





# The American Papers

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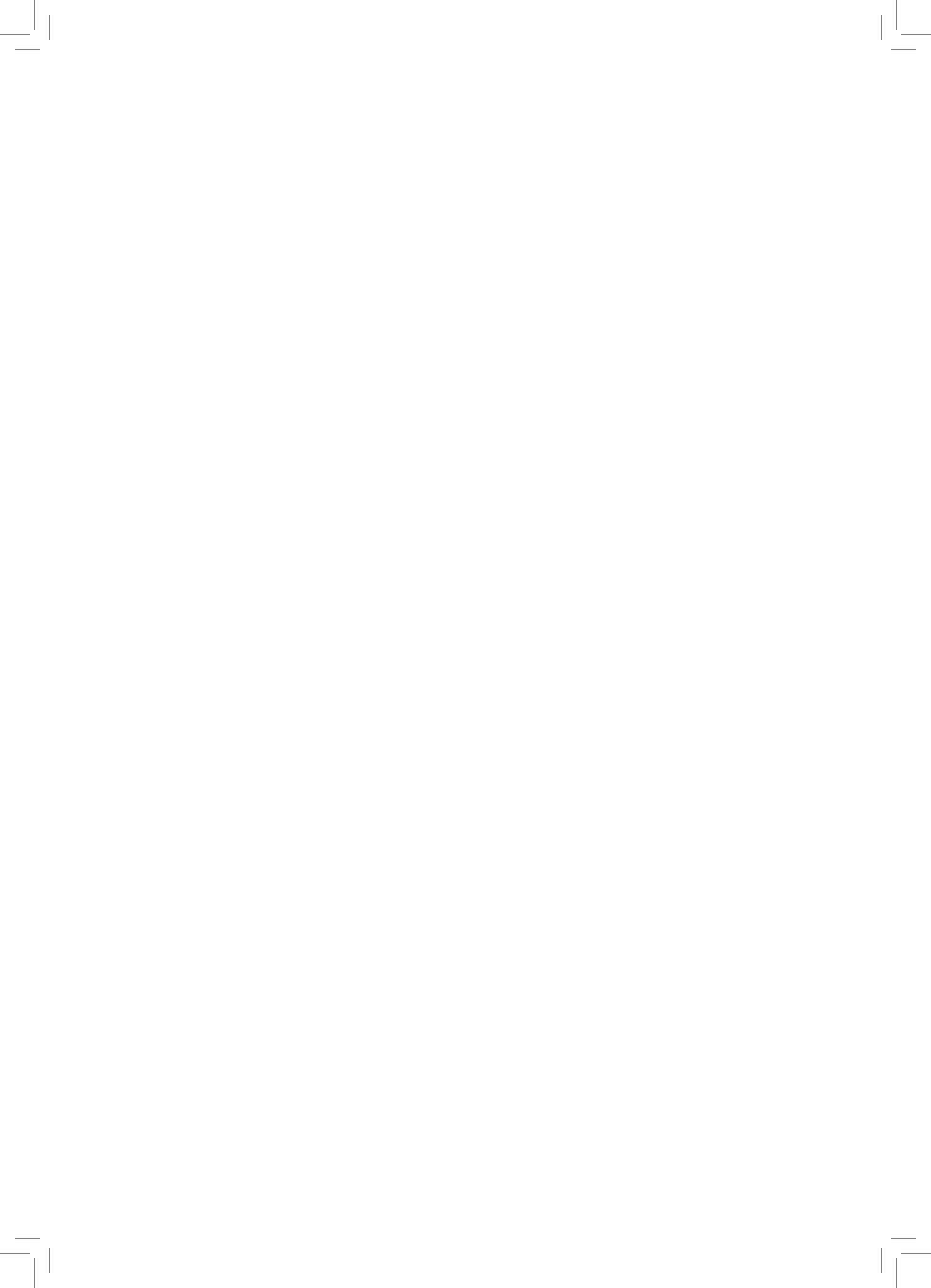
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Professor Abnet would like to thank the editors for their hard work, camaraderie, and professionalism while preparing this edition of *The American Papers*. Their willingness to give freely of their time—even over summer break—to add to this institution is very much appreciated. He also would like to commend the authors for their exceptional papers and good-natured responses to the editorial process.

