, centered them around a core theme—once insects strike, the world falls apart. Because of that, Shell heralded Dieldrin as a main line of defense against any such impending "strikes," telling farmers in 1958 to "hit 'em fast [and] hit 'em hard."<sup>72</sup> In 1953, it posited ominously that chinch bugs are "in your corn right now," lurking and waiting to ruin a farmer's livelihood.<sup>73</sup> By 1961, that more vague message became an explicit declaration against insects and their intentions, describing the job of Dieldrin as that of "eliminat[ing] the weevil evil."<sup>74</sup> While these advertisements reflected a push for farmers to recognize their significance in fighting insects through an anticommunist lens, they also reflected the way the wider culture represented insects in popular media. Specifically, film.

An infamous sector of science fiction film history emerged during this period: giant insect films. An enormous spider kicking through the walls of a town, large ants swarming across the streets of another, and wasps riddled with monstrous side-effects from radiation are only a small sample of the aggressive anti-pest imagery produced by the film industry during this time. These films were primarily produced during the 1950s as a direct combined response to the Cold War and the very real threat of insects to American welfare. Historian William Tstutsui points out that many scholars consider these films indicative of anxieties over America's ability to prevent foreign attack and the dramatized effects of what would happen if our

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<sup>71</sup> Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, *Toxicological Profile for Aldrin/Dieldrin (Update)*, Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002.

<sup>72</sup> "Kill Hoppers Now with Low-Cost Dieldrin," *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), July 1, 1958.

<sup>73</sup> "Chinch Bugs are In Your Corn...Get 'Em with Dieldrin," *Madison County Democrat* (London, Ohio), July 24, 1953.

<sup>74</sup> "Eliminate the Weevil Evil," *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), April 1, 1961.

defenses broke: “Movies about common household pests transformed into ruthless, faceless, ravenous hordes of predators, allegedly spoke to suspicions of infiltration, subversion, and invasion by ‘The Reds.’”<sup>75</sup> This transformation of a miniscule pest into an overinflated monster bled over from film into advertising. In 1955 and 1956, the Velsicol Corporation released advertisements for Heptachlor intended to reduce the alfalfa weevil population and protect crops that played into this trend. One from 1955 featured a farm sprawled across the center of the advertisement, minute beneath the towering form of the alfalfa weevil straddling the entire property. The farmhouse barely reached the weevil’s torso. The gnarled claws on its feet dug into the soil below it, and startlingly human eyes full of fury looked out at the reader. The heavy inking around its mouth resembled thick and twisted teeth.<sup>76</sup> The farm disappeared by 1956 in exchange for an even more horrifying iteration of the previous weevil. This weevil had defined, wicked claws extending from its front feet and a harsh white border around it that made it look like it had either exploded through or crawled out of the paper. The previously ambiguous teeth were now clearly rows of fangs and its eyes had shrunk to alien vertical slits that sat below sharply downturned brows.<sup>77</sup> The use of this particular style of imagery in combination with earlier language describing weevils as “evil” and presenting them as an invading force contributed directly to fear-mongering around insects and further supported the sale of insecticides.

While never reaching the same notoriety as insecticides, herbicides faced a similar treatment when it came to advertising due to their shared wartime spotlight. Where they differed, however, was in the theme of their intent to control

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<sup>75</sup> William M. Tsutsui, “Looking Straight at ‘Them!’ Understanding the Big Bug Movies of the 1950s,” *Environmental History* 12, no. 2 (2007): 242.

<sup>76</sup> “Kill Alfalfa Weevils with Proven Heptachlor,” *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), March 1, 1955.

<sup>77</sup> “Kill Alfalfa Weevils with Proven Heptachlor,” *Montana-Farmer Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), April 1, 1956.

the target. Insecticides were used to kill for the purpose of safety; herbicides to keep up appearances. As mentioned previously, the postwar lawn existed as the focal point for much of a family's social and moral standing within their neighborhood and wider society because it represented their dedication to uniformity and keeping their small portion of America looking its best in a show of patriotism. Weeds stained otherwise immaculate lawns, so herbicide advertisements promoted controlling them in a beautification effort meant to bring a consumer's lawn to a level that would show up the neighboring ones. Instead of stoking consumers' fears, advertisers appealed to their egos while still pushing the idea that weeds were an encroaching force that distorted an otherwise perfect American lawn. One example of these tactics in use can be seen in the advertisements for Weedone from the American Chemical Paint Company.

In 1946, they ran a full-page color feature in *Better Homes & Gardens* on Weedone's effect on dandelions and other unwanted plants with the bold headline "death to all enemies," and visceral descriptions of the side effects of ragweed exposure and contact with poison ivy that "burns the skin off you and your children."<sup>78</sup> This followed the trend of violent imagery seen in insecticide advertisements immediately postwar, but that idea shifted towards beautification and renewal as it entered the 1950s. One from 1952 called on consumers to "free" their lawns from "strangling crab grass" and called the plant "ugly," something to be sprayed away so that other "good" grasses could fill in the blank spaces.<sup>79</sup> The *Evening Star* proclaimed Weedone the "easiest way to beautify your lawn"<sup>80</sup> in 1954, and a 1956 issue of *Better Homes & Gardens* told readers to trust Weedone: "Let it show you—and your neighbors—a lawn that's smoother, thicker, really

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<sup>78</sup> "Advertisement: Weedone," *Better Homes and Gardens*, 06, 1946, 128.

<sup>79</sup> "Advertisements," *Better Homes and Gardens*, 07, 1952, 122.

<sup>80</sup> "Easiest Way to Beautify Your Lawn—Kill Weeds and Woody Plants with Weedone," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), May 16, 1954.



carpetlike.”<sup>81</sup> Also in 1956, the American Chemical Paint Company called it “Quick death to weeds! New Life for lawns!” in the tradition of another popular series of advertisements from the Scotts line of weed control products, including the 4-XD herbicide and Weed & Feed which removed undesirable plants at the same time as it laid down seed for the lush grass that would take its place and bring the user’s lawn up to and maybe even above the neighborhood standard.<sup>82</sup> These advertisements claimed that the removal of the encroaching threat of weeds to make way for more beautiful and standard grass, invoking the idea of eliminating foreign threats on American land so that the ideal American culture could flourish.

A photograph of a young woman shaking a Scotts box onto the lawn in front of a row of quaint suburban homes sat below the headline “Doom for Dandelions!” in a 1951 advertisement from the *Evening Star*;<sup>83</sup> an illustration of a smiling man in pleated pants and a crisp shirt pushing a Weed & Feed spreader appeared next to the bold statement “Death to Weeds...Health to Grass” in the same newspaper six years later.<sup>84</sup> Some herbicide advertisements, though, did drift in a different direction and come close to the level of martial rhetoric so heavily featured in those for insecticides. In 1953, Pittsburgh Agricultural Chemical Company released an illustration of an explosion reminiscent of the atomic bomb sending cows and weeds flying out of a pasture as a family watched in awe, comparing the impact of their product Pittsburgh 2, 4-D on weeds to the impact of the bomb during the war to entice consumers to buy it by selling them a power

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<sup>81</sup> “Advertisement: Weedone,” *Better Homes and Gardens*, 03, 1956, 269.

<sup>82</sup> “Advertisement: American Chemical Paint Co.,” *Better Homes and Gardens*, 06, 1956, 251.

<sup>83</sup> “Doom for Dandelions,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), April 15, 1951.

<sup>84</sup> “Death to Weeds...Health to Grass,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), May 19, 1957.

fantasy.<sup>85</sup> Standard Oil Company released a number of advertisements in 1952 featuring cartoon farmers overwhelmed and literally strangled by overgrown weeds that swamped them and threatened to pull them to the ground, an echo of the monstrous weevils stomping through innocent farm land.<sup>86</sup>

## Insecticides and American Culture

In a country built around consumption and commercialism, marketing both reflects and manufactures ideologies that fit current social attitudes. Advertisers in the interwar period presented a need for cleanliness and health as a sign of morality, and advertisers in the postwar period presented conformity and perfection as the same. Both drew from social and political trends and both created a new “need” for a product to satisfy the shifting demands facing their respective populations. Not examining insecticides in the larger context of these phenomena makes the advertisements themselves meaningless because they are nothing without the context of what makes them so persuasive. In addition, exploring the insecticide market pre-World War II creates a background that only serves to further emphasize just how aggressive the rhetoric used in postwar chemical advertisements became. Take, for example, a direct comparison between advertisements referenced earlier in the paper for two of the top insecticide brands in the interwar and postwar periods. In 1926, the *Arizona State Miner* ran an advertisement for Flit which showed a cartoon of a man trying to fall asleep but unable to due to increasing amounts of flies that arrive and disturb his rest. A relatively tame image, it showed insects as an inconvenience and a minor health concern. Now, consider an advertisement for Pestroy from *Woman’s Day* in 1947. Here, a terrified insect ran from a hail of bullets representing

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<sup>85</sup> “Pittsburgh 2, 4-D,” *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), March 15, 1953.

<sup>86</sup> “Choked by Weeds?,” *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), May 15, 1952; “Up to Your Ears in Weeds?,” *Montana Farmer-Stockman* (Great Falls, Montana), June 1, 1952.

Pestroy's destructive power. This positions insects as a distinct threat that requires military force to take down and Pestroy—and insecticides as a whole—as just the tool for the job.

On its own, the Pestroy advertisement falls in line with the popular scholarship on DDT and war and the familiar postwar advertising rhetoric. When compared to the Flit advertisement, however, it reveals that the history of insecticide advertising is longer and more varied than previously assumed. Unlike the claim made by *Pesticides, a Love Story*, insecticides had an industry and market before World War II, and it looked very different. Before the war, heavily influenced by the social push for cleanliness and a new focus on health due to the relatively new prevalence of germ theory—as well as the social rejection of anything associated with chemical warfare—insecticide advertisers targeted the housewives responsible for maintaining their homes and sold their product as the ultimate solution to keeping their homes clean, families and children healthy, and preserving their peers' trust in their morality. While World War I certainly had a prominent role in enhancing public perception of insecticides and revolutionizing how they were used and dispersed, the militaristic rhetoric used after World War II could not have been successful in the interwar period because the consumer public did not have as personal an investment in the war as they did during World War II. The government regularly fed 1940s civilians the narrative that their actions at home were key to victory abroad, which made them individually involved and left them with a high postwar patriotic drive and an urge to fight that the interwar public simply did not have. Therefore, viewing interwar insecticide marketing through the same lens as postwar insecticide is counterintuitive and detracts from understanding the periods individually, as well as the equally heavy but still very different impact both wars had on American society and commercial desires.

By analyzing advertisements from both periods in their appropriate contexts, this paper aimed to provide a fuller view of the insecticide market in the first half of the twentieth century in America. These advertisements show that the insecticide market in the interwar period was very much alive

despite its noted difference from the postwar market and display how advertisers had to adapt and change their target demographics and advertising techniques. As Americans moved away from centering hygiene and pest control as a symbol of morality towards viewing insects as an invading enemy force that needed to be fought back, so did advertisers. Instead of protecting the health of vulnerable children and preserving healthy sleep habits, insecticides in the late-1940s through the 1950s were sold as weapons of war put into the hands of civilians and farmers in order to defend the most vulnerable parts of America from an encroaching enemy—i.e. Communism. Seen in herbicide advertisements as well, the growing fear of secret political enemies infiltrating American homes and supply chains is reflected in the depictions of insects as monsters physically dominating farms and homes just as they were shown in monster films of the era. Without the full historical context, one cannot fully understand why the rhetoric seen in the postwar period was effective and why advertisers had to pivot to different tactics than those of the interwar period. Expanding the pool of understanding for future conversations around the historical significance of insecticides will only improve the quality and quantity of said conversations.

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## **The Limitations of William Appleman Williams' *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and The Genealogies of Racial Empire**

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**A**midst a burst of academic discourse and punditry on U.S. imperialism prompted by the unpopularity of the global “War on Terror,” Paul McDonald sardonically noted that “those who forget historiography are doomed to republish it.”<sup>1</sup> Frustrated that ongoing discussions failed to consult with comparable debates from the past, McDonald recommended one branch of prior disagreements among historians on motivations of U.S. foreign policy as especially insightful: the Wisconsin School of diplomatic history.<sup>2</sup> The Wisconsin School—based at the University of Wisconsin, Madison from the early 1950s to the early 1970s—explained pressures for commercial expansion as the chief, but not sole, historical motivation for U.S. foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> Historians from the Wisconsin School also emphasized that the so-called “Age

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<sup>1</sup> Paul K. MacDonald, “Those who forget historiography are doomed to republish it: empire, imperialism and contemporary debates about American power,” *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Buhle, “Madison: An Introduction,” 1-42 in Paul Buhle, ed., *History and the New Left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950-1970* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990): 3.

of Imperialism” at the turn of the twentieth century was not an aberration in U.S. history but in fact spurred the ideological justification for an expansionist foreign policy throughout the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

The extent of literature on the Wisconsin School and its contentions with peer schools of U.S. diplomatic history is considerable. Prominent works such as Paul Buhle’s *History and the New Left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950-1970* (1990), David S. Brown’s *Beyond the Frontier: The Midwestern Voice in American Historical Writing* (2009), and Matthew Levin’s *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties* (2013) have respectively contextualized the Wisconsin School among the nationwide New Left movements of the 1960s, situated the school within the broader chronology of radical historians who trained and/or taught at Madison (including Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles A. Beard), and elaborated on the university’s political climate during the Cold War. The most recent comprehensive work on the Wisconsin School, James G. Morgan’s *Into New Territory: American Historians and the Concept of US Imperialism*, meanwhile invites novel comparisons between the three main historiographic branches that debated U.S. diplomatic history at the time: the traditionalist Cold War consensus historians, the Wisconsin School revisionists, and the New Left orthodox Marxists.<sup>5</sup>

A substantial amount of Wisconsin School literature focuses on William Appleman Williams, the school’s foundational and best-known figure. Such texts include a biography, an edited collection of Williams’ works, and another assemblage of essays on diplomatic history published in honor of his legacy.<sup>6</sup> Williams’ most well-known work was *The Tragedy*

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> James G. Morgan, *Into New Territory: American Historians and the Concept of US Imperialism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd C. Gardner, *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams* (Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 1986); Paul M. Buhle and Edward Rice-Maximin, *William Appleman Williams: The Tragedy of Empire* (New York, NY and London, UK: Routledge, 1995); and Henry W. Berger,

of *American Diplomacy* (1959), the Wisconsin School's first comprehensive theoretical critique of U.S. diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> *Tragedy* not only disrupted the hegemonic viewpoint of U.S. foreign policy as benign among most American historians but also became a rallying call for anti-war college students and other progressive protesters a decade later during the Vietnam War.<sup>8</sup> However, *Tragedy* also shows that the precaution on "forgetting historiography" may ironically be as applicable for the Wisconsin School as it is for the twenty-first century political commentators and scholars McDonald originally addressed in his article. While Williams cites and differentiates himself from both traditionalist and New Left accounts on U.S. foreign policy, there is a prominent intellectual field that *Tragedy* entirely ignores: the contributions of Black radicals toward developing a racial conceptualization of U.S. empire. The paper seeks not only to explain how *Tragedy's* dearth of analyzing race in any serious capacity hinders its criticisms of U.S. empire, but to also illustrate a genealogy of race and empire heavily created and maintained by Black radical theorists. The successors to Williams' thought, such as Walter LaFeber and Thomas McCormick, offer more sophisticated arguments than *Tragedy* by emphasizing that U.S. foreign interest expansion was not a strict continuity throughout the turn of the century, but analytical consistencies still exist throughout the Wisconsin School's approach as a whole, one of which being the negligence of race.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this article acts as an opening intervention of the Wisconsin School by singling out *Tragedy* as the foundational conceptual work behind this absence. Through an examination of books and news articles written by Black anticolonialists as well as secondary sources that reviewed these texts, I hope to demonstrate how analyzing

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ed. *A William Appleman Williams Reader: Selections from His Major Historical Writings* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York City, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009/1962): 6-14.

<sup>8</sup> Morgan, *Into New Territory*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

race as an essential node of U.S. foreign policy compensates for this gap within *Tragedy*.

### **William Appleman Williams' Methodology and The Tragedy of American Diplomacy**

Before embarking on an analysis of *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, a clarification of terms is necessary. The first term, the "imperial," as Paul Kramer defines it, is of great use for identifying and critiquing the United States' "imperialist" behavior,

Here the imperial refers to a dimension of power in which asymmetries in the scale of political action, regimes of spatial ordering, and modes of exceptionalizing difference enable and produce relations of hierarchy, discipline, dispossession, extraction, and exploitation.<sup>10</sup>

Kramer highlights a few aspects of this definition, but one of them: the imperialist exceptionalization of socially-constructed distinctions, is of critical use for this paper.<sup>11</sup> "Race," as described under Michael Omi and Howard Winant's racial formation theory, will be understood as one of these distinctions that produce "unstable and politically contested" categorizations through the fluid processes and interpretations that mold imperialist ideologies and institutions.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Kramer's theorizations on racial production via imperialism in his seminal text *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (2006) are key here, for he stresses that race ultimately operates as a system of power historically contingent on particular political projects interwoven within other socially-constructed hierarchical

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<sup>10</sup> Paul A. Kramer, "Review: Essay Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (December 2011): 1349.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Michael Omi and Howard Winant. *Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1980s* (Oxfordshire, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2014): 1-8.

categorizations such as class and gender.<sup>13</sup> Both the “imperial” (or “imperialism” and “empire”) and “race” form the analytical basis of this paper.

A common viewpoint of *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and the rest of the Wisconsin School’s intellectual output frames it as a strictly economic interpretation of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> This is a very reductionist perspective that misstates the particular beliefs of Williams and other Wisconsin School historians by conflating the Wisconsin School with New Left historians, the latter of which interpreted U.S. foreign policy history through Vladimir Lenin’s economically deterministic theory of imperialism.<sup>15</sup> While many Wisconsin School historians, including Williams, found useful insights from the economic-centric methods of Marxist historiography, most found the Leninist thesis’s assumption that U.S. aggression was an inevitable consequence of monopolistic capitalism as too reductionist for an explanation of individual policymakers’ decisions.<sup>16</sup> To the Wisconsin School’s adherents, analyses of both economic pressures and policymakers’ agentic responses to these pressures offered a superior level of historical understanding.<sup>17</sup>

Williams’ arguments in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* heavily spurred against traditionalist historians who asserted that the 1890s and 1900s were an aberration unbecoming of the United States’ republican heritage; consensus figures often found strong offense at Williams’ consideration that U.S. foreign policy was self-interested under an obsession of commercial expansion.<sup>18</sup> While the “liberal consensus” on U.S. foreign policy and its history was quite divisive on the specific enactment of anti-communist policy, the paradigm of an

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<sup>13</sup> Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006): 22.

<sup>14</sup> Robbins, “William Appleman Williams,” 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh De Santis, “The Imperialist Impulse and American Innocence,” 65-90 in Buhle, ed., *History and the New Left*, 72.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

existential Soviet threat to the United States dominated historians' discourses on diplomatic history during *Tragedy's* publication, which left most elite academic spaces intellectually uniform to a degree.<sup>19</sup> This traditionalist school viewed the United States' foreign aggressiveness during the 1890s and 1900s as an unfortunate and irritational straying away from the country's well-intended interests toward other regions.<sup>20</sup> But instead of stressing the "Age of Imperialism" as an exception, Williams exemplifies it as the proper representative of U.S. foreign policy into the twentieth century. From McKinley to Eisenhower, Williams views the opportunistic economic expansion expressed within the 1899 Open Door Policy, which prioritized "the enlargement of American trade" in East Asia over "large territorial possessions" typical of European empires, as the dominant ideology justifying U.S. foreign policy.<sup>21</sup> The positions advocated by prominent Cold War diplomats in the Department of State certainly reaffirmed Williams' central economics-focused thesis, such as the containment theorist George Kennan's warning that the United States "has about 50 percent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population.... Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security."<sup>22</sup> Out of any particular U.S. leader, Williams identifies Secretary of State John Foster Dulles as the personified epitome of the Open Door Policy: through Dulles' ceaseless desperation to seek out "underdeveloped" regions for U.S. economic trade and resource extraction while

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, "Introduction: Reconsidering the Liberal Consensus," 1-11 in Robert Mason and Iwan Morgan, eds. *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Politics and Society in the Postwar Era* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2017): 7.