Bahar Tahamtani, Judson Barber, Darcy Anderson, and Ashley Ongalibang deserve special recognition for their service as Managing Editors as does editor Jonathan Schreiber for his assistance securing funding from the InterClub Council. Together their efforts made the production of the 2016-2017 issue possible. Professor Abnet offers special thanks to Bahar Tahamtani for her beautiful work on the layout and design of this issue. Finally, he especially would like to thank Ashley Loup for serving as this volume's Editor in Chief. Her professionalism, hard work, and dedication to the success of *The American Papers* has been remarkable.



# Course Descriptions

## **AMST 201:** Introduction to American Studies

With the concept of culture as a unifying principle, focus is on four separate time periods to provide the framework for an understanding of American civilization. Various kinds of documents used to illustrate the nature and advantages of an interdisciplinary approach.

## **AMST 300:** Introduction to American Popular Culture

A Historical exploration of popular culture in America as it both reflects and contributes to the search for meaning in everyday life. Heroes, myths of success, symbols of power, images of romance, consumerism, race and sexual identity.

## **AMST 301:** American Character

Cultural environment and personality. Extent to which there have been and continue to be distinctly American patterns of belief and behavior. Similarities, as well as class, ethnic, sex, and regional differences among Americans.

## **AMST 401T:** Adolescent America: A Cultural History and Contemporary Study of the Teenager in America

This course examines the teenager as a category of cultural participation: the challenges and conditions of adolescence in America, what has held “youth culture” together, what has fragmented and reformulated it across time, with attention to broader beliefs and values.

## **AMST 401T:** American Culture through Ethnography

In this interdisciplinary seminar students conduct independent research on aspects of contemporary American culture using ethnographic methods including interviews and participant-observation.

## **AMST 401T:** Stories of Los Angeles

Examines how people have told stories about Los Angeles. Los Angeles is repeatedly represented, fantasized, and forgotten, famously divided and sprawling, renowned for both sunshine and noir—and it is also the setting for most of our lives, so its contradictory stories are well worth exploring.

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

Explores the development and significance of outdoor, board, and video games in America. Analyzes literary works, films, television shows, advertisements, manuals, and material artifacts to understand how gaming has addressed larger social tensions and shaped American identity and culture.

## **AMST 418:** Food in American Culture

Food and identities in America from the colonial era to the present, including explorations of American ethnic food, industrialization of food and contemporary food movements.

**AMST 447: Race and American Popular Culture**

Explores American racial ideologies through the lens of popular culture. Examines literature, theater, sport, music and film, and asks: how has popular culture contributed to and challenged the social construction of race and ethnicity in the United States?

**AMST 502: Race in American Studies**

Graduate seminar in American Studies that examines the theory of race as a practice; one that is created, inhabited, transformed, and reimagined. The course pushes in-depth analysis of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of racial formation and interracial interactions in the United States.

**AMST 502: Public Memory**

*Weaver Award Course*

Analysis of cultural practices of remembering (and forgetting) in relationship to both scholarly and popular constructions of the history of "American experience." Examines the how narratives, artifacts, and sites of public memory can be seen to create as well as reinforce social boundaries.







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*The American Papers*

*In the spring of 1993 the American Studies Student Association established the Earl James Weaver Graduate Paper Prize to honor the retirement of Earl James Weaver, Professor of American Studies, past Department Chair, and founder of the Department of American Studies at California State University, Fullerton. With an original endowment raised from the generous contributions of American Studies students and alumni, the Weaver Prize is an annual \$250 cash award for the best paper written by an American Studies graduate student during the preceding year. Every spring, a panel of American Studies faculty reads submissions and selects the winning essay.*

*The 2016 Weaver Prize went to Judson Barber for his essay "Silent Ruins: The Politics, Distribution, and Confinement of Memory Surrounding Alcatraz Island." The In this original research project, Barber takes his readers on a journey to The Rock to experience the official version of the island's history. Visitors hear the sounds of slamming cell bars and leave with jail-themed souvenirs, but few learn of the island's hidden history that unfolded after the prison closed—the occupation of Alcatraz by the Indians of All Tribes from 1969 to 1971. Barber's sophisticated analysis of sources ranging from postcards to protest graffiti firmly engages the slippery concept of public memory—a process that Barber describes as more of an "active disremembering than innocent forgetting." The project is rigorously conceived and the paper beautifully written with solid argumentation from start to finish. The committee offers our heartfelt congratulations to Judson Barber for his inspiring work.*