<sup>20</sup> Morgan, *Into New Territory*, 21-25.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 56.

<sup>22</sup> George Kennan, "Policy Planning Study 23: Review of Current Trends in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1 (1948): 513.

crushing any foreign resistance, Dulles embodied the violent “tragedy” of American diplomacy.<sup>23</sup>

Given that Williams’ criticism of U.S. policymakers in *Tragedy* occasionally resembles a polemic rhetoric style, decrying them for brutal foreign interventions at the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam and for the absurdity of nuclear mutually-assured destruction, his wistful assessment of U.S. foreign policy as a “tragedy” (rather than a “debauchery” or “poverty”) may come as a surprise.<sup>24</sup> However, this is where Williams’ divergence from New Left Marxist accounts is the most apparent. As mentioned before, Williams did not share Lenin’s analysis that capitalism inherently led to foreign economic exploitation; he felt that U.S. policymakers were mistaken more so than deliberately or callously harming foreign regions.<sup>25</sup> In fact, while Williams believed that the Open Door Policy established the root conditions from which U.S. diplomats would operate, various ideological components within the diplomats’ collectively-constructed worldview (or “Weltanschauung”) ultimately determined their decisions.<sup>26</sup> While the Weltanschauung is a holistic hodgepodge of numerous principles, Andrew J. Bacevich’s afterword in *Tragedy* lists out a few of the unfortunate tendencies that strayed officials from more cautious and considerate policies, including “a penchant for externalizing evil,” “a belief that the American economy cannot function absent opportunities from external expansion,” “and an unshakable confidence in American exceptionalism and American beneficence.”<sup>27</sup> As Williams believed that these types of conditions emerged from extreme U.S. nationalistic chauvinism, the Weltanschauung encouraged U.S. officials to overestimate their government’s and allies’ capabilities, causing severe strategic errors for which countries in the Global South usually faced the direst

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<sup>23</sup> Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 241.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 191

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-19.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.



consequences.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, despite Williams' determination to deconstruct American exceptionalism, *Tragedy's* argument still relies on regressive nostalgia of an America before the era of economic expansionism abroad since the late nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> In doing so, Williams ironically maintains two lines of American exceptionalism: 1.) his demarcation of the period since the dominance of the Open Door Policy as a historical aberration and 2.) the rigid distinction of U.S. economic imperialism from European territorial imperialism.

The following genealogy focusing on Black critique against empire will show how these exceptionalist lines are inadequate given their disregard for racial analysis.

### **Black Radical Pre-Tragedy Critiques of Race and Empire**

It would ahistorical and arbitrary to declare any specific period as the "beginning" of Black anticolonial thought in the United States, for recent historical studies of slavery have documented resistant agency and trans-cultural communication of the African diaspora since the beginning of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.<sup>30</sup> However, for the sake of this paper's relative brevity as well as the availability of secondary sources and the high profile of Black figures from the time period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stand out as a period where Black radicals developed theories of race and empire. Unlike Williams these intellectuals did not situate the United States in a unique imperialist standing contrasted to Europe, but rather drew similarities through how both regions maintained the "color line." W.E.B. Du Bois frequently referred to the color line in his writings that sought to expand the political problems of Black Americans to the global sphere, "The Negro problem in America is but a local phase of a world

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>30</sup> As one example of this dynamic, specifically as it pertained to African-descendent understandings of water, see Kevin Dawson, *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018): 1-9.

problem. "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the Color Line."<sup>31</sup> Struggle against the color line—whether articulated through extra-Black American solidarity as Pan-Africanism or anti-imperialism—would become the predominant paradigm for Black anticolonial thought and praxis over the next several decades in the United States.

Of course, ideological disagreement frequently commenced between different Black anticolonialism groups, which often constituted eclectic multi-factional coalitions, not to mention that a few Black American organizations such as Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association were more ambiguous and less hasty to fully denounce U.S. and/or European economic imperialism. It should also be noted that Black thinkers against racial empire did establish challenges to the dominating international order, but would also occasionally maintain some of its oppressive ideologies. For example, when Du Bois first defined the color line as the problem of the twentieth century in the 1900s, he still believed that race was a biologically-tenable category, keeping in line with the most recent scientific scholarship (although Du Bois differed from white scientists in his confidence that Black and other non-white races could civilly organize themselves into a dignified level of sovereignty freed from white supremacy).<sup>32</sup> It was not until 1911 that Du Bois confronted his essentialist reading of race through the refutation of scientific racism by Franz Boas and other anthropologists who demonstrated their findings of a singular biological human race at the First Universal Race Congress in London.<sup>33</sup>

Nonetheless, the continuous formulation of anti-imperialist history and political action that centers on the racial

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<sup>31</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Color Line Belts the World," *Collier's Weekly*, October 0, 1906, p. 30 in David Levering Lewis, ed., *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1995): 42.

<sup>32</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," *American Negro Academy, Occasional Papers*, no. 2, 1897 in *Ibid.*, 21, 25-26.

<sup>33</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "The First Universal Race Congress," *The Independent*, 70 (August 24, 1911): 401-403 in *Ibid.*, 44-45.

elements occluded in *Tragedy* becomes readily apparent. By 1915, as European nations destroyed one another's armies on the fronts of World War I, Du Bois explicitly historicized the color line's beginnings: "The Negro slave trade was the first step in modern world commerce, followed by the modern theory of colonial expansion."<sup>34</sup> Under Du Bois' focus on slavery, Williams' retreat of innocence toward the principles of the eighteenth and nineteenth century United States becomes untenable. Du Bois also now asserted that race was "the child" of these global systems, situating racism as a scientifically-baseless ideology that nonetheless became the central philosophy justifying imperialism's self-preservation.<sup>35</sup> And while Williams had passing references to the White Man's Burden in *Tragedy*,<sup>36</sup> Du Bois is deliberate in how economic imperialism advantaged white Americans in such a way that made resistance against the system extremely difficult. While the white American (and European) working classes were abused under the capitalist system, the "new colonial theory" transferred the brunt of the most egregious labor exploitation and resource extraction to the "backward races under political domination" while justifying this inequitable condition through the rhetoric of racial inferiority that would uplift the social self-righteousness of white laborers and degrade the psychological well-being of colonized laborers.<sup>37</sup> There is no comparable systemic analysis of non-elite interests in *Tragedy* that demonstrates whether white racial interests under imperialism compromised alliances with colonized peoples. At most, Williams identifies distinctive interest groups such as farmers, bankers, and industrialists that pushed for commercial expansion, but never along the lines of white racial solidarity.<sup>38</sup>

W.E.B. Du Bois developed critical ties between racial oppression and imperialist economic expansion in several of

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<sup>34</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (1915) in *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997): 96-121.

<sup>36</sup> Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 99, 125

<sup>37</sup> Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 49.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 128.

his most famous works published throughout his long life, including *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States* (1894), *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935), *Color and Democracy* (1945), and *The World and Africa* (1947).<sup>39</sup> While more well-known for his formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Du Bois was also the vice-chair of the Council of African Affairs (CAA), the most prominent Black American anticolonial organization during the height of that political action in the late 1930s and early 1940s.<sup>40</sup> The CAA was emblematic of Black anticolonial internationalism as it engaged in close solidarity work with African nationalists pursuing colonial autonomy or independence, keeping especially close ties with the African National Congress' civil disobedience movements in South Africa.<sup>41</sup> Other leadership members of the CAA included Alphaeus Hunton (Educational Director), Max Yergan (Executive Director), and Paul Robeson (Chairman), the last of whom traced back the twentieth century political maladies of European fascism and U.S. economic imperialism to the consequences of colonialism inflicted onto detrimentally-racialized populations.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, in *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (1948), the Trinidadian-born sociologist Oliver C. Cox framed the color line within a set of global relations between different nations and colonies.<sup>43</sup> This global ordering established a set of arbitrary racial hierarchies that unevenly distributed economic benefits: Cox's systemic approach to racial empire would come

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<sup>39</sup> John J. Munro, "Empire and Intersectionality. Notes on the Production of Knowledge about US Imperialism," *GSJ Article 12* (November 2008): 2; Moon-Ho Jung, "Black Reconstruction and Empire," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 466.

<sup>40</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997): 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>43</sup> Herbert M. Hunter and Sameer Y. Abraham, eds. *Race, Class, and the World System: The Sociology of Oliver C. Cox* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1987): 265.

of use for Black critical studies decades later.<sup>44</sup> Black anticolonial women also contributed to radical critiques of U.S. foreign policy. In "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman" (1949), Claudia Jones tied her anti-imperialist criticism of Wall Street economic encroachments to the "triple oppression" of white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy faced by Black women within the United States.<sup>45</sup> While many of her revolutionary male peers disregarded the last of the three oppressions, Jones still stressed that the compatibility of triple oppression to domestic and foreign struggles strengthened the "anti-imperialist coalition" of both "the whole Negro people" and colonized peoples abroad.<sup>46</sup> To Jones, the peculiarities of Black women's oppression did not render their situation incomparable to others but instead demonstrated how the global dynamics of control over race and capital immediately crossed into other colonized peoples' livelihoods.<sup>47</sup>

There was also another intellectual current that blended together investigations of empire and race at the same time as Black anticolonialism. Indigenous critics of empire within the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century noted that when antiimperialists often only located imperialism whenever a powerful sovereign state such as the United States imposed itself on another people of a foreign (typically overseas) territory, the continual colonization of indigenous peoples within the United States became a normalized state of affairs.<sup>48</sup> In the early 1920s Cayuga leader Deskaheh, encouraged by promotions of self-determination from statesmen ranging from Woodrow Wilson to Vladimir Lenin,

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>45</sup> Claudia Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman," *Political Affairs* (June 1949): 1, 19.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007): 60.

<sup>48</sup> Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011): 4-5.

appealed to the League of Nations that the Iroquois constituted a nation capable of maintaining its own sovereignty distinctive from the United States.<sup>49</sup> While the League ultimately declined his demands, Deskaheh declared that colonialism constituted the very structure of U.S. governance.<sup>50</sup> Indigenous academics such as D'Arcy McNickle in the 1949 book *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* would later reaffirm this oppressive continuity that threads from the first appearance of European colonizers to the continual subservience of indigenous nations under the U.S. governance.<sup>51</sup>

There are a few possible reasons why Williams does not engage with these scholars in *Tragedy*. The predominant two reasons would be the combination of the discrimination in white academic circles against Black scholars and the blacklisting of Black radicals under McCarthyism during the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>52</sup> In fact, when anti-communist containment theory picked up steam under the Truman Doctrine, the Black anticolonial solidarity that peaked in the late 1930s and early 1940s broke apart, both rupturing inter-left cooperation between Black leftists and liberals and Pan-African cooperation between Black Americans, Black Caribbeans, Africans, and elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> Many elite Black American political organizations and newspapers feared that anti-imperialist critique of the Truman administration would be too likely to disrupt their domestic campaigning for civil rights. In 1948 NAACP Executive Secretary Walter Francis White even dismissed W.E.B. Du Bois largely due to the latter's outspoken criticisms of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>54</sup> *The*

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Lee Nichols, "Realizing the Social Contract: The Case of Colonialism and Indigenous Peoples," *Contemporary Political Theory* 4, no. 1 (February 2005): 43.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> D'Arcy McNickle, *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1975/1949): 284.

<sup>52</sup> Hunter and Abraham, eds., *Race, Class, and the World System*, xviii-xlv.

<sup>53</sup> Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 96-121.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

*Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Chicago Defender*, and other Black-led newspapers that previously equated the treatment of colonized people under liberal democracies to Europeans brutalized under fascist Germany and Italy now shifted to an embrace of American commercialism abroad.<sup>55</sup> Elite Black journalist accounts of Africa and the Caribbean also stressed exoticized differences unattached to Black domestic struggle, and amidst news of U.S. developmental investment in Liberia and Haiti in the early 1950s, the once critical journalistic voices instead celebrated the countries' "march[es] of progress" despite growing economic exploitation and resource extraction into U.S. hands.<sup>56</sup> The CAA itself disbanded in 1955 following costly legal defenses against government accusations of political subversion and Yeargan's removal due to his increasingly pro-Truman liberal leanings.<sup>57</sup> Many of the former leaders of Black American anticolonialism—including W.E.B. Du Bois, Claudia Jones, Paul Robeson, and Alphaeus Hunton—eventually found themselves either disgraced, exiled, or imprisoned.<sup>58</sup>

In comparison, not only did William Appleman Williams' status as a white male academic likely protect him from the extreme government pushback inflicted onto Black anti-imperialists, his state-wide reputation and tenure-track position at Madison uniquely shielded him and other Wisconsin Scholars from paranoid redbaiting by the Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy. According to Williams' reflection on his Madison experiences, "McCarthy was shrewd enough to know that he would be destroyed quickly at home if he ever launched a frontal assault on the University of Wisconsin."<sup>59</sup> The leading faculty and administration understood this advantage, so

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-166.

<sup>56</sup> "Hail the Republic of Haiti, 'Gem of the Caribbean Sea,'" *Chicago Defender*, February 12, 1955, p. 4, cited in *Ibid.*, 163; Claude A. Barnett, "Liberia's Inauguration an Expensive Spectacle," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 5, 1952, p. 5, cited in *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid* 142, 183-185.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* 142, 183-185.

<sup>59</sup> William A. Williams, "My Life in Madison," 264-271 in Buhle, ed., *History and the New Left*, 269.

Williams figured that “being first-rate in his work” would excuse most of his superiors’ misgivings about his controversial scholarship, eventually prompting the publication of *Tragedy*.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, despite Bradford Perkins’ assertion that *Tragedy* “was the first fundamental assault on the merits of American objectives,” *Tragedy* actually emerged from a temporary vacuum of American anti-imperialist scholarship in the 1950s; it erased the contributions of Black anticolonialists from decades prior.<sup>61</sup>

### Analyzing Race and Empire Since Tragedy

In the decades since *Tragedy*’s publication and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, race emerged to the forefront of political debate, with scholarly discussion on U.S. diplomatic history seeing a gradual rejuvenation of this type of analysis. The field of diplomatic history would also be rapidly transformed alongside broader intellectual movements within Western historiography that emphasized non-elite sources and narratives as well as previously understated cultural or social histories.<sup>62</sup> Before these changes emerged at the diplomatic history’s forefront, Charles S. Maier lambasted the field’s stagnancy based upon, “narrowly cast inquiries, parochial perspectives, and unfamiliarity with foreign languages and

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>61</sup> Bradford Perkins, “The Tragedy of American Diplomacy”: Twenty-Five Years After,” 21-34 in Gardner, *Redefining the Past*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> For cursory overviews of these changes in modern historiography, see Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008); and Peter Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). For texts that deal specifically with U.S. diplomatic history, see Barbara J. Keys, “Nonstate Actors,” 119–134; Paul A. Kramer, “Shades of sovereignty: racialized power, the United States and the world,” 245–270; Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “Gendering American foreign relations,” 271–283; and Andrew Preston, “The religious turn in diplomatic history,” 284–303 in Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, Fourth Edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016).



sources.”<sup>63</sup> Williams himself would draw closer to the continuities between the Manifest Destiny and U.S. imperialism abroad in his last book published that same year, *Empire as a Way of Life*. In *Empire*, he stressed that the United States maintained an endless optimism for national growth (whether through territorial expansion or commercial trade), leading Americans to rationalize foreign interventions that would establish “law and order” to supplant this growth.<sup>64</sup> The threat of force remained a constant within the “imperial way of life” and its manifestation through domestic and foreign policy against non-white racial groups.<sup>65</sup>

Amy Kaplan in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, one of the central texts of the culturalist turn that followed the Wisconsin School, recognizes white supremacy as a reconciliatory ideology shared between the Union and the Confederate soldier now fighting under one flag in both the suppression of indigenous peoples within the continental United States and the Philippines abroad.<sup>66</sup> Other scholars have emphasized how slavery molded U.S. foreign policy: Matthew Karp in *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* notes that until the presidential election of Abraham Lincoln, Southern slaveholders debated foreign conquest as a nationalist, pro-slavery project, balancing between potential profits from a Western Hemisphere-spanning plantation empire and racial anxiety over the inevitable dilution of a white-majority population through

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<sup>63</sup> Charles S. Maier, "Marking Time: The Historiography of International Relations," 355–387 in Michael G. Kammen, ed., *The Past Before Us Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008): 355–356.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament, Along With a Few Thoughts About an Alternative* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980), 13.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 78, 195–196, 208–209.

<sup>66</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of US Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 122–23.

southward expansion.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile edited volumes such as *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* and *African Americans in U.S. Foreign Policy From the Era of Frederick Douglass to the Age of Obama* tackle topics ranging from the effects of African decolonization on the Civil Rights Movement to Black athletes' and jazz musicians' roles as American cultural ambassadors.<sup>68</sup>

The racialized gender dynamics under imperialism also became an influential subfield within diplomatic history. In *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, Laura Briggs examines the eugenicists policies of the U.S. government between the reproductive control of poor, Black, and Latina women in the continental United States and the mass sterilization of a third of Puerto Rican women between 1930s and 1970s.<sup>69</sup> The reproductive management of poor and racialized women was a constant obsession among elite U.S. leaders fearful of social and economic destabilization from a growing underclass population.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, Keisha N. Blain in *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global*

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<sup>67</sup> Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016): 125-149.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Krenn, "The Unwelcome Mat: African Diplomats in Washington, D.C., during the Kennedy Years," 163-180 and Mary L. Dudziak, "Birmingham, Addis Ababa, and the Image of America: International Influence on U.S. Civil Rights Politics in the Kennedy Administration," 181-201 in Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Damion Thomas, "Goodwill Ambassadors: African American Athletes and U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1947-1968," 129-139 and Lisa Davenport, "The Paradox of Jazz Diplomacy: Race and Culture in the Cold War," 140-173 in Allison Blakely, Charles Stith, et. al., eds., *African Americans in U.S. Foreign Policy: From the Era of Frederick Douglass to the Age of Obama* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Press, 2003).

<sup>70</sup> Molly Geidel, *Peace Corps Fantasies: How Development Shaped the Global Sixties* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015): 205-207.

*Struggle for Freedom* combines government documents and newspapers, as well as less formal sources such as movement songs and poetry, into a masterful work on the underexamined Black women's contributions to global Black nationalism and anti-imperialism across the Great Depression, World War II, and the early Cold War.<sup>71</sup>

In a time of considerable censorship and crackdown on dissenting viewpoints from Cold War belligerence, *Tragedy* emerged at an opportune moment to challenge historical orthodoxy. Around half a century after its original publication, Bush and Obama administration policies such as the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the "pivot to China," faced comparisons to Williams' criticisms of U.S. belligerence.<sup>72</sup> Yet despite the unfortunate continual relevancy of *Tragedy* to contemporary affairs, histories—and modern-day critiques—of U.S. empire must look beyond the insights of Williams and the Wisconsin School. Race has been and continues to be a fundamental component of U.S. foreign affairs: as a collection of global studies professors alerted in *Foreign Policy* magazine following the global COVID-19 outbreak, George Floyd's murder, and the resulting worldwide demonstrations, "for many around the world, the moral disease of racism needs to be confronted as vehemently as the physical disease now sweeping around the globe."<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

As a reminder, this paper should not be seen as a definitive judgment of the Wisconsin School of diplomatic history as a

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<sup>71</sup> Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

<sup>72</sup> MacDonald, "Those who forget historiography are doomed to republish it," 45; Andrew J. Bacevich, "Afterword: Tragedy Renewed," 280-292 in Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 290.