*-2016 Weaver Prize Committee*

*The American Papers*



# Silent Ruins: The Politics, Distribution, and Confinement of Memory Surrounding Alcatraz Island

Judson Barber

## Introduction

There is more than a presence, but evidence of an absence on Alcatraz. Throughout popular culture, public discourse, and narrative fiction, Alcatraz Island is known primarily for its use as a Federal Penitentiary which operated from 1934 to 1963. However, there are pieces of something else, some more and something different, that curiously emerge from the shadow of the looming cellhouse. A mark here, a mention there, and while sometimes conspicuous, the stage is never granted to these hints of alterity that inhabit the island. These glimmers, specters, and wisps are eager to shout and be seen, but their platform has been dismantled and their voices spoken over. Like a sibling that vies for attention in the shadow of the favorite, the ghosts of another Alcatraz go ignored in deference to the spectacle of the preferred—the born entertainer. Glimpses of an alternate story of the island, distinguished from its prison history, can be spotted only briefly before one's attention is swiftly redirected to the cellhouse. It's as if eyes and minds are being diverted and distractions created to absorb the greatest number of people and prevent them from a substantive engagement with a history that runs counter to dominant narratives of United States government righteousness and justice. To try and understand these specters is like watching a muted television. Some information can be obtained, but there is no voice to guide us. There is no narrator to inform us of a perspective, to give us insight, or to convey knowledge beyond what is apparent *prima facie*. The spaces that bear the markings of an alternate history—an addendum to the prison years—are denied attention, reverence, or significance as places on the island. Once a lack of information in these spaces becomes apparent to visitors, they move on and the memory and intrigue quickly fade as new stimulants present themselves. In this attention heist, tourists are robbed of a more complete understanding of the significance of the island to different people at different times in history. If only we were allowed to listen to these ghosts, what would we hear?

Alcatraz Island exists as a site of public memory—a location for which understanding is formed and persists from the shared experiences of many individuals. Sites and artifacts of public (or collective) memory transmit knowledge about their subject from the shared or common experiences of those individuals and the monuments or memorials that are produced from them. As with most sites of public memory and monuments of public history, the privileging of certain information and neglect of others in the construction of historical narrative is a necessary, if regrettable, part of the process. With Alcatraz, however, that omission is not only detrimental to a complete understanding of the varied and layered significance of this place, but also acts to dispossess Native Americans of the importance of Alcatraz Island in their history and ongoing struggle for civil and sovereign rights. Though Alcatraz is arguably more culturally significant as a site of political protest than it ever was during its time as a Federal Penitentiary, that

has not become the dominant memory of Alcatraz in either the official narrative nor the public image as dictated by the tourism industry that surrounds it.

This project began as I wanted to explore what might have been submerged or set aside as distinguished from what regularly invoked in public discourse of the island and its history. Alcatraz struck me as uniquely specific because for years I have been deeply interested and invested in exploring the placement of the prison in the American consciousness and as a part of American culture, both for its symbolic institutional value and practical application, and this prison island in particular was one of the most popular and notorious. Alcatraz exists as a major figure in America's obsession with prisons, as even a cursory glance at the narrative fiction and popular media from the twentieth century that involves the island would verify. In reading both geographer Kenneth E. Foote's *Shadowed Ground* and culture and communication scholar Marita Sturken's *Tourists of History* over the past months, a question arose: Why do sites of traumatic memory so often hide the complicated stories of their past? In their respective works, both Foote and Sturken illuminate several examples wherein simplicity and coherence are privileged over murkier, though often more authentic, truths when constructing narratives at these places.

In the vein of both Kenneth Foote and Marita Sturken, my focus for this study is directed to the existing island and its contents, memorials, and material artifacts of public memory that contribute to its story. With this more specific focus, my questions remain: What is it that Alcatraz Island *tells us about itself*, and what is lost from this tale? To answer these questions, I traveled to San Francisco and Alcatraz Island in April 2015 to participate in tours of the island, both chaperoned and self-guided, and to experience the tourism industry that surrounds this famous attraction. On the mainland, I remained open to the typical tourist experience of the city, visiting several of the areas most trafficked by those visiting from out of town, such as Fisherman's Wharf and the surrounding piers, as far south as the San Francisco Ferry Building. I have decided to focus on my experiences and engagement with the tourism industry that surrounds Alcatraz and produces popular depictions and representations of it as my primary evidence. Alcatraz tourism, which hosts approximately one million visitors to the island each year and produces and distributes information about the island around the world in the form of souvenirs, is positioned as a major purveyor of knowledge about the island to the unassuming, uninformed, and unprepared. The experience they are offered is the focus of this study.

### Grounding and Foundations

Though Alcatraz is a special place in many ways, its situation as a former prison now open to the public for tourism is actually quite common. While there isn't a wealth of scholarship that pertains to this arrangement on Alcatraz specifically, tourism historian John F. Sears, in his book *Sacred Places*, writes that tourism to prisons, asylums, and institutions for the deaf, dumb, and blind was an emerging trend in the nineteenth century. Sears writes that:

The novelty of these institutions and the tremendous hopes they aroused for the banishment of darkness, ignorance, and sin attracted the curiosity of American and foreign visitors...The new institutions presented visions of order and methods of control in a world which seemed at times destructive or chaotic.<sup>1</sup>

During this time prisons, asylums, and other institutions were tourist attractions for their novelty, as those that had existed on the American landscape in years prior were

unremarkable and often sequestered from society. These new institutions, however were heralded as monuments to the progress of modernity, often perched on hilltops as, “symbols of the accomplishments and benevolent intentions of their founders.”<sup>2</sup> Moving into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, prison tourism is perhaps more adequately situated under the realm of dark tourism, in which visitors travel to sites associated with trauma and tragedy for a variety of purposes. With prisons, criminologist Michael Welch in his book *Escape to Prison*, speculates much of the tourist draw centers around imagining the spectacle of punishment, pain, and suffering from a safe distance, both physically and temporally.<sup>3</sup> An interesting dilemma arises with dark tourism, especially with more horrific sites such as those where assassinations have taken place, Holocaust death camps, and sites of terrorist attacks, but also with Alcatraz and other prisons, and that is the commodification and exploitation of tragedy. Travel and tourism scholars John J. Lennon and Malcolm Foley argue that time and distance are critical factors before a site of trauma can be commercialized and commodified for public consumption. They argue that:

It is likely that memorials will be erected and that these may be visited by this on a dedicated pilgrimage, those who are passing through and by the merely curious. What takes longer to be acceptable is any form of interpretation of the events - anything which could be said to be a touristic ‘experience’, however that experience may be intended. Yet, there appears to be a point at which this becomes acceptable.<sup>4</sup>

Lennon and Foley go on to discuss several sites that have made this leap, some sooner than others, but it’s interesting to consider the aging necessary for a site of trauma before it can be accepted as a site of cultural significance with touristic appeal.

Tourism as an educative institution in itself, broader than just modern dark tourism, has long long been aligned with the principles of modernity.<sup>5</sup> Arguably one of the most important functions of tourism is that of education, especially at sites of dark tourism with contested meanings and interpretations, such as Alcatraz or the Channel Islands. Sociologist and cultural studies scholar Jacqueline Z. Wilson, is keen to remind readers of her book *Prison: Cultural Memory and Dark Tourism* that:

Far from being “merely” sites of suffering, with connotations of human being in extremis as their main draw card, sites recognizably fitting the Dark Tourism model are usually multi-layered historically and sociologically, and from those layers disparate groups and identities derive subtly nuanced, diverse ranges and meanings.<sup>6</sup>

Wilson continues and makes the point that with Alcatraz specifically, two distinct interpretations are equally valid: the site exists as both a symbol of brutal incarceration practices and pre-twentieth century indigenous dispossession.<sup>7</sup> Responsibilities of representation come to bear a greater significance in a place like this.

Another, more complex, ethical dilemma is then raised when the issue of “whose story” to tell as the dominant narrative of a place is adjudicated.<sup>8</sup> With Alcatraz’s current situation as a prison museum—as a story-telling institution that issues a tale about itself and its place in history<sup>9</sup>—there is a burden to effectively capture and accurately convey the multiple meanings and interpretations that remain valid. To highlight only a single aspect of a place with such layered significance does a disservice to the alternative memories and cheats tourists of a fully educative experience.