<sup>73</sup> Gurminder K. Bhambra, Yolande Bouka, et. al. "Why Is Mainstream International Relations Blind to Racism?" *Foreign Policy*, July 3, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/>.

whole due to the focus on the intellectual field's most influential text. While *Tragedy* embodied many traits of this historiographic movement, it would obviously be misleading and reductionist to conflate the totality of concepts and arguments between Williams' other works and those of other Wisconsin School historians to *Tragedy*. So instead, this dialogue between *Tragedy* and race-focused writings on empire opens forth future research avenues on whether any other scholars of the Wisconsin school, not to mention the traditionalist consensus and Marxist diplomatic historians of the same time period, demonstrated any greater incorporation of race within their explanations of U.S. foreign policy history. Hypothetically, a far more extensive analysis of the relationships between Wisconsin School scholarship and racial empire could also investigate why Black radical critiques were neglected at such a pivotal historiographic moment. As previously mentioned, despite the demonstrable scholarship of radicalism at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and claims that "the Wisconsin institution was the most lively center for historical studies in the United States," there is a surprising dearth of secondary scholarship that investigates whether the school interacted with non-white movements and intellectuals.<sup>74</sup> While the host of the university's campus, Jefferson County, had a marginally small population of Black citizens during the height of the Wisconsin School's influence, the sheer extent of Black national and even global Pan-African intellectual exchanges and organizing casts doubt on the counterargument that the Wisconsin School had no meaningful opportunity to engage with their theories on imperialism.<sup>75</sup> This absence is quite curious given that Williams campaigned for civil rights with the Congress of Racial Equality before his professorship as well as the nationwide

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<sup>74</sup> William G. Robbins, "William Appleman Williams: Doing History is Best of All. No Regrets," 3-20 in Gardner, *Redefining the Past*, 4.

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Negro Population, By County 1960 and 1950, Supplementary Report PC (S1)-52. Department of Commerce, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1960/pc-s1-supplementary-reports/pc-s1-52.pdf>, 63.

uprisings of Black and indigenous revolutionary groups in the same years that Madison's faculty reached its most radical stage protesting the Vietnam War.<sup>76</sup> In fact, the most prominent indigenous counterpart to the 1960s New Left wave, the American Indian Movement, had an active presence in Wisconsin.<sup>77</sup> Williams' hesitancy toward the more militant and culturally radical segments of the New Left campus presence at Madison, which in part compelled him to transfer to Oregon State University, may suggest an intentional avoidance of arguments from Black and indigenous anticolonial movements.<sup>78</sup>

Nonetheless, this elaboration on how Williams' *Tragedy* faltered on the role of race in United States foreign policy opens up new insights into the limitations of his methodology. Despite Williams' self-avowed radicalism, his reluctance to establish connections between the racial hierarchization under both European and United States imperialism, ironically prolonged the American exceptionalist ideology he so adamantly denounced traditionalist historians for upholding. Correspondingly, the expansion of racially marginalized perspectives on United States diplomatic history also challenges the traditional recognition of white scholarship as the most groundbreaking contributions in the field. The holistic incorporation of early twentieth century Black radical thought decenters the academy as the definitive arbiter of history, for while some Black intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois received a professional college education, multiple others, such as Claudia Jones, did not.

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<sup>76</sup> Robbins, "William Appleman Williams," 4.

Patty Loew, *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2001): 71.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Emily S. Rosenburg, "Economic interest and United States foreign policy," 37-51, Gordon Martel, ed., *American Foreign Relations Reconsidered, 1890-1993* (London and New York, UK and NY: Rutledge, 1994): 44.

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## **The White Australia Policy in the 1940s Erosion of the Great White Wall**

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**I**n 1947, Australian Minister for the Department of Immigration Arthur Calwell stood before the House of Representatives and responded to criticism and questions about his new Department's policies. The deportations of Asian refugees and residents had sparked controversy, and Calwell infamously remarked, "there are a lot of Wongs amongst the Chinese community, but two Wongs don't make a white."<sup>1</sup> Calwell's racist speech was delivered at a historical crossroads for Australia. The narrative of immigration in the 1940s has been one of obstinate resistance by political elites, and often does not reflect the complicated story of unraveling a racially discriminatory immigration system that had defined Australia's immigration policy since nation's founding.

Australian political elites had often been motivated by racial anxieties in the formulation of their policy initiatives, and in the new order of the postwar world there was now significant room for political debate over the acceptance of racial discrimination in immigration. The immigration schemes implemented by the first Department of Immigration were

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<sup>1</sup> "Malays With Two Wives: Calwell's Claim," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, NSW) Dec. 3, 1947.

significant as they shaped the modern Australian state by providing the framework for future immigration initiatives. Nevertheless, the 1940s were also a time of profound and widespread racism with political elites and sections of the Australia public actively trying to entrench White Australia by stoking racial anxieties and enforcing a draconian series of deportations aimed at eliminating the threat of Asia.

There is a significant body of scholarly work that explores the collapse of the White Australia policy after World War II. Scholars have often used a top-down analysis of the actions of policymakers to examine the question of how and why the White Australia policy ended despite the apparent popular support for the policy. Specifically, historians have looked at the policy actions of successive Liberal governments in the late 1950s and 1960s to answer this question. Historians like Gwenda Tavan and Sean Brawley have extensively examined the actions of individual members of parliament and Department of Immigration officials during the period of liberalization. The scholarly consensus on the period of liberalization was that it was not an organized effort to end the policy but rather the result of ad hoc and piecemeal reforms implemented by the will of individuals within parliament and the Department of Immigration. Discussions about the emergence of reformist attitudes amidst the public discourse of the policy appear less important in these discussions than the role of individual political action.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sean Brawley, "Department of Immigration and Abolition of the "White Australia" Policy Reflected through the Private Diaries of Sir Peter Heydon," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 41, no. 3 (Jun. 2008): 420 – 434, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.1995.tb01270.x>; Gwenda Tavan, "The Dismantling of the White Australia Policy: Elite Conspiracy or Will of the People?" *Australian Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 1 (Mar. 2004): 109 – 125 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2005.0383a.x>; Gwenda Tavan, "The Limits of Discretion: the Role of the Liberal Party in the Dismantling of the White Australia Policy," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51, no. 3 (Sept. 2005): 418 – 428 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2005.0383a.x>

Since the 1990s, scholars have reconceptualized the history of the policy focusing on the broader implications of pursuing racist isolationism in Asia. The reason for this reconceptualization was in part due to historians seeking to answer the question of how Australia itself transformed from a racially restrictive monocultural British outpost to an increasingly multicultural society less than two decades after the policy's abolition. Neville Meaney, David Walker, James Jupp, and Matthew Jordan have provided excellent analysis on the sociocultural, economic, philosophical, and diplomatic shifts between Australia and other Asian nations. More recent scholarship has also shifted the perspective from Australian policymakers towards foreign interest groups who engaged with or protested the White Australia policy prior to the "liberalization" and abolition of the policy in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>3</sup>

Recent scholarship has sought to examine the long-term implications of the White Australia policy on modern debates surrounding immigration. Since 2001, immigration and asylum have become ongoing sources of public and political debate against the backdrop of the War on Terror and the displacement of people due to humanitarian crises and military

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<sup>3</sup> Kevin Blackburn, "Disguised Anti-Colonialism: Protest against the White Australia Policy in Malaya and Singapore, 1947-1962," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 55, no.1 (2010):101 – 117, Accessed April 10, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710120055102>; Matthew Jordan, "The Reappraisal of the White Australia Policy Against the Background of a Changing Asia, 1945–1967," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 52, no. 1 (2006): 224 – 243, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2005.00416.x>; James Jupp, "From 'White Australia' to 'Part of Asia': Recent Shifts in Australian Immigration Policy towards the Region," *International Migration Review* 29, no.1 (Spring 1995): 207-228; Neville Meaney, "The End of 'White Australia' and Australia's Changing Perceptions of Asia, 1945–1990," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 49, no. 2 (1995): 171–189; David Walker, *Stranded Nation: White Australia in an Asian Region* (Crawley, UWA Publishing, 2019); Matthew Radcliffe, "In Defence of White Australia: Discouraging 'Asian Marriage' in Postwar South-East Asia," *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 2 (2014): 184 – 201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2014.911176>.

conflict. Consequently, there is a re-emergence of scholarly discussion about the legacy of the White Australia policy. In James Jupp's book, *From White Australia to Woomera*, the analysis focuses on the collapse of the White Australia policy following the conclusion of World War II and the long-term influence of the policy over more recent immigration debates, patterns, and legislation. Likewise, Gwenda Tavan's influential book, *the Long, Slow Death of White Australia*, examines the origins, challenges, and dissolution of the policy comparative to major reform efforts and immigration milestones that occurred from the 1950s until the 1970s. Further historiographical efforts like Matthew Jordan's article, "Rewriting Australia's Racist Past: How Historians (Mis)Interpret the 'White Australia' Policy," examined how contemporary historians were debating the character of the White Australia policy and its continued influence. He divided the literature into two broad camps: essentialists who argued that racism arrived with the British colonists and influenced the policy, and apologists who argued against the racist nature of the Immigration Restriction Act. He believed that both views were flawed because they did not adequately analyze the attitudes and cultural values of Australians over the course of the White Australia policy's existence, and the acceptance of race-based nationalism and its subsequent collapse following World War II.<sup>4</sup>

This essay contributes to the existing body of literature surrounding the end of the White Australia policy by re-examining the 1940s as a period of substantive change. The narrative of the 1940s has previously been defined by a rigid adherence to the White Australia policy against mounting international pressure, but closer examination of the actions of the Department of Immigration during their migration

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Jordan, "Rewriting Australia's Racist Past: How Historians (Mis)Interpret the 'White Australia' Policy," *History Compass* 3 (2005): 1 – 32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2005.00164.x>; James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002); Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of the White Australia Policy* (Melbourne, Scribe Publications, 2005).

programs shows a government willing to change long-held ideas surrounding who could migrate to Australia. Simultaneously, Arthur Calwell's racist attacks on non-European refugees would further undermine the defense of White Australia as domestic and international pressure groups rallied against the deportation efforts of the Department of Immigration. The discourse surrounding the White Australia policy in the 1940s is complicated but necessary to understand how liberalization and eventually multiculturalism would flourish in Australia.

### **Origins of the White Australia Policy**

The origins of the policy emerged in large part due to anti-Chinese sentiments that existed amongst white Australian laborers in the middle of the nineteenth century. The arrival of Chinese laborers in the Victorian goldfields led to the various colonial governments enacting exclusionary and openly discriminatory immigration legislation. Bizarrely, the migration of Chinese laborers was largely in response to Australian mining companies seeking a way to increase the labor force in the goldfields.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the need for additional laborers did nothing to ease the racial tensions that existed between the white workers and the newly arrived Chinese. Unlike in the United States and other countries where anti-immigrant violence was common, the tensions in Australia did not typically boil over into acts of racial violence, and there was an expectation amongst most white Australian laborers that it was the government's job to deal with the problems of Chinese immigration.<sup>6</sup> An example of this would be the efforts made by Victorian legislators in 1855 to include discriminatory taxation policies and quotas on Chinese migrants to the

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<sup>5</sup> A.P Elkin, "Re-thinking the White Australia Policy," *The Australian Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1945): 13, Accessed April 16, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20631287>.

<sup>6</sup> James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8.

colony.<sup>7</sup> These efforts by colonial legislators would soon expand beyond simply addressing white laborers' concerns about Chinese migrations and would take on a more comprehensive racially discriminatory tone. The early efforts of colonial legislators bore similarities to the United States Congress which had also enacted a ban on Chinese Immigration in 1882.<sup>8</sup> In 1888, the Premiers of the various Australian colonies, organized a conference where they explicitly restricted immigration from "all coloured races," regardless of their status within the framework of the British empire.<sup>9</sup> The efforts of the Premiers and the legislators would form the foundational legal and ideological bedrock for the implementation of the White Australia Policy, and ensured its bipartisan political popularity through the first half of the twentieth century.

The federation of Australia forged the individual colonies into the modern nation, but this did not change the guiding principles established by those earlier colonial legislators regarding immigration law. In December 1901, the new federal parliament of Australia passed the Immigration Restriction Act, colloquially known as the White Australia policy, formalizing the restrictive immigration policy for the next seventy-two years. However, the old overt methods of racial exclusion used by the preceding colonial administrations were not acceptable in the twentieth century British empire. The British colonial officials had adopted a policy against racial discrimination in the empire, and thus any attempts by the fledgling Australian government to explicitly continue this

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<sup>7</sup> David Atkinson, "The White Australia Policy, the British Empire, and the World," *Britain and the World* 8, no. 2 (2015): 208, Accessed April 16, 2022. doi:10.3366/brw.2015.0191.

<sup>8</sup> Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 37.

<sup>9</sup> A.P Elkin, "Re-thinking the White Australia Policy," *The Australian Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1945):16, Accessed April 16, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20631287>

openly racially discriminatory policy were prevented.<sup>10</sup> Instead the newly passed bill would avoid the use of racial language and would utilize subtler methods of exclusion. The authors of the Immigration Restriction Act drew inspiration from other British colonial holdings, chief among them Natal in South Africa, that allowed immigration officials to create enforcement mechanisms that were specifically designed to prevent non-European migration.<sup>11</sup> The dictation test was an important feature of the White Australia Policy because it allowed immigration officials the ability to determine if a new arrival was a “prohibited immigrant.” The test was operated by an immigration officer who would ask the migrant to write a small passage of fifty words in a European language of the officer’s choosing, and if they failed, they would become a prohibited immigrant and be denied entry to the country.<sup>12</sup> The test satisfied British authorities and allowed the Australian government total discretionary control over who could enter the country.

The dictation test appeared to be a sound compromise to British colonial authorities who wanted to avoid the appearance of overt racial discrimination within the empire. Nevertheless, the dictation test was the tool used by immigration officers to prevent undesired migration from nonwhite countries and was therefore discriminatory in practice. This was best exemplified by its callous application in the wake of human tragedy. In 1909, the SS *Clan Ranald*, a British commercial steamer, sank in Saint Vincent’s Gulf off the coast of Australia. Most of the crew, some forty sailors and officers, drowned and the remainder were rescued by local men such as Constable Shanks of Edithburg and G.P. Benson. They recalled discovering groups of Lascars, a British term for a sailor of Indian or Southeast Asia origin, on the rocky beach

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<sup>10</sup> David Atkinson, “the White Australia Policy, the British Empire, and the World,” 210.

<sup>11</sup> A.P. Elkin, “Re-thinking the White Australia Policy,” 17.

<sup>12</sup> The House of Representatives and the Attorney-General’s Department, “Immigration Restriction Act, 1901,” National Archive of Australia Digital Collection, Canberra, 1901, 1.



and they quickly ferried them back towards Port Adelaide.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, many survivors were not of European descent and so their return to Adelaide was overshadowed by the Immigration Restriction Act, and the customs officials awaiting them. Inspector W.P. Stokes met the Lascars and wasted no time in applying the dictation test to them. Most of the Lascars promptly failed the dictation test and were designated as prohibited immigrants that were to be immediately deported.

However, W.P. Stokes was surprised when one of the crew members passed the dictation test, and he noted, “the quartermaster [Lucano Orico] known as No. 18 on examination showed that he not only could read and speak English fluently but could also write the dictation test without hesitation.”<sup>14</sup> Consequently, Stokes concluded, the test must be put in another language than English and one with which he is unacquainted.<sup>15</sup> Stokes revealed in his minutes the hidden function of the dictation test. Even though Lucano Orico proved that he was capable of speaking, reading, and writing English at a level of comprehension that surprised the customs agent, it was still unsatisfactory. Simply put the dictation test was designed so that a customs agent or immigration officer, using their discretion, could intentionally fail a potential migrant. The dictation test was a discriminatory tool provided by the Immigration Restriction Act that was intended as the last line of deterrence. In the case of the SS Clan Ranald, inspector Stokes used the test against a group of individuals who had no intention of immigrating to Australia but had ended up on Australia’s shore because of maritime tragedy. The dictation test would be synonymous with Australian immigration policy for the next fifty years.

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<sup>13</sup> “Tragedy of the Sea: Wheat Vessel Goes Down, Forty Lives Lost, The Cause a Mystery,” *The Weekly Times* (Melbourne, Victoria) Feb. 6, 1909.

<sup>14</sup> W.P. Stokes, “Dictation Test and Arrangements for Survivors of SS Clan Ranald Shipwreck,” minutes for the Customs and Excise Office, South Australia Feb. 2, 1909, National Archives of Australia D596, 1909/687.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

The application of the White Australia Policy created a tightly controlled immigration system, but it did little to alleviate the racial anxieties of white Australians who had intentionally isolated themselves as a European outpost in the Pacific. The decades following the implementation of the policy saw numerous politicians attempt to promote assisted migration schemes from Britain. Alfred Deakin, the second Prime Minister of Australia who served from 1905 to 1908, wished to buttress Northern Australia with British migrants. This was opposed by the Australian Labor Party who adhered to a rhetoric of “Australia for the white man.” In this case, the “white man” was the White Australian laborer.<sup>16</sup> During these early stages of the White Australia policy, members of the Australian Labor Party were almost always opposed to assisted migration schemes even if they were proposed by their own party leadership. Assisted migration continued regardless of Labor opposition, and the Australian authorities clearly favored British migration until the postwar era.<sup>17</sup> Australian publications like *the New Australian* were eager to promote the White Australia Policy and assisted migration for Britons with adverts that showcased the so called “Big Brother Movement,” a program for British boys to accept Australian opportunities.<sup>18</sup> Prior to the Second World War Australian immigration programs were defined by attempts to reinforce a white British cultural polity.

During the interwar period, Australian policy makers became increasingly concerned with Australia’s small population seeing it as a weakness in the event of war. The geopolitical situation in Europe and in China in the 1930s

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<sup>16</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, “The Transformation of the Labor Party Immigration Policy, 1901-1945,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2016): 407, accessed online on April 17, 2022 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2016.1223152>.

<sup>17</sup> James Jupp, “From ‘White Australia’ to ‘Part of Asia’: Recent Shifts in Australian Immigration Policy towards the Region,” *International Migration Review* 29, no.1 (Spring 1995): 207-228.

<sup>18</sup> “Sponsorship of British Child Migrants – the New Australian Magazine of the Big Brother Movement,” *The New Australian*, Magazine Jan. 1929, National Archives of Australia A1, 1932/7662.

caused prominent politicians such as Robert Menzies, to argue that migration was needed if Australia was going to have to defend itself.<sup>19</sup> Despite the need for increased migration there were not significant ideological changes within the major political parties such as the Nationalist Party or the Australia Labor Party to accept non-British migrants. This was best exemplified by the Jewish migration crisis of the 1930s, which showcased the exclusionary attitudes of Australian policymakers in the face of a global humanitarian emergency. In a memorandum produced for a cabinet decision, the cabinet considered the Jewish people of Europe fleeing the Nazi regime to be “not desirable migrants for the reason they do not assimilate.”<sup>20</sup> The perceived failure to assimilate into Australian culture was one of the numerous shifting defenses that successive government ministers would employ for immigrant groups that they did not want within Australia. In this case, the Jewish asylum seekers represented a threat to Australian-British racial and cultural identity and a tangible threat to the Australian labor force.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, at the suggestion of Stanley Bruce, High Commissioner to Britain, the government would accept a quota of German Jewish migrants, but there was a caveat those migrants would have to have some capital or the ability to find employment within Australia.<sup>22</sup> The problems that emerged from the Jewish migration crisis would become a recurrent theme in the Australian immigration debates of the 1930s and 1940s. While Australian politicians still adamantly defended their country’s right to control who could enter the country, the geo-political situation was rapidly deteriorating, and global conflict would

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<sup>19</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, “The Transformation of the Labor Party Immigration Policy, 1901-1945,” 410.

<sup>20</sup> M. Garrett, “Question of Admission of Jews into Australia,” memo for cabinet June 2, 1933, National Archives of Australia, A434, 1949/3/7034.

<sup>21</sup> Katrina Stats, “‘Characteristically Generous’? Australian Responses to Refugees prior to 1951,” *Australian Journal of History and Politics* 60, no. 2 (2014): 182 Accessed online April 18, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajph.12053>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 183 – 184.

soon challenge and then influence the immigration thinking in the post-war period.