Instead, I would argue that Alcatraz needs to be understood as a site of contested memory. There is a responsibility to effectively convey more of the island's history than its use as a Federal Penitentiary. The exclusion and suppression of the Indians of All Tribes narrative, perspective, and spatial significance excludes that possibility—and not only prevents tourists from a complete understanding of the significance of the place—but works to deny Native American people a right to claim, and have widely acknowledged, the importance of Alcatraz Island in their history. The words of Richard Oakes from 1969 echo in my mind, "Alcatraz is not an Island, it's an idea."<sup>10</sup>

### **The Arrangement and Presentation of Physical Space**

With the island itself is where I will begin my analysis. The ferry ride out to Alcatraz from San Francisco's Pier 33 is a chilly and windy one, especially before 9:00AM when my boat departs. It is on this journey that one becomes acutely aware of how truly isolated Alcatraz really is from the mainland. Though just under two miles from the peninsula, the cold, choppy waters and howling wind that separate Alcatraz from the city magnify and intensify the distance. Once docked, visitors disembark from their vessel and are greeted with a brief orientation speech from a National Park Service ranger. The ranger situates himself at the foot of Building 64, the largest and most prominent structure tourists can see when landing, beneath the United States Penitentiary sign that is still adorned with the remnants of Native American graffiti from the 1969-71 occupation (figure 1).

During the orientation speech, which is designed to convey some of the colorful history of the island as well as the rules and regulations visitors are expected to obey, visitors are encouraged by the NPS ranger to purchase a guidebook for \$1 from kiosks at the dock. The guidebook, "Discover Alcatraz: A Tour of the Rock" is available in several languages and folds out like a pamphlet, inside of which information about the prison is immediately presented:

Use this brochure to discover some of Alcatraz's true stories. Form your own opinions, and explore the island's mysteries. For it does indeed have a mysterious presence, one shaded by the uses to which society has put it. The island in the heart of San Francisco Bay... has been used for a fort, a lighthouse, and a prison.<sup>11</sup>

When expanded further, the brochure highlights four aspects of the island's history, each presented on their own page: (1) Alcatraz, The Fort; (2) Alcatraz, The Prison; (3) The Native American Occupation; (4) Natural Alcatraz. A full expansion of the brochure reveals a map of the island and brief histories of some of the significant buildings.

When the speech concludes, the group I follow ascends the walkway that will take us past several structures—the Guardhouse & Sally Port, Electric Repair Shop, Military Chapel, the ruins of the Post Exchange/Officers Club, the Water Tower, and Military Morgue—on the way to the main attraction of the island, the award-winning Cellhouse Audio Tour. Inside the cellhouse, as a queue forms to retrieve headsets for the audio tour, another self-guiding information brochure is available for \$1, "Discover Alcatraz: Escapes - A Tour of The Attempts." This brochure's focus is more specific as it details the prison design and charts several of the attempted escapes from the prison. Once I retrieve my headset and begin the audio tour, which lasts roughly 45 minutes as it directs visitors through the cellblocks,

library, administration wing, and dining hall, I am taken aback by the production quality and investment in this product. The tour cinematically incorporates narration, sound effects, and voice acting to re-create an atmosphere in the space tourists inhabit. The effect is often startling as the voices, footsteps, shouts, gunshots, and slamming of cell doors that resonate through each individual's headset produces a haunting atmosphere when walking through the rows of vacant cells. Events such as the 1946 Battle of Alcatraz and 1962 escape of John and Clarence Anglin and Frank Lee Morris are reconstructed and re-created in vivid detail as narrated by former prisoners and guards with the aid of sound effects through the headsets of visitors. I found it quite easy to lose myself in the experience of the tour, and often felt as if I was actually transported to a different time where I was witnessing these events for myself, and feeling a desire to participate in them. When the audio tour concludes, I return my headset and proceed out of the cellhouse to explore the other offerings of the island.

As I traverse the island freely, I come across two structures in ruins that draw me in, the former Warden/Military Commandant's house and the Officer's Club/Post Exchange. The concrete skeletons of these structures are all that remain, as dense vegetation covers their foundations and snakes up the walls. In the absence of plaques detailing the histories of these structures, a consultation of the "Discover Alcatraz" brochure reveals only that these buildings were some of, "several destroyed by fire in June 1970."<sup>12</sup> No additional information is given about who or what may have caused this fire, under what circumstances, or who the inhabitants of the island might have been at that time. Moreover, there is not even the slightest suggestion that the ruined state of any structures could be the result of a prolonged and deliberate protest by a group of individuals seeking awareness and reparations for centuries of mistreatment and abuse by the hand of the United States government, nor that these structures were intentionally demolished because of the symbolic institutional value they project. Though the origin and intent of those fires remains disputed, the action to proceed with silence rather than acknowledging such a contest dispossesses their potential for interpretation by the public.