As war raged in China and the Japanese military moved further southward capturing city after city, it appeared that the rhetorical concern of politicians was coming true. The concern about the expansionist policies of the Japanese had been growing throughout the 1930s and by 1941, they could no longer be ignored. The Australian Ambassador to Japan, Sir John Greig Latham, writing to the Minister for External Affairs, Sir Frederick Stewart, about Japanese attitudes towards Australia concluded that the relationship was in a precarious position. Latham identified attitudes within the Japanese press related to the vast resource wealth of Australia, the absence of a significant population, and questioning how it should be utilized for people of "Greater East Asia." Latham described many of the anxieties that Australian politicians had felt and went on to make influential arguments about how the Australian government would act following the conclusion of the war.<sup>23</sup> Following the outbreak of conflict between the Japanese empire and the various colonial empires of Southern Asia, the Australian people were terrified for the next two years that they would be invaded or suffer a significant attack from Japanese Empire. The main pillar of Australian defense policy had been the British Navy which had not performed well against Japanese and military defeats like the fall of Singapore shocked the Australian public.

The military crisis following the shocking defeat of the British forces in Singapore had caused Australian war anxiety to skyrocket, but Prime Minister John Curtin was more than willing to seek aid outside of the empire to salvage the defense of Australia. The decisive victory at Midway, and the arrival of large numbers of United States troops had considerably lowered Australian anxiety over Japanese invasion, and so political discussion about Australia's future and immigration

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<sup>23</sup> Sir John Greig Latham, "White Australia and the Vast Empty Spaces," Letter to the Minister of External Affairs May 30, 1941, National Archives of Australia A433, 1945/2/5960.

quickly resumed.<sup>24</sup> In 1943, Sir John Latham amended his letter about the vast empty spaces and sent it to Prime Minister Curtin. This letter was highly influential as it would form the basis of Australian politicians' defense of the White Australia Policy in the postwar era. Latham's prescience about the shifting geopolitical order was exemplified when he argued that "the war position has improved and we can plan on the basis of victory. But this fact will not prevent a post-war international examination of our immigration policy."<sup>25</sup> Latham was quick to identify the fact that Australia would come under increased scrutiny following the conclusion of the war, but he did not advocate for a revision of the White Australia Policy rather he sought to help the Prime Minister by developing an adequate defense. This defense would be adopted by successive Labor governments and was twofold in nature. First, proponents of the policy argued that many countries already employed similarly restrictive immigration policies. Latham identified Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Canada as all having similar rules in place. Additionally, Latham wanted to avoid negativity, and asserted that "insistence on a right to exclude immigrants is a negative attitude which invites resistance from other countries."<sup>26</sup> Latham's solution was that Australian government should frame the answer in a positive rebuttal where they are not excluding but rather choosing who they want in their country.<sup>27</sup> Latham's understanding of geopolitics showcases how Australian political figures shifted between anxieties about their position in Asia during the war but also their concern over unwanted attention to Australia's immigration policy following the war's conclusion. Latham's letters are influential because they were written in a time of considerable political flux and the crises that arose during the war had a lasting impact on

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<sup>24</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, "The Transformation of the Labor Party Immigration Policy, 1901-1945," 412.

<sup>25</sup> Sir John Greig Latham, "RE: White Australia Policy and General Immigration," Letter to Prime Minister John Curtin Sept. 21, 1943, National Archives of Australia A433, 1945/2/5960.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

postwar policy, and how political parties would defend the White Australia Policy.

World War II had highlighted many of the anxieties and concerns that existed in Australian political circles, but the war also had definitive effect on the Australian Labor Party and how their members viewed immigration policy. Traditionally, the Labor Party had been resistant to assisted migration schemes regardless of the migrant's place of origin. For example, in the 1930s John Curtin, then opposition leader, said that the Labor Party would block any migration scheme because it had been such a categorical "disaster" for Australia in the past.<sup>28</sup> As a result of the military crisis of 1941, Labor Party members were becoming more receptive to the idea of assisted migration schemes. This is because Australia's defense strategy had largely failed, and the reliance on the United States for military support was not a long-term solution to the anxieties felt within parliament. The first member to break with the party line was Ben Chifley, minister for postwar reconstruction, who advocated for a massive increase in migration to Australia and even went far enough to establish clear population goals for the future.<sup>29</sup> The impact of this change in attitude amongst Labor Party members was not necessarily a softening of the White Australia Policy. Chifley's goal was to rapidly populate Australia with White British settlers and fill the vast open spaces that caused significant racist fears. Chifley's abandonment of a key tenet of prewar Labor policy shows how transformative the war was about the issues of migration, and as Chifley's political star was on the rise it would soon become a defining bipartisan feature of postwar parliamentary discussion.

### **The Postwar Immigration Programs**

In 1945, prime minister John Curtin died unexpectedly in office. Curtin's death led to a significant reorganization of the

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<sup>28</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, "The Transformation of the Labor Party Immigration Policy, 1901-1945," 410.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 412.

federal Labor Party. Ben Chifley, the first Labor member to advocate for assisted migration programs, emerged as the Labor Party leader and prime minister after he successfully ousted the acting leader Frank Forde.<sup>30</sup> Chifley's support of mass migration programs influenced how he reshuffled his cabinet despite being adamant that he would continue to "carry out the policies and ideal for which he [John Curtin] stood."<sup>31</sup> Chifley's goal was to organize the Australian government's immigration programs into a single centralized federal body controlled by a cabinet minister. This new minister would be charged with the creation and organization of the assisted migration programs. Ross Gollan, a correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, noted that immigration was "the long-ranging problem of any country which has to populate or perish," and that this was the first government to formally have a cabinet position solely dedicated to resolving this problem.<sup>32</sup> Chifley looked to Arthur Calwell to champion a new epoch in Australian immigration. The War in the Pacific was still ongoing while Chifley reorganized his cabinet, and soon he and Calwell would embark on one of the most ambitious immigration drives in Australian history.

An examination of the postwar migration programs implemented by the Chifley government would not be possible without examining the man driving the effort: Arthur Calwell. Calwell was Australia's first Minister for Department of Immigration and exists as a controversial political figure even in contemporary Australian political discourse. He was a complicated individual that helped shape the multicultural landscape of Australia for much of the twentieth century. Historian Gwenda Tavan explored the complexities of Arthur Calwell in an article where she described him as, "a supporter of the White Australia policy who taught himself Mandarin,

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<sup>30</sup> "Chifley to be New Prime Minister: Overwhelming Support by Party in Leadership Ballot," *Queensland Times* (Ipswich, Queensland) Jul. 13, 1945.

<sup>31</sup> "Chifley Announces two New Cabinet Positions," *The Sun* (Sydney, New South Wales) Jul. 13, 1945.

<sup>32</sup> Ross Gollan, "Mr. Chifley's New-Old Cabinet: Immigration and Housing," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, NSW) Jul. 16, 1945.

maintained good relations with the Chinese community and defended Aboriginal rights; an assimilationist who implemented the European migration program, successfully sold that program to white, British Australians.”<sup>33</sup> Calwell’s attitude towards immigration reflected the trend amongst Australian politicians that were anxious over population, defense, and the future of the nation. In his 1945 parliamentary speech he noted that, “we cannot afford to fail. There is so much dependent on the success of our [immigration] policy that failure will spell national disaster.”<sup>34</sup> Calwell had positioned himself with rhetoric and innovation as central to the immigration debate in Australia. Calwell’s announcement of the new immigration policy was an increase in population of 2 percent per annum with 1 percent being from immigration or approximately 70,000 migrants per year.<sup>35</sup> This bold pronouncement would fundamentally alter the cultural landscape of Australia and would place Arthur Calwell in a position of intense scrutiny particularly as his adherence to the White Australia policy would become increasingly problematic.

Calwell’s initial plan was to continue to support the assisted migration of white British citizens to Australia. In a nation where 90 percent of the population were ostensibly of a white British background, it followed that Calwell and Department of Immigration officials would continue to prefer British migrants over any other prospective migrant in an assisted migration scheme.<sup>36</sup> The announcement of the Free-Passage

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<sup>33</sup> Gwenda Tavan, “Leadership: Arthur Calwell and the Post-War Immigration Program,” *Australian Journal of History and Politics* 58 no. 2 (2012): 203 Accessed Online 5/2/2022 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2012.01632.x>.

<sup>34</sup> “Realism in Immigration: Australia’s Policy Voiced by Mr. Calwell,” *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney, NSW) Aug. 16, 1945.

<sup>35</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, “The Transformation of the Labor Party Immigration Policy, 1901-1945,” 414.

<sup>36</sup> C.A. Price, “The Effects of Post-War Immigration on the Growth of Population, Ethnic Composition and Religious Structure of Australia,” *The Australian Quarterly* 29, no.4 (Dec., 1957): 28 accessed online 5/9/2022 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41317901>.



and Assisted Passage Migration Schemes by Arthur Calwell in parliament in August 1945 allowed for the free passage of British soldiers and their dependents. Further it allowed for the economic assistance for anyone interested in migration from Great Britain to Australia. Additionally, the agreement included the ability to take on large numbers of war orphans.<sup>37</sup> Calwell's initial goal was to rapidly populate Australia with white British migrants in large part to preserve the existing racial and cultural order. Public opinion guided this principle because Australians were more receptive to British migrants than any other group. A.P. Elkin writing about the White Australia policy in 1945 stated that, "we Australians as a whole are on our guard against any people markedly different from ourselves." Elkin was describing the racist, xenophobic, and culturalist attitudes that were prominent in the 1940s amongst the Australian public and particularly the desire for only Anglo-Saxon migrants.<sup>38</sup> Therefore the preservation of a white British monocultural state was desired by members of the Department of Immigration, the Labor Party, and the Chifley government. The lofty ambitions of meeting these immigration targets with only British migrants would fall short, and Calwell was forced to sell non-British European migrants to Australian public by 1947 which was a substantial departure from any previous migration initiatives.<sup>39</sup>

While the Chifley Government and Arthur Calwell were still determined to maintain the traditional source of British migrants it was apparent that an expansion of the migration program was needed. In 1947, *the Mercury* reported that Australia's preference for British migrants would not be realized in large part due to British war reconstruction needs.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Big Migration Scheme; British Ex-Servicemen to get Free Passage," *The Sun* (Sydney, NSW) Aug 2, 1945; "Immigration Policy: Assisted Passages and Free Fares," *Narandera Argus and Riverina Advertiser* (NSW) Aug. 7, 1945.

<sup>38</sup> A.P. Elkin, "Re-Thinking the White Australia Policy," 20.

<sup>39</sup> Gwenda Tavan, "Leadership: Arthur Calwell and the Post-War Immigration Program," 210.

<sup>40</sup> "Displaced Persons" as Migrants," *The Mercury* (Hobart, TAS) Jul 24, 1947.

Arthur Calwell, who had previously hinted at the expansion of immigration to include new groups of Europeans, could now implement additional schemes to prop up the migration targets of the Department of Immigration. The solution appeared when Arthur Calwell signed the International Refugee Organization-Australian Government Agreement in 1947. This agreement allowed Australia to take on approximately 4,000 “displaced persons,” and up to 12,000 people every subsequent year.<sup>41</sup> Importantly, the agreement also allowed Australian immigration officials the discretionary powers to decide which displaced people would be allowed into Australia.<sup>42</sup> This important caveat meant that the White Australia policy would remain intact without any international interference.

Calwell’s move to diverge from traditional sources of migrants was not met without criticism from more conservative elements within Australian society. The leadership of the Returned & Services League of Australia (R.S.L.) were immediately critical of this expansion of migration to previously undesired migrants. State President of the League K.L. Bolton stated that, “they [displaced persons] grab empty offices and shops which the Digger [Australian soldier] cannot get for love or money.”<sup>43</sup> The R.S.L., represented by K.L. Bolton, held the view that a White Australia was necessary for sound defense policy and were oppositional towards migration of any non-British group regardless of their European origin.<sup>44</sup> It would appear that members of the R.S.L were motivated by fears of “racial dilution” when Calwell included Eastern and Southern

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> “International Refugee Organisation-Australian Government Agreement,” Agreement between the Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization and the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia July 21, 1947, National Archives of Australia A13307, 46/2.

<sup>43</sup> “Bitter attack on Displaced Persons,” *Daily Examiner* (Grafton, NSW) Aug 21, 1947.

<sup>44</sup> H.I London, *Non-White Immigration and the “White Australia” Policy*, (1970) 109.

Europeans in the migration schemes. The R.S.L. were an example of a powerful pressure group that were advocating for a continuation of an unaltered British White Australia. This presented Arthur Calwell with a distinct problem because while he was a prominent supporter of the White Australia policy, he was not married to notion of only British or Anglo-Saxon migrants arriving in Australia and so there were divisions forming within defenders of the policy.<sup>45</sup> The decision to allow previously excluded migrants was controversial and inflamed tensions between the immigration minister and pro-White Australia groups, and it was also met with mixed reactions from the Australian public.

The Australian public's reaction to the Displaced Persons Scheme is important when examining the complex, and sometimes, paradoxical attitudes held about the White Australia policy in the late 1940s. The publication of Gallup poll results in *the Advertiser* showed 48 percent of Australian respondents were opposed to the proposed inclusion of Eastern Europeans.<sup>46</sup> The consensus was that British migrants were preferred and that there was not adequate housing for native born Australians.<sup>47</sup> The continued preference for British migrants was usually championed by cultural defenders of the White Australia policy as an essential means to preserve the monocultural order, and clearly this defense resonated with a broad section of the surveyed public. The cultural defense at times appears to be the colorblind language for racist fears over racial dilution. Publications like *Smith's Weekly* advocated against the expanded migration program because it bred uncertainty over the "future of our race," and expressed disdain for previously settled Italian migrants who were "not conspicuously our shield and buckler."<sup>48</sup> The implications of these attitudes were that migrants like Italians were not

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<sup>45</sup> Gwenda Tavan, "Leadership: Arthur Calwell and the Post-War Immigration Program," 211.

<sup>46</sup> "Public Opinion Poll: Displaced Persons as Immigrants," *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA) Sept 10, 1947.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> "This Week: No Melting Pot, Please!" *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney, NSW) Aug. 9, 1947.

considered inherently white and were a risk to the homogeneity of Australian society. The Australian Institute of Political Science held a conference in January of 1946 where the participants reached the conclusion that the White Australia policy had fundamentally changed from its original intention. One of the participants, A.P. Elkin, argued that “but what began as a fear lest our way of life should be undermined by Oriental immigrants has come to symbolise our antipathy and prejudice towards all peoples, cultures, and ideologies which are not wholly Anglo-Saxon.”<sup>49</sup> The implications of this antipathy and prejudice do appear to inform the public discourse over the inclusion of Eastern and Southern Europeans into Australia. The Australian public’s reaction appeared bound by resistant xenophobic and racist attitudes towards the inclusion of Europeans who did not fit the narrow Anglo-Saxon or Celtic racial and cultural identity that existed in the 1940s.

However, Australian attitudes about immigration and the White Australia policy were never monolithic nor consistent, and certain groups were receptive to Calwell’s migration schemes. The expanded schemes were a new opportunity for individuals and groups to advocate for the mass-migration of previously excluded immigrants. For example, Ivan Orlov writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* lobbied for the arrival of Slovene refugees based on his personal belief that they were the “finest of the Slav races,” and argued that other Slavic people like Bulgarians and Serbians were not fit for Australia.<sup>50</sup> Publications like the *Kalgoorlie Miner* were less concerned over the exclusion of certain Europeans and were instead supportive of Calwell’s plan because they were concerned over white birthrates and that there was a limited timeframe to encourage white European migration.<sup>51</sup> Other Australians

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<sup>49</sup> “This White Australia,” *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, NSW) Dec. 27, 1947.

<sup>50</sup> “Immigration,” *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, NSW) Aug. 11, 1947.

<sup>51</sup> “Immigration and Housing,” *Kalgoorlie Miner* (WA) Jun. 12, 1947.

adopted a Calwellian view of immigration and rejected calls for narrow British only migration programs. An individual interviewed by the *Daily Examiner* in Lismore argued that “it’s no use sitting back and referring to dagoes and others coming here. You will be at the stadium cheering Vic Patrick [a professional boxer] a first-generation Australian of Italian parentage, yet you cheer him because he is an Australian. People of European stock are preferable to a Japanese invasion.”<sup>52</sup> The attitude of men like Mr. Grove show an Australian less concerned over racial dilution or multiculturalism but motivated by entrenched racist fears about Japanese or Asian invasion.

The arrival of displaced persons under the IRO-Australian government agreement led to an influx of non-British Europeans, and Calwell and the Department of Immigration were quick to defend the policy by advocating for the assimilation of these migrant groups. Calwell had publicly been an assimilationist since the mid-1940s and had previously advocated for migrant Italian communities in Leeton-Griffith as an example of an assimilated non-British group.<sup>53</sup> While organizations like the R.S.L. had taken view that immigration should be limited to only white British citizens, Calwell had directed government policy to allow these migrants to settle in Australia. The agreement allowed displaced people to settle in Australia provided they sign a two-year indentured contract with the Australian government which gave them work and government subsidized housing.<sup>54</sup>

The policy which was rapidly changing Australia was not without its challenges and caused families to be separated because of the complicated dancing the Department of Immigration officials had to do to prevent antagonizing trade

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<sup>52</sup> “RSL to Formulate Immigration Plan,” *Daily Examiner* (Grafton, NSW) Aug. 23, 1947.

<sup>53</sup> “Italians in Australia: Mr. Calwell on Immigration,” *Sunshine Advocate* (VIC) Aug 31, 1945.

<sup>54</sup> Alexandra Dellios, “Displaced Persons, Family Separation and the Work Contract in Postwar Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no.2 (2016): 419 Accessed online 5/9/2022 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2016.1224913>.

unionists or Australian laborers by placing displaced individuals in jobs that were held by settled Australians.<sup>55</sup> In defense of this policy, officials from the Department of Immigration began writing bulletins defending Calwell's decisions. For example, in *Tomorrow's Australians*, Arthur Calwell advocated, "if we do not populate Australia quickly with people of our own British stock and Europeans of our choice, we may get our 20,000,000 sooner than we think-20,000,000 invaders."<sup>56</sup> The racist fears over an imagined Asian invasion were used as a defense of the plan to include otherwise previously prohibited or limited migrants. Further, *Tomorrow's Australians* would often advertise the positive cultural or physical traits that various non-British migrants would bring to Australia such as the Dutch bringing "native skill" to Australian farming.<sup>57</sup> Calwell's defense of the expansion of the immigration program did little to change the fact that the admission of large numbers of non-British Europeans had a distinct effect on immigration. The Displaced Persons Scheme had effectively opened gates to non-British migration, and statistics gathered over the course of 1945 to 1956 show that nearly 66 percent of all migrants to Australia were non-British.<sup>58</sup> The established monocultural identity of Australia was eroding due to the successes of the migration schemes. While Calwell invoked racial fears of Asia and Asian migration, he was also influential in creating a more multicultural Australia which would influence social values particularly about perceptions of race and xenophobia. The new migration policy would create social tensions due to resistant racism amongst sections of the Australian public, but it tentatively led Australia to being more open to a multicultural future.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 421.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur Calwell, "Immigration Minister Tells What Migrant Types We Want," *Tomorrow's Australians* (Canberra, ACT) Aug 9, 1948, National Archives of Australia A3300, 699.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> C.A. Price, "The Effects of Post-War Immigration on the Growth of Population, Ethnic Composition and Religious Structure of Australia," 35.

## Deportation of Wartime Refugees

In 1947, Arthur Calwell and members of the Department of Immigration decided to address the question of what should be done about the war-time refugees who remained within Australia. Calwell's view was simple: the remaining refugees were considered undesirable migrants, that all efforts should be made to remove them, and any weaknesses in deportation powers should be addressed.<sup>59</sup> Importantly, Calwell's true motivations for the deportations were racially motivated and he sought to preserve the White Australia policy in the postwar era. His speeches during the deportation period showcase his blatant racism, and he often argued that, "thus the whole concept of a homogenous White Australia is threatened by a numerically strong pocket of Asiatics..."<sup>60</sup> Calwell acted with the full support of the Labor party and the prime minister. For example, Ben Chifley argued that the admission of non-Europeans had been to address the war situation in the South Pacific, and that these refugees had always known that peace would mean returning to their home country.<sup>61</sup> The decision to proceed with a series of deportations did not prevent widespread political controversy. Calwell's decision exposed the government to questioning from Members of Parliament like Fraser and Lang who appealed to humanitarianism and to the signed agreements with the United Nations.<sup>62</sup> This sudden outbreak of criticism towards the White Australia Policy was surprising to a Labor government that had enjoyed, outside of certain pressure groups, bipartisan political support, and the perceived mandate of the electorate. Historian A.C. Palfreeman argued that the reason public and political pressure

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<sup>59</sup> "Tightening Up on Deportation," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* (Newcastle, NSW) Nov. 29, 1947.

<sup>60</sup> Department of External Affairs, "Asian Refugees Admitted via Certificate of Exemption – Excerpt from Arthur Calwell's Speech," edited speech notes for the Department of External Affairs Mar. 23, 1949, National Archives of Australia A3300, 699.

<sup>61</sup> "Mr. Chifley Defends Deportations," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* (Newcastle, NSW) Dec. 16, 1947.

<sup>62</sup> A.C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 20-21.

increased was because of Calwell's increasingly severe stance and that he acted as chief defender of the "traditional administration."<sup>63</sup> Outside of the political arena, Calwell's stubborn resistance on issue of wartime refugees acted as a lightning rod for pressure groups like the media, church organizations, trade unions, and foreign organizations. The deportations of 1947–49 represent a microcosm of how the emergent pressure groups affected the course of the White Australia Policy. These groups would influence the outcomes of not only the deportation proceedings but would have a longer impact on the political calculus surrounding an unyielding defense of the policy.

The first major effort to deport war refugees began in 1947 when the Labor government attempted the deportation of fourteen sailors from Malaya and Singapore. Abdul Samat Bin Amjah had arrived in Australia in 1942 due to the ongoing conflict and fought for the Australian navy. He returned to Australia in 1943 after his ship was bombed. The same year he was discharged from service in the navy and married an Australian woman. Shortly after migration officials moved to deport Amjah because his certificate of exemption had lapsed, and he was then classified as a prohibited immigrant under the *Immigration Act*.<sup>64</sup> The saga continued for nearly two years and would represent the first incident involving both domestic and international pressure groups. Domestically, church organizations were quick to rally against the deportation of the Malayan sailors. The World Council of Churches attempted to persuade Calwell by highlighting the fact that the Malaysians were married to Australian women and that they were British subjects who had fought with Australia during the war.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, the *Standard*, the weekly newspaper of the Anglican church, condemned the deportation arguing that citizenship

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<sup>63</sup> Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy*, 2.

<sup>64</sup> "Malay Can Remain, Says Court," *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, NSW) Aug. 6, 1949.

<sup>65</sup> "Church Appeal for Malayan Seamen," *The Argus* (Melbourne, VIC) Nov. 19, 1947; The "Church Protest Against Malayan Deportation," *The North Western Courier* (Narrabri, NSW) Nov. 17, 1947.



should be offered out of “national gratitude” and “common decency.”<sup>66</sup> Christian leaders and organizations had undergone a significant ideological shift away from racial discrimination in the 1940s. Church members were also motivated by strong concerns of the breaking up of familial bonds. The Church groups’ appeals would not sway a Labor government that was bound to a rigid application of the White Australia policy against non-European refugees. The World Council of Churches was particularly disappointed by Prime Minister Chifley’s defense of the deportations, and his apparent support for the racist vitriol expressed by Calwell in his parliamentary statements.<sup>67</sup> The ramifications of the government’s position would not become immediately apparent, but the causal effect of dogged adherence to this position would have political consequences for the Labor Party in 1949.

Internationally, the decision to deport the sailors would gain wide attention in Southeast Asia spurring a wave of anti-Australian sentiment. The Australian editor of the Singaporean *Strait Times*, Henry Kays, remarked that, “for the first time in modern history, the Malays have become conscious of the “White Australia” policy.”<sup>68</sup> Newspapers, like the *Morning Tribune* in Singapore, would be writing about the discriminatory practices of the White Australia policy and offering rapid updates on the political machinations of the deportation proceedings.<sup>69</sup> As reports of the deportations spread throughout Singapore and Malaya, protesting the White Australia Policy became representative of a broader anti-colonial cause and helped unify the ethnically divided regions.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> “Churches Plea for Malayan Seamen,” *The Newcastle Sun* (Newcastle, NSW) Dec. 2, 1947.

<sup>67</sup> “Mr. Chifley Defends Deportations,” *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate* (Newcastle, NSW) Dec. 16, 1947.

<sup>68</sup> Henry Kays, “Australia and the Malays,” *The Strait Times* (Singapore) Dec. 2, 1947.

<sup>69</sup> “Deportation of Malays in Full Accord With Policy Of White Australia,” *Morning Tribune* (Singapore) Nov. 20, 1947.

<sup>70</sup> Kevin Blackburn, “Disguised Anti-Colonialism: Protest against the White Australia Policy in Malaya and Singapore, 1947-1962,”

Certain nationalist leaders like Taha Bin Kalu argued against modification of the White Australia Policy but criticized the deportation decision. He argued that the sailors had ended up in Australia because of war and not because of immigration, and any familial separation was unnecessary.<sup>71</sup> In Selangor, local government members would pass a resolution in protest of the Australian decision arguing in a similar manner to the church organizations that they fought for Australia and to separate their families would cause economic hardship. The Selangor committee went further arguing that the White Australia Policy should have ceased the moment war was declared against fascism.<sup>72</sup> The committee's appeal to war solidarity as well as the association of fascism with racial superiority highlighted how the White Australia policy was alienating Australia from regional allies. Further, the association with racial discrimination was becoming harder to rationalize against the backdrop of an increasingly decolonized Southeast Asia. For example, organizations like the Straits Chinese British Association wrote to the Australian Commission to Malaya to ask about what they perceived as an "out-dated racial policy".<sup>73</sup> The deportations of 1947 had shown that the Australian government could no longer act unilaterally in an increasingly changing and empowered Southeast Asia. The immigration decisions of Australia were beginning to have geopolitical consequences in a region where British and European colonial control was fading.

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*Australian Journal of International Affairs* 55, no.1 (2010):104  
 Accessed April 10, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710120055102>.

<sup>71</sup> "Indignation in Malaya: Australian Action in Seamen's Case"  
*The Western Australian* (Perth, WA) Nov. 17, 1947.

<sup>72</sup> "Protest Against Deportations of Malay Seamen From Australia: Mic Johore Branch Secretary says: PUTERA-AMCJA Selangor State Committee's Resolution," *Indian Daily Mail* Dec. 18, 1947.

<sup>73</sup> Tan Hoon Siang. Straits Chinese British Association to the Australian Commissioner for Malaya April 27, 1948. Letter. National Archives of Australia, Migration and multiculturalism, [www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resources-themes/society-and-culture/migration-and-multiculturalism/letter-colonial-secretary-singapore-about-australian-deportation-malayan-chinese](http://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resources-themes/society-and-culture/migration-and-multiculturalism/letter-colonial-secretary-singapore-about-australian-deportation-malayan-chinese).

The emergence of fierce anti-Australian sentiment in Malaya and Singapore did little to sway Calwell and Prime Minister Chifley from their actions, but it did cause significant political drama for the Labor Party. In 1947, the government had to contend with the potential costs of a Malayan trade boycott which were only narrowly avoided by the Australian Commissioner to Malaya, Claude Massey, who managed to convince Malayan leadership of the government's position.<sup>74</sup> In a confidential dispatch to the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Massey concluded that it was through his efforts and conversations with "Nato [sic] Onn bin Jaffar" that the question of the Malayan sailors had been put to rest.<sup>75</sup> Massey's confident assessment of the Malayan situation was incorrect and showcased how poorly the Australian government had planned for international responses to their actions. Within the Labor Party, there were also clear divisions on how the deportations should proceed. Dr. Herbert Evatt, Minister for the Department of External Affairs and acting Prime Minister in late 1947, was deeply concerned about the deportation orders. Evatt ordered the immediate cancellation of the deportation of Malayan sailors because he was distinctly aware of the damage the deportations could cause Australian relations in Southeast Asia.<sup>76</sup> Dr. Evatt's decision to cancel the deportation was enough to spark press debate over an apparent schism between Calwell and Evatt.<sup>77</sup> The incident would highlight the increased divisions between the governmental

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<sup>74</sup> "Malayan Boycott Unlikely: Seamen's Expulsion accepted" *Recorder* (Port Pirie, SA) December 5, 1947.

<sup>75</sup> Claude Massey. The Australian Commissioner for Malaya to the Secretary, Department of Internal Affairs, Canberra December 30, 1947. Letter. National Archives of Australia. [www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resources-themes/society-and-culture/migration-and-multiculturalism/malaysian-entry-conditions-european-australian-families-malay-seaman](http://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resources-themes/society-and-culture/migration-and-multiculturalism/malaysian-entry-conditions-european-australian-families-malay-seaman).

<sup>76</sup> "Malays can stay, decides Dr Evatt" *The Singapore Free Press* (Singapore) Dec. 27, 1947; "Deportation Plans Changed." *Queensland Times* (Ipswich, QLD), Dec. 27, 1947.

<sup>77</sup> "Cabinet Clash? Over Deportation of Malay Seamen" *Warwick Daily News* (Warwick, QLD) Dec. 29, 1947.

departments and their ministers over the administration of White Australia policy. Importantly, the problem was not adherence to the White Australia Policy but rather it appeared that politicians like Dr. Evatt and members of the Department of External Affairs were increasingly aware of the political costs of repatriation. Officially, the decision of deportation or repatriation were in the purview of Arthur Calwell who would over the next two years continue to pursue war refugees despite the increasing pressures against him and this position.

Calwell's racist crusade against non-European immigrants in Australia would not be limited to deportations, and in 1948 he announced a ban on the Japanese brides of Australian soldiers arriving in Australia. The occupation of Japan by the United States and the British Commonwealth Occupation Force meant that fraternization between local Japanese and allied troops was inevitable. The result of this fraternization were instances of Australian troops marrying Japanese women. Officially, army policy and immigration policy were aligned, and commanding officers were meant to refuse permission of Australian soldiers to marry any "Japanese, Eurasian or colored girls."<sup>78</sup> This did not prevent it from happening and troops like Corporal Ivan Woods would still marry Japanese women. In Woods' case, he married a Japanese American and this would spark some controversy. Calwell would adamantly state, "no Japanese person will be admitted to Australia while I am Minister."<sup>79</sup> Calwell's obstinate position caused outrage amongst American officials in Japan because the immigration policy was barring an American citizen from entry.<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, the legal options available to Australian soldiers were limited and they were reliant on the personal whims of Arthur Calwell whose racist bias and stubbornness were well established.

The marriages between Australian soldiers and Japanese women highlighted the complicated attitudes that existed in

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<sup>78</sup> "Calwell Vetoes Corporal's Romance: Jap Girl Born in U.S. Barred as Wife," *The Herald* (Melbourne, VIC) Dec. 11, 1947.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

Australia in the 1940s where there appeared to be shifting views on racial discrimination. For example, Jessie Henderson, the mother of an Australian soldier who had married a Japanese woman, received an anonymous letter that accused her of betraying Australian womanhood.<sup>81</sup> The incident showed that persistent racism still existed in Australia despite the ongoing protests about the deportation of non-European refugees. In the 1940s, some Australians held deep animosity to the Japanese because of wartime atrocities. For example, Paterson, a former Royal Australian Airforce officer, argued that “is memory so short? One of my mates had his eyes gouged out and his tongue cut off by the Japs, and was then let loose in the jungle. I am against any move to bring Japs in—even war brides.”<sup>82</sup> Despite the existence of racist or prejudiced beliefs, other Australians were publicly expressing views of racial tolerance or that the Japanese should not be denied the chance to live in Australia. Individuals in Brisbane argued that Australia was currently admitting Germans and Italians who had committed similar atrocities during the war, and therefore it would be hypocritical to deny Japanese immigrants on those grounds.<sup>83</sup> The ban on Japanese war brides showcased how public discourse was changing in the 1940s despite entrenched racist beliefs. Importantly, there was social awareness of the increasing indefensible position of racism in immigration. While persistent racist attitudes would continue to exist, individuals were now openly discussing the hypocrisy of White Australia policy’s defenders.

The ban on Japanese brides would become another pressure point for public discussion about the White Australia policy by 1949. *The Advocate* published a scathing rebuttal to the ban on Japanese war brides that argued it was against Christian principles, and “democratic humanism.”<sup>84</sup> Further,

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<sup>81</sup> “Slated Because Son Married Jap.,” *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton, QLD) Mar. 15, 1948.

<sup>82</sup> “People Say: Don’t Like Jap Brides here, But.,” *The Courier Mail* (Brisbane, QLD) Mar. 13, 1948.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> “The Case of the Japanese Brides,” *The Advocate* (Melbourne, VIC) Mar. 17, 1949.

the article used the case of the Japanese brides to highlight the hypocrisy of Australian immigration policy particularly the cultural defense offered by government officials. For example, the article states “whenever the official attitude has been put to the test in cases where the admission of Orientals to permanent residence here cannot conceivably lead to any problems of this kind, the reactions [of immigration officials] indicate, very clearly, that race-prejudice is involved to a very large degree”<sup>85</sup> The shifting attitude amongst publications like *the Advocate* are indicative of the broader changes that were happening in the 1940s. The Australian public were increasingly skeptical of the colorblind cultural defense of the White Australia policy. Incidents like banning the arrival of Japanese brides were fueling pressure against the White Australia policy because it appeared inflexible to instances that required compassion and discretion. Further, the ban on Japanese brides had failed to prevent Australian soldiers from marrying. Soldiers that returned from Japan reported that more soldiers had married Japanese women and that the Japanese were faithful, hardworking, and trustworthy.<sup>86</sup> The deportations and the ban on the immigration of Japanese brides had shown Australia was at a crossroads where adherence to the White Australia policy would lead to geopolitical and racial isolation. The Advocate summed up the position of Australia in the 1940s with the question, “do we believe in the “brotherhood of man” and the right of all human beings to certain essential liberties or do we reject that faith, as the Nazis did?”<sup>87</sup>

Calwell’s repeated attempts to remove wartime refugees had started to have a clear effect on the public and political discourse surrounding the White Australia policy, a fact that became more apparent in 1949 when he sought to deport the Indonesian refugee, Annie O’Keefe. O’Keefe had, like many war refugees, arrived involuntarily following the Japanese

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> “Many Soldiers Defy Ban and Wed Japanese Girls,” Newcastle Sun (Newcastle, NSW) Mar. 5, 1949.

<sup>87</sup> “The Case of the Japanese Brides,” *The Advocate*.

invasion of Indonesia (then the Dutch East Indies). Her husband died during the war, and she remarried to Jack O'Keefe. This marriage, for no clear reason provided by the Department of Immigration, did not confer her the traditional rights afforded to marriage, and she was treated as a prohibited migrant and faced a deportation order in late 1948.<sup>88</sup> O'Keefe did not believe that she was a prohibited immigrant or in violation of any law, and she argued, "my position simply is the Dutch authorities consider me an Australian citizen, but the Australian government considers me Dutch. I will stay here with my children and my Australian husband."<sup>89</sup> After stating her position, O'Keefe sought legal advice and decided to fight deportation in Australia's court system. In February 1949, O'Keefe announced that she would be filing a writ against Arthur Calwell and the Department of Immigration stating clearly that she was not an immigrant or prohibited immigrant, "within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1901-40."<sup>90</sup> The deportation of O'Keefe would not only trigger similar pressure groups to campaign in her defense, but it would also result in the first historically significant strike against the White Australia policy.

The O'Keefe deportation case triggered protests throughout Australia that were like previous efforts to prevent the deportation of Malayan sailors. Church organizations led the protests about the deportation order. In Leeton, a Methodist committee voted one hundred and fifty-one to one in favor of a resolution of "emphatic" protest. The lone dissenter voted against the resolution because they believed that the resolution should call for a more dramatic overhaul of the immigration policy.<sup>91</sup> Likewise, the Congregational Church

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<sup>88</sup> Sean Brawley, "Finding Home in White Australia: The O'Keefe Deportation Case of 1949," *History Australia* 11, no. 1 (2014): 129 – 131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2014.11668503>.

<sup>89</sup> "Mrs. O'Keefe is Defiant," *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill, NSW) Feb. 8, 1949.

<sup>90</sup> "O'Keefe Writ Against Mr. Calwell," *The Argus* (Melbourne, VIC) Feb. 16, 1949.

<sup>91</sup> "Mrs. O'Keefe," *The Riverine Grazier* (Hay, NSW) Feb. 18, 1949.

Union leadership condemned the White Australia policy and advocated for an immigration policy that favored discretion and one that would not result in the disruption of familial bonds or marriages.<sup>92</sup> Archbishop Mannix, leader of the Catholic diocese of Melbourne, was reported to have personally appealed to Calwell about the O’Keefe’s case. Calwell denied that any religious organization or representative had supported O’Keefe’s application to remain in Australia.<sup>93</sup> The validity of that statement is extremely questionable given how vocal church organizations and their leaders had been on the deportations of the late 1940s. By 1949, Christian organizations were championing efforts for the reform or abolition of the White Australia policy. Individuals like Reverend Alan Walker, a Methodist church leader, argued that the White Australia policy was one of the world’s largest racial problems alongside Jim Crow laws, apartheid in Africa, and the continuation of imperialism in the colonial world.<sup>94</sup> The O’Keefe deportation case continued to draw attention to the White Australia policy and invigorated church organizations and church leaders to continue to advocate for substantive change.

In the Australian parliament, opposition party members used the deportation order as ammunition to attack Calwell and undermine his legacy as Immigration Minister. Even supporters of the White Australia policy such as Robert Menzies were swift to criticize the deportation order arguing that while Calwell’s record on immigration was “laudable,” his “singularly ill-balanced mind” had caused more damage to Australia’s reputation in the pursuit of an unnecessary defense of the White Australia policy.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, Harold Holt, a member of the Liberal Party of Australia, argued that Calwell’s

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<sup>92</sup> “Church condemns “White Australia” as “Offensive to Neighbors,” *Tribune* (Sydney, NSW) Mar. 23, 1949.

<sup>93</sup> “No Exceptions O’Keefe Family Must Go: Church Plea,” *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane, QLD) Jan. 30, 1949.

<sup>94</sup> “White Australia Policy Criticised,” *Queensland Times* (Ipswich, QLD) Mar. 15, 1949.

<sup>95</sup> “O’Keefe Affair Causes Stir in Representatives,” *Daily Mercury* (Mackay, QLD) Feb. 19, 1949.



public remarks were endangering the White Australia policy and were only increasingly international hatred of Australians.<sup>96</sup> The O’Keefe deportation case had become powerful ammunition in the hands of opposition politicians like Robert Menzies and Harold Holt who would utilize the opportunity to protest Calwell’s decision as a means of ensuring political support amongst a divided Australian electorate. Even within the Labor party there were protests about Calwell’s decision. Secretary A.B. Cameron of the Wallsend Branch of the Australian Labor Party filed a protest motion that argued Calwell was flooding Australia with people of color and yet sought to deport one Asian woman married to an Australian.<sup>97</sup> Cameron’s protest was unusual given Arthur Calwell’s public record of racism towards people of color and his outspoken adherence to the White Australia policy. Political protest about this deportation showcased a growing realization amongst Australian politicians about the efficacy of discretion when it came to applying the White Australia policy. While politicians, like Holt and Menzies, were critical of the government’s decision it was because of the lack of humanity rather than a genuine concern for immigration reform and the total removal of racial discrimination in immigration policy.