Figure 1: Government signage and the fading graffiti from the Native American Occupation. (Photograph by Judson Barber)



As I work my way around and back down the island, towards the dock in search of other exhibits that may enhance and inform my experience, I find several areas closed off to guests, most notably the Parade Grounds. Signage and fences prevent tourists from exploring and inhabiting this space as part of their visit. According to maps, only piles of rubble and a children's garden are left on the Parade Grounds, but this was once where apartments and housing stood for those who lived on the island during the prison years and during the Native American Occupation. Passing by the Water Tower that sits toward the back of the island, I take note of the graffiti that reads, in red spray paint "Peace and freedom. Welcome. Home of the Free. Indian-land." A search for another informational plaque that might provide some additional insight into this writing proves futile once again. The only signage near the fenced-off perimeter of the Water Tower is a signpost directing visitors further up the walkway toward the Cellhouse Audio Tour (figure 2).



Figure 2: The Water Tower and signage directing tourists away from it.  
(Photograph by Judson Barber)

Another look at the programs scheduled for the day reveals three guided tours, "Escapes" scheduled to commence at the Dock at 11:30AM, "Alcatraz Success" at 2:00PM, and "Fortress Alcatraz" at 3:10PM in the same location. Again, there is no offering found of information that pertains to the history of the island after 1963. I find my way into a dark corridor beneath Building 64 near the dock, which takes me into the area formerly used as casemates during the island's time as a military fort. Known as "China Alley," this space is now converted into a movie theatre which plays the documentary *Alcatraz: Stories from the Rock* throughout the day, a gift shop, and two distinct exhibit rooms. The first of these exhibits, "We Hold the Rock" is housed inside a former gunpowder storage room, roughly the size of one of the treatment cells visitors find in D Block of the cellhouse above (figure 3). Once inside, the walls are covered with two-dimensional materials—primarily text and photographs—that describe the experience, politics, and outcomes of the Native American

Occupation that lasted from 1969-1971. On one of the walls, an hour-long video loop that compiles news footage and interviews chronicling the Occupation plays in the background. Framing this video is an image of dozens of Native Americans huddled inside the historic cellhouse, which they presumably made use of during their occupation (figure 4). This use of the cellhouse was never mentioned in the award-winning audio tour. Next door, the second exhibit, “Alcatraz and the American Prison Experience,” occupies two of these storage rooms, and contains images, artifacts, and information about the storied history of Alcatraz in particular, as well as an overview of the history of penology in western culture. Displays in this room distinguish the myths of Alcatraz as a prison from the reality of life on the island, and highlight the island’s prominence in American popular culture throughout the twentieth century.



Figure 3: “We Hold The Rock” exhibit located in “China Alley.” (Photograph by Judson Barber)



Figure 4: Inside “We Hold The Rock” a looping video screen and Native Americans seated in the cellhouse. (Photograph by Judson Barber)

After taking in these exhibits and the tours, I am dissatisfied to learn I have seen all there is available to tourists on the island that relate to its history. After several hours of exploration I have come across very little that paints a complete picture of the island and its history of different uses. The most glaring absence is the lack of an equivalent to the Cellhouse Audio Tour that chronicles the Indians of All Tribes Occupation and the lives of those women and men who lived here during that time. As communications, memory, and cultural studies scholars Cynthia Duquette Smith and Teresa Bergman astutely note in their article, “You Were on Indian Land: Alcatraz as Recalcitrant Memory Space,” the lack of tourists’ ability to access spaces on the island that were inhabited by Native Americans during their Occupation:

Seriously and negatively affects both attention to and the staying power of Occupation memories. While visitors can directly engage with the prison by moving through it, walking into cells, and even touching objects, there is no parallel experience of the Occupation available.<sup>13</sup>

The absence of physical materials or spaces pertaining to the Occupation that tourists can interact with, and their replacement with two-dimensional boards and screens, forecloses the possibility of forming lasting cultural and individual memories that persist beyond one's time on the island. Smith and Bergman argue that the physical and sensory engagement with the prison architecture and artifacts produces a more visceral and lasting memory of the space, the expense of which is the forgetting of less impactful Native American exhibits and remnants. "The memories that 'stick' are embodied in its buildings, made tangible in its cell bars, and enlivened by the vivid audio tour visitors hear as they walk through the prison," Smith and Bergman contend.<sup>14</sup>