The O’Keefe deportation case reinvigorated international pressure against the White Australia policy and protests would occur in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. The president of the Malaya Nationalist Party Taha Kalu requested permission to commence mass demonstrations against Calwell’s decision to deport O’Keefe.<sup>98</sup> The Deputy Police Commissioner, G.R. Livett blocked the proposed protest permit by using emergency powers. This did not sway Taha Kalu who appealed to the United Nations Human Rights

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<sup>96</sup> “O’Keefe Case Debated,” *National Advocate* (Bathurst, NSW) Feb. 10, 1949.

<sup>97</sup> “Protest Motion on O’Keefe Case Defeated,” *the Newcastle Sun* (Newcastle, NSW) Feb. 15, 1949.

<sup>98</sup> “Protest on Deportation Order,” *Singleton Argus* (NSW) Feb. 4, 1949.

Commission.<sup>99</sup> The continued interest of Malayan nationalists in the minutiae of Australian immigration policies goes beyond appealing for welfare of one Indonesian woman. The deportations represented a continuation of colonialism in the region. Malayan political leaders like C.C. Tan, the leader of Singapore Progressive Party, argued that the continued deportation of Asian people showed that Australia's promise of economic aid was nothing more than a bribe to stop pressure against the White Australia policy.<sup>100</sup> Calwell's continued drive to deport Annie O'Keefe had profound international repercussions as it only created more tensions between Australian government and the increasingly independent Southeast Asia nations. Likewise, the decision to deport O'Keefe caused friction between the Australian government and the Dutch government. The Dutch who controlled Indonesia in the 1940s did not regard O'Keefe as a Dutch citizen because she had married an Australian. The Secretary to the Netherlands Consulate, J. Zwalf, argued that Calwell should know the Netherlands had strict immigration laws and O'Keefe was not eligible to return to Indonesia.<sup>101</sup> The O'Keefe case had become a political disaster for Arthur Calwell whose motivation to deport non-Europeans had further alienated him from more moderate defenders of the White Australia policy, and had sparked diplomatic squabbles that would have far reaching implications.

The historical significance of the O'Keefe deportation case was the blow it dealt the White Australia policy in the High Court of Australia. O'Keefe's legal counsel, Reg Scholl KC, argued that O'Keefe was not an immigrant within the bounds of the *Immigration Act*, and that she was also not a prohibited immigrant under the same act.<sup>102</sup> Calwell, his senior staff, and legal counsel argued that Scholl's argument had opened

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Kevin Blackburn, "Disguised Anti-Colonialism: Protest against the White Australia Policy in Malaya and Singapore, 1947-1962," 108.

<sup>101</sup> "Dutch say Mrs. O'Keefe is British," *Daily Mercury* (Mackay, QLD) Feb. 3, 1949.

<sup>102</sup> Sean Brawley, "Finding Home in White Australia: The O'Keefe Deportation Case of 1949," 136.

“pandora’s box” because it would mean all wartime refugees would be eligible to remain in Australia.<sup>103</sup> The High Court in a four to two ruling agreed with Reg Scholl that O’Keefe was not eligible for deportation and was not a prohibited immigrant under the *Immigration Act*.<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, one of the dissenting justices was Chief Justice Latham who had been influential in formulating the government’s rhetorical defense of the White Australia policy in the postwar era. Calwell was apoplectic about the High Court decision, and he said, “the White Australia policy is now threatened for the first time. In recent months the nation has seen what damage can be done to a universally held principle by sentimental political agitators, communists, and stunting newspapers.”<sup>105</sup> Calwell’s rage about the High Court’s decision was, in his view, justified because the ruling set a precedent for all non-Europeans who had been admitted under a certificate of exemption.<sup>106</sup>

O’Keefe’s High Court victory prompted a swift backlash from Calwell and the Labor Government who were motivated by a desire to remove any weakness exposed by their loss in the High Court. Calwell and senior officers of the Department of Immigration devised the *War-time Refugee Removal Act* that was intended to provide immigration officials a legal means to remove individuals admitted into Australia over the course of the war.<sup>107</sup> Calwell’s political strategy was to introduce the bill with many objectionable premises to force opposition politicians to either come out in support of the White Australia policy or to publicly oppose it.<sup>108</sup> The political gambit worked and the House of Representatives passed the *War-time Refugee*

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>105</sup> “White Australia Policy Imperilled: Calwell’s Attack on O’Keefe Decision,” *the Argus* (Melbourne, VIC) Mar. 24, 1949.

<sup>106</sup> Sean Brawley, “Finding Home in White Australia: The O’Keefe Deportation Case of 1949,” 141.

<sup>107</sup> “War-time Refugee Removal Act, 1949,” Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation, Accessed 5/31/2022 <https://legislation.gov.au/Details/C1949A00032>.

<sup>108</sup> “Immigration Weakness to be Removed,” *Labor Call* (Melbourne, VIC) Jun. 3, 1949.

*Removal Act*. Long-term critics of the Chifley government like Jack Lang, an independent MP, called the new law the “Reprisal against Mrs. O’Keefe bill.”<sup>109</sup> Lang argued that Calwell had been motivated by his own personal animosity towards Mrs. O’Keefe and had turned an administrative act into a “savage piece of legislation.”<sup>110</sup> Further, the introduction of the bill prompted a rare outcry from sections of the Chinese community residing in Australia who were concerned over the enforcement mechanisms this provided immigration officials. Particularly, Chinese businessmen had grown concerned after the arrest of eleven Chinese sailors. Mr. A. Locke of the Chinese Seaman’s Union said that Chinese businessmen would organize a fund to challenge the legal validity of the new act.<sup>111</sup>

The passage of the War-time Refugee Act further aggravated Malayan nationalists who saw this as a draconian new measure against Asian settlement in Australia. C.C. Tan believed this was Calwell’s attempt to “purge” Australia of people of color and Asian residents, and likened Calwell to Hitler.<sup>112</sup> C.C. Tan’s calls for punitive measures against Australians including a ban on Australian migration to Singapore enjoyed popular support amongst political leaders like P.D. Nair, the General-Secretary of the Labor Party of Singapore, and Inche Sardon bin Haji Jubir, President of the Malay Union. They saw Calwell’s expanded powers as an attempt to continue European colonialism in Southeast Asia.<sup>113</sup> The motion was only narrowly defeated through the intervention of Malcolm Macdonald, the British Commissioner General for Southeast Asia, at the insistence of the embattled Australian diplomat Claude Massey.<sup>114</sup> The long-

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<sup>109</sup> “Lang Lashes at Calwell,” *Border Morning Mail* (Albury, NSW) Jul. 1, 1949.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> “To Challenge Refugees Removal Bill,” *Warwick Daily News* (Warwick, QLD) Aug. 23, 1949; “China Lodges Protest,” *The Argus* (Melbourne, VIC) Aug. 24, 1949.

<sup>112</sup> Kevin Blackburn, “Disguised Anti-Colonialism: Protest against the White Australia Policy in Malaya and Singapore, 1947-1962,” 108.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

term implications of the rapid passage of the *War-time Refugee Removal Act* complicated and isolated Australia from regional neighbors. Further, Calwell's overt racism complicated any colorblind defense that diplomats or government officials could use to justify the removal of wartime refugees. K.D. Gott summarized the issue of defending the deportations when he said, "the absence of any logical economic basis for the deportation has made it clear that Mr. Calwell-in contrast to preceding Immigration Ministers-has chosen to interpret the White Australia policy as a racial doctrine even to the extent of alienating opinion in his own country and abroad."<sup>115</sup> Calwell's dogged adherence to removing any threat to the White Australia policy had begun to generate tangible pressure against the policy, and domestically and internationally made it more difficult to utilize the traditional defense of economic protectionism.

## Conclusion

Calwell would not get to use the new powers afforded by the *War-time Refugee Removal Act* because of the Labor party's defeat in the federal election of 1949. The emergence of domestic and international pressure groups had some influence over the outcome of the election. H.A. Campbell, editor of the *Melbourne Age*, argued that "indiscriminate application of the White Australia policy against Asiatics," had been influential in swaying voters away from the Labor Party.<sup>116</sup> Robert Menzies and the Liberal-Country coalition had won mainly on policies, but political commentators like Alan Reid argued that Arthur Calwell had helped Menzies to win in a landslide.<sup>117</sup> One of the policies that Robert Menzies advocated prior to the election was a more compassionate reading of the White Australia

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<sup>115</sup> K.D. Gott, "Australia's White Curtain," *Eastern World* 3, no. 7 (Jul. 1949), Magazine Article, National Archives of Australia A1838, 581/1 Part 1.

<sup>116</sup> "3 Australians' reasons for Labor's Defeat," *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, NSW) Dec. 21, 1949.

<sup>117</sup> Alan Reid, "Menzies Won the Election Calwell Made the Landslide," *the Sun* (Sydney, NSW) Dec. 13, 1949.

policy with the view that individual cases would be assessed based on their merits.<sup>118</sup> This was a major departure from Calwell's racist application to all non-Europeans residing in Australia, and signaled the beginning of liberalization.

The new Liberal-Country government would vacillate between moments of encouraging reform and efforts to reinforce the declining White Australia policy. Arthur Calwell's leadership of the Department of Immigration was historically significant because it led to the first furtive effort in federal immigration towards a more multicultural, albeit European, society which is a defining trait of modern Australia. His legacy was overshadowed by overt racism towards non-Europeans and an inflexibility that politically isolated him during his efforts to deport all non-European war refugees. The application of the White Australia policy against refugees in the 1940s helped galvanize political pressure groups that would be influential on the piecemeal reforms of the 1950s and 1960s. Internationally, Calwell's actions had invalidated the traditional economic defenses available to the Australian Government. This placed the newly appointed Immigration Minister Harold Holt in a position to enact some changes based on the Liberal-Country policy of a humane understanding of the White Australia policy. Holt and officials from the Department of Immigration organized the first liberalization in 1952, when Harold Holt reversed the Calwell-era ban on Australian and Japanese marriage allowing for the first time a group of non-Europeans to permanently reside in Australia.<sup>119</sup> In 1958, policymakers formerly ended the Dictation Test with certain members of parliament acknowledging that it was a discriminatory tool to enforce the White Australia policy.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> "Menzies supports White Australia, but Attacks Administration," *the Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, Australia) Jun. 17, 1949.

<sup>119</sup> "Yoshiko Ishikawa's Wedding Dress," *National Museum of Australia*, Accessed 5/18/2022 <https://nma.gov.au/explore/collection/highlights/yoshiko-ishikawa-wedding-dress>.

<sup>120</sup> "Dictation Test goes – Without Mourners," *Tribune* (Sydney, NSW) Oct. 1, 1958.

Ultimately, the erosion of the White Australia policy would take several decades as pieces of the racially discriminatory policy collapsed under sociopolitical pressure. While the 1940s were not emblematic of rapid political change they were a time of substantive political and public change.

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## Celebrating Whom?

### The Citrus Fiesta of 1932 and Anglo-Centrism in the Rio Grande Valley

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**O**n December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1932, the “Home of the Grapefruit” opened itself to outsiders and locals alike to the first annual Citrus Fiesta.<sup>1</sup> Over 9,000 attendees flocked to Mission, Texas to “[commemorate the Valley’s] yield of golden fruit,” with parades, beauty and fashion contests, high school band concerts, citrus-themed games, and even a ball.<sup>2</sup> Local citrus industry leaders such as John H. Shary kickstarted the event, and according to the *Navasota Daily Examiner*, “Despite the [Great] Depression,” Mission community members raised over \$2,000 to support the first festival of many to come.<sup>3</sup>

The first annual regional Citrus Fiesta clearly celebrated the local economy and attempted to jumpstart Mission as a tourist destination, but beyond these goals, *who* did the festival truly

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<sup>1</sup> “Landowners to Gather for Fiesta,” *Navasota Daily Examiner* (Navasota, TX) November 30, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> “Mission Fetes Valley Citrus: Brilliant Pageant is Climax to Day Glorifying Golden Fruit,” *Brownsville Herald* (Brownsville, TX) December 11, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Bowman, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016), 103-104; “Landowners to Gather for Fiesta,” *Navasota Daily Examiner*.



celebrate and highlight? Who were considered the pioneers of the citrus economy in Mission, Texas, or, rather, the Home of the Grapefruit? Was the reality of the citrus economy and agricultural society of the Rio Grande Valley as glamorous as its annual festival?

In the early twentieth century, the Rio Grande Valley, a region composed of the four southernmost counties in Texas, maintained a race-based dual society.<sup>4</sup> On one hand, Anglo Americans dominated both the economic and social realms of the region, controlling aspects such as land sales and education.<sup>5</sup> This feature of the Valley was heavily advertised to outsiders and other Anglo Americans throughout the Midwest of the United States.<sup>6</sup> The marketed “Magic Valley” presented a golden opportunity for any white farmer, and as such, the Citrus Fiesta and its promotion perfectly embodied this belief.

Comparatively, Mexicans and Mexican Americans of the region suffered meager wages, poor working and living conditions, and publicly enforced segregation.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were largely limited to fulfilling the Valley’s reserved pool of cheap laborers and had virtually no upward economic mobility. Therefore, although the glamorous Citrus Fiesta romanticized the region and its

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<sup>4</sup> The four counties are Willacy, Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr. This paper primarily focuses on events in Hidalgo County, but studies of the Rio Grande Valley often group the counties together since each town, their development, populations, and histories are similar.

<sup>5</sup> When using the term ‘Anglo American,’ I refer to white Americans. In the Rio Grande Valley during this period, there were also Anglo European migrants, but include them in the same group as Anglo Americans since they both exercised political, economic, and societal power over local Mexicans and Mexican Americans based on race.

<sup>6</sup> The Rio Grande Valley is often referred to simply as The Valley, and I use these titles interchangeably throughout the paper.

<sup>7</sup> I differentiate between Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans to emphasize how individuals within this ethnic group were treated the same, regardless of citizenship. All were treated like outsiders and less than American. However, I also sometimes include the term Tejano, primarily when quoting historian Zaragosa Vargas, but with the same meaning.

economy to outsiders and locals alike, the Rio Grande Valley fit neatly into what historian Mario Barrera describes as a colonial labor system. Barrera classifies five main attributes of a colonial labor system: labor repression, the existence of a dual-wage system, occupational stratification, minorities as a reserve labor force, and minorities as economic buffers.<sup>8</sup> Thus, a race-based, socioeconomic hierarchy rooted in white supremacy permeated life and propelled the citrus-dominant economy in the Rio Grande Valley. By celebrating the literal and symbolic fruits of this labor system, the first Citrus Fiesta of 1932 commemorated Anglo American economic and political monopoly over the region.

### **The Manufactured Magic of the Rio Grande Valley**

Firstly, it is imperative to begin with the year 1900 to build up to the Citrus Fiesta of 1932. Historian Evan Anders asserts that with the introduction of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico railroad system in the Rio Grande Valley in 1904, the economy effectively transitioned from a ranching zone to the beginnings of a commercialized agricultural economy. Land value soared and long-term ranchers sold acres from \$5 to \$300 by 1912. By 1921, 204,000 acres in the Rio Grande Valley were irrigated, making the land even more attractive to prospective buyers. Moreover, cotton, citrus, and a variety of vegetables became staple crops in the Valley.<sup>9</sup>

Booster materials in the form of pamphlets, newspaper advertisements, and magazines were utilized to promote such economic opportunities in the newly advertised “Magic Valley” to outsiders. These advertisements of the newly developed land and towns in the Valley were spread nationwide, but most especially towards Midwestern farmers.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Norte Dame: Norte Dame Press, 1979), 39-40.

<sup>9</sup> Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 139-140.

<sup>10</sup> Hernandez-Salinas, Sandra, Lupe A. Flores, Mary Noell, et. al, *The Norquest Family: A Porción of Edinburg* (Edinburg, University of Texas Pan American, 2012), 38-40.

Boosters, moreover, presented a package deal: a favorable environment for commercial agriculture with readily available cheap labor.<sup>11</sup>

Created by the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railroad company, issues of *Gulf Coast Magazine* in the early 1900s exemplify such promotion. For example, an advertisement by the Indiana Co-Operative Canal Company<sup>12</sup> in a 1908 issue of *Gulf Coast Magazine* decrees, “If it’s Texas lands, we have what you want: rice ... cotton ... alfalfa ...sugar cane ... colonization ... [and] ranches.” The author also warns readers, “Colonization tracts are getting scarce, we have a few good ones left that will make the purchaser from 100% to 200% a profit.”<sup>13</sup> Surely, farmers could not miss out on such a viable opportunity.

Within the same volume, a promotion by the Hallam Colonization Company inquires,

“Do you want a home where the roses bloom every month? Where the choicest vegetables are shipped mid-winter? Where one acre has the productive power of ten in other lands? Where droughts, cyclones, earthquakes, and blizzards are unknown? If you do, we can show you. Come to the land of sunshine; come to the country of riches.”<sup>14</sup>

Some promotional materials also went so far as to publish lies to illustrate a more inviting landscape. For instance, one advertisement for the small town of Riviera deceptively assures its readers, “...mosquitos are unknown here,” effectively

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<sup>11</sup> Christian Brannstorm and Matthew Neuman, “Inventing the “Magic Valley” of South Texas, 1905-1941,” *Geographical Review* 99, no. 2 (2009): 127.

<sup>12</sup> David Robles, “Chicano Revolt and Political Response: Grassroots Change in the South Texas Town of Pharr After the 1971 Riot” (doctoral thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2018), 41.

<sup>13</sup> A.C. Swanson and E.F. Rowson, “If It’s Texas Lands, We Have What You Want,” *Gulf Coast Magazine* 3, no. 4 (1908), UTRGV Digital Library, The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley.

<sup>14</sup> Hallam Colonization Co., “La Donna Land Syndicate,” *Gulf Coast Magazine* (1908).

misleading anybody unfamiliar with the common pests of South Texas.<sup>15</sup>

These advertisements painted the Rio Grande Valley almost as an oasis of the southernmost U.S., where any man could make a name and substantial money for himself. Investors and farmers no longer needed to expand westward in search of newly developed lands and a profitable empire — they just needed to head south. As argued by these documents, a man could find unconditional success by investing in the Rio Grande Valley and its incomparable lands. In short, as described in *The Norquest Family*, “The symbolic power of the iconography, imagery, and written descriptions in the ‘Magic Valley’ marketing campaign created a myth surrounding the Valley,”<sup>16</sup> to best attract new landowners.

### A Guaranteed Cheap and Pliant Workforce

Beyond the numerous agricultural possibilities available in the Valley, these booster materials also imposed a labor hierarchy based on race, or a colonial labor system. Regardless of citizenship status, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were considered the primary cheap labor pool of the region as “a racialized working class.”<sup>17</sup> For example, in a 1906 issue of *Gulf Coast Magazine*, a pair of Wisconsin farmers, the Piper brothers, describe their experiences farming in the Rio Grande Valley. They explain, “We employ Mexican labor entirely and it is very plentiful ... [we pay them] about 37 cents in American money. Inasmuch as they board themselves, we consider it the cheapest labor in the United States today.”<sup>18</sup> A specific wage designated to Mexican and Mexican American workers therefore enforced the practice of a Mexican wage and

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<sup>15</sup> Theo. F. Koch & Company, “Riviera, Texas,” *Gulf Coast Magazine* (1908).

<sup>16</sup> Hernandez-Salinas, Sandra, Lupe A. Flores, Mary Noell, et. al, *The Norquest Family*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 54.

<sup>18</sup> Piper brothers, “And Nothing but the Truth,” *Gulf Coast Magazine* 2, no. 2 (1906), UTRGV Digital Library, The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley, 49.

imposed a dual-wage system characteristic of Texas labor of the time.

This idea of a Mexican wage aligns with Barrera's argument of a dual-wage system. Dual-wage systems, based on racialized pay systems, directly disempowered Mexican and Mexican American laborers, regardless of their citizenship status. Moreover, the dual wage system and enforcement of a Mexican wage reduced many Mexican and Mexican American agricultural workers to the region's cheap labor.<sup>19</sup> In fact, Mexican wages were so cheap, many black and white sharecroppers experienced unemployment throughout the state.<sup>20</sup>

And while citizenship was not taken into consideration when enforcing a Mexican wage, Mexican nationals were certainly encouraged to work for growers in the Valley. John H. Shary, widely known as the founder of the Valley's citrus industry, actively fought against immigration restrictions so he could employ hundreds of Mexican nationals.<sup>21</sup> Agribusiness leaders like Shary demanded the end to Mexican-directed, restrictive immigration efforts, like the 1924 National Origins Act and the 1926 Box Bill. Nativist U.S. politicians argued that by allowing more Mexican and non-Western European immigrants into the United States, a "race problem" that threatened the white population emerged. In response, agribusiness leaders in South Texas promised Mexican immigrants would remain solely as employees, and not as assimilable members of society. Growers further portrayed Mexican immigrants as "flights of passage," meaning they would enter the U.S. to work, then "fly" back home. This depiction eased concerns of Mexican nationals as threats to

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<sup>19</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 42.

<sup>20</sup> Zaragoza Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 19.

<sup>21</sup> Zulema Silva-Bewley, *The Legacy of John H. Shary: Promotion and Land Development in Hidalgo County, South Texas 1912-1930* (Edinburg: University of Texas Pan American Press, 2001), 56.

full-time white employment and white-dominated society.<sup>22</sup> It also undermined the contributions of Mexicans to the development of South Texas. As a director of the Rio Grande Valley Incorporated organization, Shary and other Anglo businessmen and growers formally protested the restrictive immigration law of 1929 and repatriations, arguably for their own economic benefit.<sup>23</sup> In fact, some agribusinessmen further ahead into the 1950s even opposed the U.S. Border Patrol since they heavily depended on undocumented labor.<sup>24</sup>

The existence of a dual wage system in the Rio Grande Valley is further proven by the racialization of land ownership in the early 1900s. In this period, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were prohibited from leasing land from entities like the Southwestern Land Company.<sup>25</sup> Anglo Americans monopolized landowning, grower, and management roles, while both Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants remained subjected to low wage, farmworker positions.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, lower class Mexican and Mexican Americans were only allowed jobs that were “conditioned” to them.<sup>27</sup> In other words, landless or even newcomer Mexicans and Mexican Americans were not granted the same opportunities for upward economic mobility as Anglo Americans.

Another piece from the previous 1906 *Gulf Coast Magazine* article includes a writing submission from farmer J.P. Withers, who explains that his crops are solely cultivated by “Mexican tenants in the old-fashioned way, under contracts, which pay me one-fourth of the crop as rent ... under a verbal contract.”<sup>28</sup> By “the old-fashioned way,” Withers referred to the tenant farming agreements that went back to ranching times, when the patron-peon system was used regularly across

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<sup>22</sup> Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 28-29, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Silva-Bewley, *The Legacy of John H. Shary*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Hernández, *Migra!*, 161.

<sup>25</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 92.

<sup>26</sup> Hernández, *Migra!*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 62.

<sup>28</sup> J.P. Withers, “And Nothing but the Truth,” *Gulf Coast Magazine*, (1906): 51.

the Rio Grande Valley. Within the patron-peon labor system, patron, or paternalistic, ranchers enforced minimal wages and continual indebtedness amongst their *peones*, which allowed patrons to control and instill economic and social “subordination” amongst their workers.<sup>29</sup> As such, peonage systems were based on “unfree labor,” and as exemplified by Withers, unfree labor continued even after it was outlawed in Texas.<sup>30</sup> This could explain why Withers relied on informal verbal agreements.

Some growers in the 1920s and 1930s even enforced their peonage systems by threatening to call the Border Patrol on their workers, hiring police forces to intimidate workers, and charging their “peons” with vagrancy to force work and further extend the harsh cycle of unfree labor and indebtedness.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, by doing so, locally instated U.S. Border Patrol officers and Anglo-American growers in South Texas developed a primarily white hegemonic structure of legal and economic authority.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, peonage practices survived the dwindling ranching systems of the late 1800s and continued to disservice and disenfranchise laborers into the early 1900s.

While John Shary did not enforce the peonage system within his business, he matched most characteristics of a patron. Historian Zulema Silva-Bewley describes Shary as maintaining up to 600 primarily Mexican and Mexican American farmworkers. Most of these employees received Christmas gifts from Shary, and he even paid for their housing on his property and took care of their personal necessities like household items and medical bills. Silva-Bewley asserts, “As any father would, Shary gave liberally, asking only for loyalty and love in return.”<sup>33</sup> In this way, Shary almost exactly

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<sup>29</sup> Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, xii. Note: quotation marks are placed around the word ‘peon’ to clarify that it is an outdated term, and not used today by this author.

<sup>30</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 40, 77; Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, xii.

<sup>31</sup> Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Hernández, *Migra!*, 44.

<sup>33</sup> Silva-Bewley, *The Legacy of John H. Shary*, 53-54.

reflected the patron-peon system of the ranching period described by Anders.

While some scholars, like Silva-Bewley, may present Shary as a kind and generous employer, it is important to recognize Shary's characterization of a patron, because this directly affected the bargaining position of his laborers. Workers would be less likely to organize, ask for pay increases, and thus have minimal possibilities of upward economic mobility because benevolent Shary paid for worker family medical bills and donated Christmas turkeys to his laborers. These actions instilled, or imposed, expectations of loyalty amongst his racialized workforce.

This is especially true when considering the continuation of low wages. As explained by Bowman, whether an agricultural Mexican or Mexican American worker was a farm tenant or not, "...the average unskilled ethnic Mexican worker earned about ten cents per hour ... [and] it was ... not uncommon by 1900 for crop pickers to make as little as twenty-five cents per day."<sup>34</sup> At most, by the 1930s, families earned a dollar per day.<sup>35</sup> Again, the persistence of a designated Mexican or Mexican American wage remained a crucial aspect of the Valley economy and its colonial labor system.

Even the supposedly generous Shary attempted to keep Mexican wages under control. In a 1926 letter to his payroll employee, Shary questioned the total wages calculated for his workers. He asked, was this "labor actual labor?" then argued, "The Mexicans are smart enough to know that they can lay down on the job, and it is hard to check these results."<sup>36</sup> While Shary claimed to support his employees and showered them with gifts, behind the scenes he did not seem to trust them to adequately calculate the wages they felt they deserved. Rather, as soon as he believed they asked for too much, he lost all faith and attempted to alter his payroll.

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<sup>34</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 42.

<sup>35</sup> Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> John H. Shary to B.F. McKee, December 19th, 1926, B.F. McKee 1926-1930 folder, Box 235, John H. Shary Collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Texas.



In fact, when his longtime chauffer Vicente Olivarez apparently asked for a raise in 1930, Shary wrote, “Since you intimated . . . that you are not properly taken care of, I give you this opportunity to look for another job . . . after all I have done for you, it hurts me very much to think that you . . . [would] even suggest that you have not been paid for your services.”<sup>37</sup> Olivarez apologized in response for offending Shary and continued in his employ for many years afterwards, but it is unclear if he received a wage increase after all.<sup>38</sup> This documented interaction truly emphasized the bounds of loyalty he expected of his workers, going so far as to attempt the termination of a long-term employee who asked for higher wages. Through this mentality and his actions against immigration restriction, Shary solidified the low bargaining power of Mexican and Mexican American agricultural workers, and thus ensured they would remain as cheap labor in the Valley.

This can also be applied to Barrera’s description of occupational stratification—the third attribute of a colonial labor system—which affirms that “...minority workers are concentrated in the least desirable occupations.”<sup>39</sup> During this period, Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Rio Grande Valley consistently earned low wages for difficult work that not many Anglo Americans undertook, such as land clearing, working as farm hands, or any other jobs designated as so-called unskilled labor.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, the calculated enforcement of Mexican and Mexican American workers as cheap and unskilled labor informed their low positioning within the Rio Grande Valley’s social hierarchies as well.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> John H. Shary to Vicente Olivarez, January 11, 1930, Vicente Olivares 1898-1943 folder, Box 235, John H. Shary collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Texas.

<sup>38</sup> Vicente Olivarez to John H. Shary, January 15, 1930, Vicente Olivares 1898-1943 folder, Box 235, John H. Shary collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, Texas.

<sup>39</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 40-43.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

Moreover, an article from a 1908 issue of *Gulf Coast Magazine* also asserts that workers of Hidalgo found happiness without “class consciousness,” establishing this attribute as an attractive aspect for new colonizers. The author asserts that attributes like a lack of class consciousness is what made “Happy, harmonious Hidalgo,” an example of “...what all Texas should be.”<sup>42</sup> Such emphasis on lacking class consciousness and therefore any worker desires for upward economic mobility leads to further questions.

How did Hidalgo developers ensure their laborers avoided class consciousness and remained “happy?” Perhaps workers remained reduced to racialized working positions with no opportunities of improvement due to employers who threatened to deport them, ensured region-wide low wages, and utilized the isolating “peon” system. Or, as exemplified by Shary, the patron status of landowning, elite Anglos was purposefully enacted to emphasize loyalty within their workers, and thus avoid encouragement of class consciousness and labor organizing.

After all, if the primarily Mexican and Mexican American workers lacked class consciousness, there would be less chances for any kind of labor movements. Barrera argues that utilizing this racialized group of workers as a reserve labor pool standardized wages, and if needed, undocumented Mexicans and unemployed Mexican Americans could easily be utilized as strikebreakers to disempower any dissent.<sup>43</sup> Booster promotions used these ideas and therefore the Valley’s colonial labor system as attractive pull factors for prospective farmers and landowners. The ever-dependent reserve labor of Mexicans and Mexican Americans made it even easier for employers to utilize them as economic buffers, especially when widespread unemployment of Anglos plagued communities during the Great Depression.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> “A Type of What All Texas Should Be,” *Gulf Coast Magazine* (1908): 46-47.

<sup>43</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 47.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

Shary also participated in reducing his Mexican and Mexican American citrus workers to being economic buffers. Bowman writes that when financial times grew tough in an undated year, Shary ordered his orchard manager that he “[wanted] one half of the men laid off this week, I do not care what happens.”<sup>45</sup> Though on the outside it appeared Shary cared deeply about his workers by providing patron-like support and advocating for immigration, it becomes clear that at the end of it all, Shary commodified, rather than humanized, his laborers.

### **The Socioeconomic and Agricultural Transformation of the Rio Grande Valley**

With the rapid development of land, acreage sales, and inviting booster materials that advertised a place myth and readily available workforce, the population in the Rio Grande Valley quickly grew. Anglo developers took charge of both commercial agriculture and the installment of new towns.<sup>46</sup> *Gulf Coast Magazine* advertised these new towns as exemplary places for new settlers. Big time developer of the Valley, Lon C. Hill, wrote, “Harlingen is destined and cannot be prevented from becoming a great enterprising city.”<sup>47</sup> Because of advertisements by individuals like Hill, the total populations of Cameron and Hidalgo Counties of the Valley reached up to 41,000 by 1910.<sup>48</sup> The majority of new settlers arrived from the Midwest with agriculture and economic profit in mind. One of those most successful entrepreneurs and soon to be patrons: John H. Shary.

In 1912, Shary arrived from Nebraska to evaluate Mission lands. By this time, he had years of experience in buying, selling, and developing lands for commercialized farming. As previously mentioned, by the mid-1910s, extensive railway and irrigation development exacerbated the need for cheap and

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<sup>45</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 137.

<sup>46</sup> Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 141.

<sup>47</sup> Lon C. Hill, “The Land of Opportunities,” *Gulf Coast Magazine* (1908).

<sup>48</sup> Anders, 141.

intensive farm labor.<sup>49</sup> Along with naturally fertile soil, these factors proved beneficial for the budding citrus industry.<sup>50</sup> Once Shary began fully investing in and boosting his own land and crops in Mission, his quick success gave him the nickname of the Father of the Citrus Industry. Two years later, Shary created Sharyland, a subdivision of Mission, then in 1923, founded the Texas Citrus Growers Exchange with other farming businessmen.<sup>51</sup>

The Exchange gave “growers a chance to realize profits where in previous years profits had been meager or not at all” and established business connections across the state and organizing the local citrus industry. Moreover, the Exchange expanded from Mission and Sharyland to across the whole Valley within a few years.<sup>52</sup> By 1929, the Rio Grande Valley boasted maintenance of over 3.4 million citrus trees, with over 2 million in Hidalgo County alone, in comparison to the seemingly meager number of just barely over a million citrus trees throughout all of California.<sup>53</sup> Shary’s impact on and guidance of the Valley’s citrus industry allowed it to become so successful and nationally recognized, that in 1932, the Citrus Fiesta would be created in his honor.

Furthermore, according to a 1934 article of the *Mission Times*, before the commercialized farming industry of citrus,

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<sup>49</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 70.

<sup>50</sup> Silva-Bewley, *The Legacy of John H. Shary*, 3, 20.

<sup>51</sup> “Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Times Is Reminiscence Time for John H. Shary, ‘Daddy’ of Citrus Industry,” John H. Shary, *Mission Times* (Mission, TX), 1934, Box 14, Folder 14-11, Frances Isbell Collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

<sup>52</sup> “History of Development of Citrus Marketing for Valley Interesting Commentary on Early Industry,” *Mission Times* (Mission, TX), 1934, Box 14, Folder 14-11, Frances Isbell Collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

<sup>53</sup> “First Orange Plantings Are Made at Laguna Seca and Experimentation Carried On At Santa Maria, Mission,” *Mission Times* (Mission, TX), 1934, Box 14, Folder 14-11, Frances Isbell Collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

the Rio Grande Valley landscape of “cacti, mesquite,” and other native plants was a “desolate waste.”<sup>54</sup> Although many Anglo Americans arrived in the Rio Grande Valley and established their own socioeconomic regimes and legacies in the Valley, Shary still remains widely recognized for his role in the exponential development of the local citrus industry. Popular portrayals of Shary solidify historical memory of him as a pioneer who saved the Valley from such desolate waste.

### The First Citrus Fiesta of 1932

The first Citrus Fiesta of 1932 in Mission showcased the economic achievements of Shary and other glamorized local figures. In a news article published a couple of weeks before the event, the *Navasota Daily Examiner* explains, “Mission ... is officially recognized as the largest grapefruit growing and shipping center in the United States. The Fiesta will celebrate this attainment as well as call attention of America to the importance of this \$125,000,000 Texas Industry.”<sup>55</sup> Additionally, according to Bowman, the Fiesta presented how “citrus growers and other people in the industry reinforced their “one big family” version of life in the Valley.”<sup>56</sup> If long-distance booster materials did not seal the deal, surely the colonial community of Mission would captivate Anglo farming families into buying and commercializing land.

Capitalizing on the Citrus Fiesta, the railway companies of Missouri Pacific and Southern Pacific provided “special excursion rates” to farmers outside of Texas. The *Brenham Banner-Press* notes, “Letters from thousands of persons in the north who were contacted by the Mission Chamber of Commerce indicate many non-residents will make the trip to

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<sup>54</sup> “Mission Groves Estates Transforms Desolate Waste of Cacti and Jonco into Acres of Fruit Bearing Trees,” *Mission Times* (Mission, TX), 1934, Box 14, Folder 14-11, Frances Isbell Collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

<sup>55</sup> “Landowners to Gather for Fiesta,” *Navasota Daily Examiner*, 1932.

<sup>56</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 103.

see the Valley celebrate.”<sup>57</sup> Much like the booster advertisements of the 1910s, midwestern farmers were targeted for attendance at the Fiesta to view first-hand the fruitful citrus economy. It is plain to see that Chamber of Commerce members hoped the event and local economic success would entice even more farmers, investors, and developers into the region.

The festival hosted several days of band concerts, a Parade of Oranges, games, agricultural exhibits, beauty contests, and a ball, all of which showcased not only citrus but also other native plants.<sup>58</sup> Other than the ball, every event was free to the public. One game of note centered around packing citrus fruit, which promised a monetary prize to whoever packed their box the fastest.<sup>59</sup> Visitors and non-agricultural workers could enjoy a noncommittal game of what was, in reality, underpaid work and everyday life for the many Mexicans and Mexican Americans who supported the citrus economy’s success.

Not only that, but local so-called pioneers received crowns for their influence. Texas Congressman and future Vice President John Nance Garner was honored as Royal Grand Mufti in the festival. Garner bestowed John Shary and Emogen Baker, wife of Sheriff A.Y. Baker, as King and Queen Citrus.<sup>60</sup> The anointed royals represented the top of the local socioeconomic hierarchy and had the thrones to prove it. Atop a carpeted throne, surrounded by large bouquets of flowers, and with large crowns resting their heads, the anointed royals of the local agricultural society posed for what would become a classic picture in Rio Grande Valley history. Baker wore a simple dress with a considerably long fur-lined cape, but in terms of royalty, she arguably paled in comparison to Shary. His long, puffed sleeves, stockings, slippers, and extra-long cape proved truly reminiscent of imperial kings.

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<sup>57</sup> “Citrus Fiesta Be Held in Home of the Grapefruit,” *Brenham-Banner Press* (Brenham, TX), December 8, 1932.

<sup>58</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 104; “First Annual Fruit Fiesta Held Friday,” *Brownsville Herald* (Brownsville, TX), December 18, 1932.

<sup>59</sup> “First Annual Fruit Fiesta Held Friday,” *Brownsville Herald*, December 1932.

<sup>60</sup> Bowman, *Blood Oranges*, 104.



John Shary as “King Citrus,” left, and Emogen Baker, right, as “Queen Citrus.”

*Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives.*

Interestingly, neither A.Y. Baker nor his wife participated in the citrus industry, but Baker retained popularity as a prominent political boss and a former Texas Ranger. During his time as a Ranger, he allegedly murdered at least two Mexican Americans and escaped punishment unscathed due to political connections. Garner was close friends with Shary and, like Baker, could only thank the reigning political bosses of the Valley for his successful congressional elections.<sup>61</sup>

Although the success of the citrus industry of the Valley was showcased as representative of the Mission and Sharyland community during the Citrus Fiesta, it must be reasserted that within the economy, there remained a colonial labor system. Therefore, the Rio Grande Valley’s citrus economy and its prospects were advertised singularly to one group: Anglo Americans. Mexicans and Mexican Americans were not recipients of long-distance invitations to the Fiesta or even

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<sup>61</sup> Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 37-38, 106; Silva-Bewley, *The Legacy of John H. Shary*, 46.

considered pioneers of the citrus industry, despite carrying the labor of the economy on their backs.

Moreover, the Citrus Fiesta of 1932 dedicated a physical space in which booster advertisements became reality. The festival displayed truly how much of a capitalistic prowess and wealthy behemoth the Rio Grande Valley's citrus economy grew into, and thus represented how successful prospective Anglo farmers could become. Games, parades, pageants, and royal designations contributed to a romanticized portrayal of the Rio Grande Valley's agricultural society, so much so that the festival could have easily fit within booster material itself. Yet at the core of this friendly and inviting event, white supremacy and racialized labor remained prevalent. The successful local economy was founded on racial and economic inequalities, and thus celebrations like the Citrus Fiesta mocked the unfavorable socioeconomic conditions many Mexicans and Mexican Americans remained subjected to.

### **Labor as a Factor in the Valley's Social Order**

In fact, everyday Anglo-American society in the Rio Grande Valley purposefully excluded most Mexicans and Mexican Americans, despite their significant populations and contributions to each Valley town. After all, booster materials and the Citrus Fiesta promised a white-dominated and segregated lifestyle alongside economic prospects and a guaranteed cheap labor force. Racialization of Mexican and Mexican Americans dominated every aspect of the Rio Grande Valley in the existence of de facto segregation, based off Jim Crow laws in other regions of Texas.

Residential segregation permeated daily life in many different towns of the Valley. For one, many towns did not allow Mexicans and Mexican Americans in specific restaurants, swimming pools, or other public spaces.<sup>62</sup> Towns were also rooted in racial segregation. The same railway tracks that

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<sup>62</sup> Benjamin H. Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 178.



brought economic progress and commercialization to the Rio Grande Valley segregated whites and Mexicans. Town developers planned out Anglo and Mexican housing and often instilled residential segregation.<sup>63</sup> So not only could Anglo Americans expect to have a primarily racialized labor division from booster materials, but upon arrival, could trust that the racial division would characterize the social hierarchy as well. Economic status determined what side of the tracks one lived on, and conveniently, non-whites remained consistently separated from newcomer Anglos.