The artifacts from the Occupation that do remain, but attention is directed away from—such as the graffiti which goes unexplained in any detail, the omission of information from brochures that would detail causes of fires which destroyed buildings, cells in main cellhouse that remain decorated as they were by Native Americans, and other closed-off sections of the island—coupled with the lack of tours that would elaborate on the Native American experience on the island and its significance as part of a social movement, or a brochure of its own that would give tourists the opportunity to guide themselves around sites of significance to the Occupation—amount to more of an effort at active disremembering than innocent forgetting. To privilege the narratives of captivity and punishment here, specifically within the frame of the twentieth century, is a deliberate decision. When Alcatraz was incorporated into the larger Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1972, the option was present to highlight aspects of the island's history that were distinguished from its time as a federal penitentiary. Instead, time and money were invested in constructing the elaborate cellhouse tour, curating several exhibits on inmate and officer life on the island, and restoring buildings that were integral to the island's use as a penitentiary. No such attempt was made to restore the structures built by the Indians of All Tribes that were demolished by the U.S. government, under the General Services Administration, in 1971, or to preserve the markings of the Indians of All Tribes that were left over the previous years. By contrast, there is complete failure to express the Indians of All Tribes Occupation in more than two dimensions in any of the exhibits, places, or memorials open to visitors on the island. This demonstrates not only a desire to subvert and suppress narratives that run counter to those of government and authoritative righteousness, but it also demonstrates the way our imaginations have been caged in by the representations, myths, and lore surrounding Alcatraz—as solely a prison—in our popular memory.

### **The Consumption of the Kitsch, the Authentic, and The Distribution of Memory**

The merchandise, souvenirs, and memorabilia that sustains much of the tourist industry surrounding Alcatraz also has a significant role in producing and maintaining our conceptions and interpretations of the island in our culture. While these tchotchkes and knickknacks that tourists are encouraged to bring home with them may seem insignificant at first glance, I believe them to be just as significant as embodied experiences on Alcatraz—if not more so—in the construction of public



memory about the island. These artifacts transmit knowledge about what a place is known for, what it ought to be remembered as, and arguably try to provide an overview of a place like Alcatraz in a metonymic way. Souvenirs related to Alcatraz, ranging from extremely kitsch to bearing some semblance of authenticity, are prominent at tourist stops throughout San Francisco Bay.<sup>15</sup> I believe that these trinkets, available to even those who do not make the journey to the island itself, but instead remain confined to the mainland, serve as symbolic vessels for memory. They contain and communicate information—even to those with no sentimental attachment to them—about the place which they represent. When they are taken home and put on display in different locales around the world they contribute to the formation of knowledge about a place as a result of what they project and put forth in their representations. Though this is often an innocent projection, it can be understood to be quite problematic.

With an understanding of Alcatraz as more than simply a prison, but as a site of contested meaning with different significance to different groups of people, an analysis of some of the material artifacts that can be brought home can be quite revealing. Postcards are one such category of souvenir objects I came across frequently during my visit. The postcard is interesting to me not only for its seemingly universal availability in the realm of souvenir merchandise, but also for what it represents. A postcard is, first and foremost, intended to be sent from a site of tourism, either back home, to loved ones, or around the world. The postcard, both literally and figuratively, is designed to carry a message. It acts as a vessel for knowledge and sentiment from its sender to its recipient. The back side of the card carries personal meaning to the recipient and the front communicates a symbolic message about the place from where it was sent. In San Francisco, the symbolic messages that decorate the front of postcards range from cityscapes, bridges, Lombard Street, the painted ladies, cable cars, Fisherman's Wharf, Chinatown, Coit Tower, and predictably, Alcatraz. Of the five postcards depicting Alcatraz I encountered repeatedly throughout my visit to San Francisco and the island, only one acknowledges the island as a landscape with more significance beyond its use as a Federal Penitentiary, and more specifically mentions the Native American Occupation (figures 5.1 through 5.3). The rest, either implicitly or explicitly highlight the prison and its inhabitants as the most important aspect of the island's history. The silence here is very much consistent with other experiences of Alcatraz Island and the narrative that gets produced.

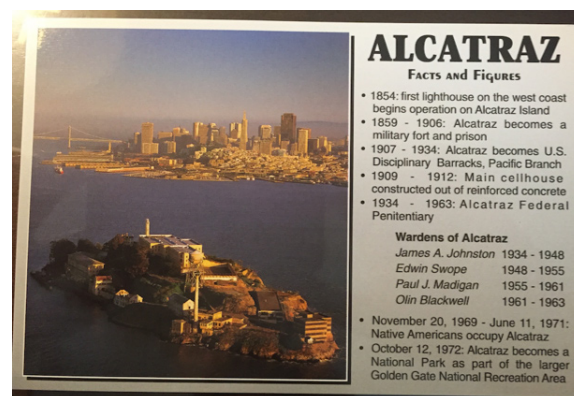


Figure 5.1: "Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary: "Facts and Figures" postcard. (Photograph by Judson Barber)