Scholar Jennifer Nájera also contends that segregated lifestyles even existed in local news press, whose authors purposefully excluded Mexicans and Mexican Americans from public record. She asserts, “During this time ... Valley towns [were] developing not only an infrastructure but also a community identity,” and that a widespread disparity of articles about Mexicans and Mexican Americans “indicates not that Mexican people were absent ... but rather that they existed outside of the imagined community.”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the romanticization and labor stratification of the Magic Valley did not end with booster materials of the 1910s, but in fact bled into everyday life. The enforced racialized economic hierarchy defined means of living in the Rio Grande Valley, and thus ensured Mexicans and Mexican Americans were not considered as pioneers of the Magic Valley. Glorified representations of Valley life did not include Mexicans and Mexican Americans, because as a mostly cheap labor pool subjected to segregated barrios, they were not viewed as major players of the socioeconomic scene.

De facto segregation also dominated local school systems. H. Clay Harvey, previously either the superintendent or principal of the nearby Mercedes school district,<sup>65</sup> wrote in a

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<sup>63</sup> Jennifer R. Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race: Mexican Segregation in a South Texas Town* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 38-39.

<sup>64</sup> Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race*, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Texas State Department of Education, “Examinations and Certificates: 1915,” Bulletin 42 (Austin, Texas), February 1915. I write that he was either the superintendent or principal because this source

1917 *Mercedes Tribune* article, “We believe in segregation up to and including the seventh grade. If the Mexican child makes good ... we believe he should be admitted to the American high school with all the privileges of the American boys and girls.” Harvey cites language differences as the determining factor of segregation, alongside his opinion that, “The Mexican child in general is not by nature as brilliant as the American child,” and concludes that these two characteristics are “handicaps,” undeserving of integrated schooling.<sup>66</sup>

So, although local leaders like Harvey initially argued that mere language differences justified Mexican and Mexican American segregation from Anglo children, racial bias undoubtedly influenced such decisions. School segregation based on eugenics and racialized intelligence testing characterized the early twentieth century and clearly permeated into the Rio Grande Valley as well, where Anglo Americans took hold of the local economy and politics. Tejanos such as George I. Sánchez protested this trend, but it remained a characteristic feature of the era, backed by white social scientists and educators.<sup>67</sup>

In Harvey’s own words, non-white individuals could not easily reach, and at least had to earn, the privileges of brilliant American superiority and thus educational opportunities. Mexicans and Mexican Americans could only earn this privilege after years of primary schooling, since they lacked the American-ness of Anglos, regardless of citizenship. Moreover, such ideas contradicted the fact that the Valley and its citizens were legally considered white, American citizens since 1848, when the Mexican American war ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.<sup>68</sup> Still, these children were not American

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does not specify what category he fell under, where he is listed as “Superintendent or Principal” on page 29.

<sup>66</sup> H. Clay Harvey, “Stray Thoughts,” *Mercedes Tribune* (Mercedes, TX) September 14, 1917.

<sup>67</sup> George I. Sánchez, “Bilingualism and Mental Measures: A Word of Caution,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 18, no. 6, (1934): 765-772.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Griswold del Castillo, “Citizenship and Property Rights: U.S. Interpretations of the Treaty,” in *The Treaty of Guadalupe*

enough—or rather, white enough. Instead, many Valley schools like Harvey’s followed the precedent of Jim Crow segregated schooling in other Texas regions.

The Mission school district exemplified the reality of physical social stratification in the Valley. A 1934 issue of the *Mission Times* dedicated an entire spread on the history of its schooling system. One article written by George Wolfram, the first Anglo teacher of Mission, explains that the first Anglo school was established in 1909, “on the north side of the railroad in Mission ... with an average daily attendance of 28.” Most of these students were new residents to the Valley, which makes sense considering the migration trends of this period. He continues to explain that a Catholic school existed even before the Anglo institution, located “south of the railroad ... [with] a daily attendance of more than 200 Mexican students.”<sup>69</sup>

The Mission school district was officially established a year later, in 1910. By 1919, the school district allocated up to at least \$88,000 total funds for renovations, building development, and more for Anglo students. These renovations included multiple buildings, an auditorium, and extra classrooms. In 1919, the district built its first Mexican school with \$40,000 on the south side of the railroad tracks.<sup>70</sup> The singular Mexican school, besides its creation being an afterthought, could not compare to its Anglo counterparts. By

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*Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 62.

<sup>69</sup> George Wolfram, “History of Early Days of Education in Mission Is a Leaf From Pioneer book of Romance Equaled Only in Fiction,” *Mission Times* (Mission, Texas), 1934, Box 14, Folder 14-28, Frances Isbell Collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas.

<sup>70</sup> “History of Mission’s School System from Its First School in 1909 Has Shown Continual Growth and Service,” *Mission Times* (Mission, TX), 1934, Box 14, Folder 14-28, Frances Isbell Collection, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Special Collections and Archives, Edinburg, Texas. Today, this money would be approximately \$1.5 million dollars for the Anglo-American school and nearly \$700,000 the Mexican school. *U.S. Inflation Calculator*, accessed April 26, 2023, <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>.

1920, the Mission school district built a high school, but it is unclear if this building was segregated as well, or if it allowed the limited integration Harvey spoke of in other school districts.<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, an article of the *Mission Times* explains, “The schools did a good work in Americanization during 1918-1919 and 1919-1920 and holds a certificate from the Federal government for work in that field.”<sup>72</sup> Historian Cynthia Orozco explains that Americanization programs were popular across the nation, but especially in the Rio Grande Valley because of influences like “the Mexican revolution beginning in 1910, the Plan de San Diego episode of 1915, the Progressive movement of the 1910s and 1920s ... World War I ... [and] the eugenics movement.”<sup>73</sup> Nationalism and concerns over foreign policy and immigration therefore propelled the existence of such programs, and Mexicans and Mexican Americans were not considered American enough for regular curriculum. Rather, these students – many of whom were born in Texas with generational roots – needed to be trained as Americans. Local Anglos may have viewed segregated schooling and Americanization programs as perhaps necessary to avoid any association with the transborder spillage of the Mexican Revolution and the locally planned Tejano uprising, the Plan de San Diego.<sup>74</sup> Regardless of any justifications, however, Mexican and Mexican American students were subjected to the same social otherness and subjugation that many faced in the labor sphere. For one reason or another and in different contexts, Mexicans and

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<sup>71</sup> “History of Mission’s School System...” *Mission Times* (Mission, TX), 1934.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 39.

<sup>74</sup> For more information on the impact of the Mexican Revolution in the Rio Grande Valley and the Plan de San Diego, see: Monica Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

Mexican Americans remained ostracized from mainstream, Anglo-centric life in the Valley.

Even though Mexican Americans existed in the Valley with new or generational citizenship, all were labeled as Mexicans, as something other than true American children. Just as Barrera argued that the non-white status of Mexicans and Mexican Americans immediately established their disenfranchised labor positions, the nonwhite status of their children immediately determined their educational opportunities and separate, propagandized curriculum.<sup>75</sup>

As such, Nájera argues that these programs taught “transmitted Anglo and social cultural dominance.” According to Nájera and as exemplified by the 1934 proud declaration of the *Mission Times*, Americanization programs continued past the 1920s in the Valley. She writes that the programs were oriented around “civilization,” and promoted to Mexican and Mexican American children in their separate schools because it was believed that “Mexican-origin people were less socially evolved than their Anglo counterparts.”<sup>76</sup> This directly relates to Harvey’s belief that Mexican or Mexican American children were inherently less intelligent than their Anglo counterparts. So not only did they require separate learning apparently due to language differences, but they required specific, propagandized curriculum as well—one might argue that practice attempted to strip these children of their cultural traits or ancestry.

Such discriminatory thinking must have been important to Shary as well when he created the segregated Sharyland school district. Shary created the Sharyland Independent School District in 1921 and remained school board president until 1939. As described by Silva-Bewley, Shary formally enforced segregation in his district only at the elementary level. Notably, a Mexican student did not graduate from Sharyland’s high school until 1940, a year after he left his leadership position. Despite restricting Mexican and Mexican American children from attending his white school, he provided charity to them,

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<sup>75</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 42.

<sup>76</sup> Nájera, *The Borderlands of Race*, 59-60.

like by fulfilling each Mexican child's Christmas list every winter.<sup>77</sup>

Shary's enforcement of segregation in his school district while outwardly asserting his dedication to his Mexican and Mexican American workers and their children were not unrelated actions. It is similar to how, as previously mentioned, he attempted to gain the allegiance of his workers by allowing them to live on his land and send him his medical bills while purposefully enforcing low wages and threatening to fire workers if they asked for anything more. By segregating Mexican and Mexican American children in his school district from Anglos, he enforced disenfranchisement of this group beyond the labor fields. He therefore ensured Mexicans and Mexican Americans remained low on the Valley's socioeconomic hierarchy by segregating the local school system and enforcing stratified labor positions.

These intentions are made even clearer by Harvey, who in his aforementioned article said that by providing a school for Mexicans and retaining them as the Valley's main cheap labor source, these actions can "assist our entire Mexican population to keep busy." He continues, "It would be an economic move for us. Where everybody keeps busy all the time in some useful employment you find a happy and prosperous people and the officers of the law have but little to do," implying that segregated schooling and stratified, low-paying labor helped keep Mexicans and Mexican Americans out of trouble.<sup>78</sup>

Lastly, white supremacy existed in dangerous forms beyond the agricultural fields, residential areas, and school systems in the Valley. Firstly, in the 1910s, primarily Anglo-American Texas Rangers and lynch mobs indiscriminately murdered hundreds of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the name of justice. Often using the catch-all excuse of banditry, Ranger attacks on the local nonwhite population included "harassment ... forcible relocations," and "extralegal executions" without trial. Historians William Carrigan and Clive Webb tally nearly one hundred *reported* lynchings of

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<sup>77</sup> Silva-Bewley, *The Legacy of John H. Shary*, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Harvey, "Stray Thoughts," *Mercedes Tribune*, 1917.

Mexicans and Mexican Americans from 1915 to 1918, but estimate the number of unrecorded deaths in the decade reach the hundreds.<sup>79</sup> And a decade later, the Ku Klux Klan held parades and controlled local offices in Cameron County.<sup>80</sup>

Racial violence in the Rio Grande Valley became such a prominent issue that Tejano state legislator, J.T. Canales, led a state investigation against the Texas Rangers and their involvement in lynch mobs and prisoner killings in 1919.<sup>81</sup> Clearly, in the early twentieth century Mexican and Mexican American subordination extended even beyond labor positions, residential areas, and schools. Anglo Americans were even willing to keep them at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy through violence.

### **The Limitations of the American Dream in the Valley**

Ultimately, the colonial labor system of the Rio Grande Valley, enforced by economic features like the citrus industry, developed rigid, stratified communities across the region. Shary and the Citrus Fiesta are an example of how the Valley implemented American dream, or rather, the *Anglo*-American dream of upward class mobility.

On the other hand, as established by Barrera, Mexican and Mexican American workers of this period were a “subordinate class segment” within the overall working class of the United States due to their nonwhite status. He writes, “The five aspects of colonial labor represent the ways in which [Mexican and Mexican American] workers have been set off from the rest of the [overall working class] class by altering their relationship to the means and process of production.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 213-217.

<sup>80</sup> Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*, 2-3, 178.

<sup>81</sup> Texas Legislature, “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” volumes I - III, Texas, 1919.

<sup>82</sup> Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest*, 101.

Therefore, since the labor opportunities for Mexicans and Mexican Americans relied on racialization, this meant that the land of economic freedom advertised by boosters and the Citrus Fiesta remained exclusive to Anglo Americans.

Even if an Anglo American did not reach the successful status of Shary and remained in the working class, they did not experience racial discrimination or the same subordinate class position of many Mexicans and Mexican Americans. However, it is also important to recognize that not all Mexican Americans experienced the same subjugated labor and social class status. Many historians have noted the flexibility of Mexicans and Mexican Americans within the racial hierarchy in Texas, primarily based on skin color and generational landowning wealth.<sup>83</sup> Aspects of the colonial labor system benefitted both Anglos and privileged Mexican Americans alike. Anglo Americans, for instance, could qualify for land leases on the basis of their race. Moreover, Anglos did not experience segregation in schools, newspapers, or residential areas. Because of this, even working-class Anglo Americans exercised dominance over Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

So, while the Citrus Fiesta showcased women in dresses made of produce, made fruit box packing a fun game for outsiders, lent a literal and figurative crown to John H. Shary as king of the citrus industry, and even implemented a Spanish word in its name, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were primarily only allowed on the outside, looking in. The

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<sup>83</sup> Lytle-Hernández, *Migra!*, 43. See also: Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed*, David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1993), Armando Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998). There is also important work on Mexican Americans as abusive members of the U.S. Border Patrol and Texas Rangers, even when latter group frequently targeted Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans. For example, for further reading on Mexican Americans in the U.S. border patrol, see: Lytle-Hernández, *Migra!*, and Muñoz-Martínez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You* for Mexican American participation in Texas Ranger forces.



celebrated and prospective achievements of the citrus economy were singularly reserved for non-local Anglo Americans like Shary. Yet, it is important to recognize that their success in the early twentieth century would have been impossible to obtain without worker exploitation and the racialized, colonial labor system in the Rio Grande Valley.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Review of *Clio's Foot Soldiers: Twentieth-Century U.S. Social Movements and Collective Memory*. By Lara Leigh Kelland  
*Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018.*  
*pp. xiii, 207, paperback \$29.95***

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**D**iscussions on the task of the public historian are ongoing. Although the public history field in the United States has accepted a broad definition of public history as history being “put to work in the world,” there are still discussions on how to accomplish that task.<sup>1</sup> Is the role of the public historian to facilitate the dissemination of history to the public? To use history to serve the needs of their communities? To use history to fight against systemic inequality? In *Clio's Foot Soldiers*, Kelland reframes the origin narrative of the public history field: public history was not born within academia but from the social movements of the late twentieth century (ix). By tracing the public history field's origin to the grassroots social movements of the twentieth century, the author argues that the field and its methods are influenced by and rooted in social activism and the memory practices of social activists.

Kelland organizes *Clio's Foot Soldiers* into five chapters. Each chapter covers a social movement of the late twentieth century: Civil Rights, Black Power, Feminist, LGBT, and Red Power. The author analyzes several case studies in each chapter, explaining how activists used memory practices to achieve their respective movement goals. Civil Rights and Black Power

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<sup>1</sup> The National Council on Public History describes public history as “the many and diverse ways in which history is put to work in the world.” NCPH, “About the Field: How Do We Define Public History?” <https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/#0>.

activists used history education to gain control over Black history and to construct a Black collective memory. While the former wanted to use history education to assert Black citizenship, the latter was more interested in using history to create a separatist, sometimes Pan-Africanist, collective memory and identity (11 and 41). Likewise, Feminist, LGBT, and Red Power activists sought to claim ownership over their own respective histories and to assert their own community identity (71, 102, and 142). Although each movement had different sets of challenges and different techniques to assert ownership over their own history and identity, they all used a form of memory practices to achieve their goals.

Kelland tends to focus their analysis on the memory practices of each social movement. At times the author's goal, to trace the origin of the public history field to social activism in the late twentieth century, is not clearly identified and analyzed until later in a chapter's conclusion or the conclusion of the book. One example of the author's emphasis on collective memory is the analysis of the Highlander Folk School in chapter one. The staff at Highlander used Black folk music to not only preserve Black music heritage but also to transmit a Black cultural identity (23). Another example is the author's analysis of how LGBT activists shared queer history with the public. Some activists focused on community-repositories that were to be owned by the community and responsible to the community (radical archiving) like the Lesbian Herstory Archive (107). LGBT activist scholars and community historians participated in collaborative research to share information and sources on LGBT history since the archival record erased or obscured the presence of same-sex-loving individuals (110). Other activists participated in history projects like Jocelyn Cohen and Nancy Poore's Helaine Victoria Press to share LGBT historical narratives on postcards (91). In all the case studies that Kelland analyzes, attention is given to how activists use memory practices and collective memory to construct a political identity.

It is not until the conclusion, however, that Kelland identifies how collective memory work in the late twentieth century impacted the public history field today, especially in

mainstream institutions (158). *Clio's Foot Soldiers* seems to be more about collective memory and memory practices than a reframed origin-narrative of the public history field. It requires careful reading, and a general knowledge of the field, to understand the author's implied arguments and their connections to public history today. The variety of techniques employed by social activists, such as Black activists' use of education to assert ownership over Black history, Feminist and LGBT activists' use of nontraditional sources to overcome the archival power, and Red Power activists' use of education to fight against racialized ideas, are some of the techniques and methods that today's public historians use to serve their communities. Kelland says, "By insisting on articulating their own histories, social movement activists laid the groundwork for more democratic, evidence-based, and culturally sensitive history-making" (173). Public historians adapted some of the practices, memory practices in particular, of social activists. Mainstream institutions like museums integrated some of the historical narratives created within these social movements.

*Clio's Foot Soldiers* is a good book for both students and professionals of public history. It provides to students a contextualized history of the field and its practices. The book also engages with ongoing discussions on the role of the public historian. Kelland does not express definitively what the task of the public historian should be, but the author's argument seems to indicate that public historians should acknowledge and embrace their grassroots and social activism origins. Although the author could have made the relationship between twentieth-century social movements and the public history field clearer by analyzing recent public history works, projects, and methods, Kelland makes a strong argument for the field's grassroots origin.





# The history of *History Matters*

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## Appalachian State University, Department of History

Have you ever spent so much time and effort on something that you wanted to share it with other people? Have you ever felt unfulfilled receiving only a grade and your own satisfaction as rewards for your hard work? Have you ever wanted to get your work published?

For these reasons *History Matters* was founded. In the spring of 2003, Eric Burnette, a freshman at Appalachian State University, was looking for an outlet for his research paper. He was frustrated by the lack of venues for undergraduate research, and he figured that other students probably felt the same way. Dr. Michael Moore, who had edited *Albion*, a professional journal of British history, for more than 25 years, began advising Burnette on how best to go about starting an academic journal for undergraduate historical research. Another Appalachian student, Matthew Manes, was asked to join the interesting experiment, and together they laid the groundwork for *History Matters*.

Our first deadline was in late January 2004. For the editorial staff, it was an extensive and time-consuming process of reading, revising, and communicating with both the authors and the Faculty Editorial Board. In the end, the collaboration published one research paper, one research essay, and three editorial book reviews. This first issue of *History Matters: An Undergraduate Journal of Historical Research* was published online on April 28, 2004.

From the beginning, Burnette and Manes wanted to expand the journal. The more students who were involved, the more students who had the opportunity to be published and the better those papers would be. The 2004-2005 school year saw the participation of the University of North Carolina Asheville and Western Carolina University, as well as submissions from half a dozen schools nationwide. The 2005 issue was published with two research papers, one from Appalachian State University and one from a student at Villanova University. Five book reviews from all three participating departments were also published.

Since 2004, *History Matters* has grown drastically. Over the years our submission base increased from 11 papers in 2004-2005 to 136 papers in 2016-2017. We now receive submissions from all over the United States from distinguished universities including Yale, Harvard, Brown, Cornell, UC Berkeley, and Stanford. *History Matters* has also expanded internationally. We have received submissions from Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and South America while also employing international staff members as contributing editors.

Today, *History Matters* continues to grow and prosper thanks to a supportive faculty, department, university, and, most importantly, the students who have worked hard on their papers and work with us to get them published.

# Submit to **HISTORY MATTERS**

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The editors of *History Matters* will begin accepting papers for the **May 2024 issue** this summer!

## **Early Submission**

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Submit by July 31st and the editors will let you know if your paper has moved on to the next stage in the review process by the end of September.

## **Regular Submission**

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The last day for all paper submissions is December 15, 2023.

# HISTORY MATTERS

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**Foreword**

**Eric Burnette**

*Appalachian State  
University '06*

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Pofue Yang**, MA student, *Appalachian State University*