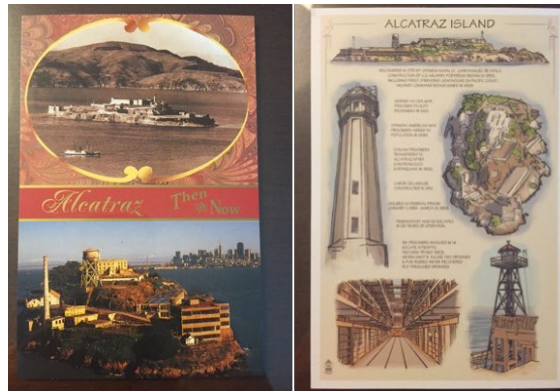


Figure 5.2: “Alcatraz “Then & Now” postcard.

Figure 5.3: “Alcatraz Island” postcard.

(Photographs by Judson Barber)

In the gift shops, souvenir stands, and kiosks throughout the peninsula the kitsch memorabilia and trinkets that dominate make the name Alcatraz synonymous with (and a metonym for) the prison. Shot glasses, coffee mugs, flasks, t-shirts, and other objects that may be made useful in the day-to-day lives of tourists when they return home, as not only constant working reminders of time spent on vacation, but as vessels of memory and knowledge about the place they represent—Alcatraz—are all emblazoned with prison and prisoner imagery and symbols (cell bars, typeface, and pinstripes) (figure 6). Items that exist purely as display pieces, such as photo frames, decorative license plates, and magnets, all maintain this trend and often depict hands in chains, shackles, or other restrictive impediments to mobility. These kitsch artifacts, much like the postcards, transmit a very specific message about the history of Alcatraz, and in that transmission determine how the island will be remembered, not only for those who have visited San Francisco or Alcatraz themselves, but also any individuals those people or their souvenirs may come into contact with. In this way, the reach of depictions on souvenir merchandise, and knowledge those objects project and sustain, is much more expansive than just those who have experienced the island themselves. In the gift shops on Alcatraz Island itself, the merchandise available seems to go for a more authentic appeal as distinguished from the kitsch of the mainland. The memorabilia found here is generally much more focused on the “reality” of the island as a prison, and less on the sensationalized depiction. Books, music, and documentaries that claim to speak to the real experience of life in the prison, as told by guards, prisoners, and musicians, are for sale. Additionally, and perhaps curiously, several works of fiction also make their way onto these racks (Michael Bay’s 1996 film *The Rock* and Don Siegel’s 1979 *Escape From Alcatraz*), as do generic “Prison Music Audio CDs” like Johnny Cash’s album from Folsom Prison.

Shoppers in gift stores on Alcatraz Island are reminded that their purchases help support the preservation of the island, doubly so when purchasing items from the “Save The Rock” line. Available in this collection are more coffee mugs, reproductions of inmate cups, and pieces of rock from the island itself. These items are arguably some of the most authentic for purchase. However, throughout all of this I do not find a single piece of merchandise related to the memory of the Indians

of All Tribes Occupation. The result is the wide distribution of memory solidifying Alcatraz as solely worth knowing for its brief time as a United States Penitentiary. No artifacts or souvenirs are designed to leave the island and contribute to the construction of an alternate conception of the island. As with the arrangement and presentation of physical space on the island, the souvenirs made available for tourists to purchase suggest an active disremembering of parts of the island's history, rather than an innocent forgetting. The only memories and representations of the island that can be brought home are the broad and nonspecific (as with chunks of rock) or the specific representation of the prison (through simulacra, symbolic imagery, or narrative media).



Figure 6: Prison-specific Alcatraz-themed flask and shot glasses. (Photograph by Judson Barber)

## Conclusion

The specters of memory that whisper to tourists coming to understand and encounter Alcatraz do so because that is all they have at this moment. From the silent margins of the island's history, the ghosts of the Indians of All Tribes Occupation continue to vie for our attention, relying on the markings from days past to welcome visitors and draw them into a search for another story. Why though, has their narrative and interpretation been so suppressed, omitted, and disadvantaged? In his book *Shadowed Ground: America's Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*, Kenneth Foote discusses the role of shame in attempts to obliterate memory at sites of trauma. Though Alcatraz is not a site of violent trauma in relation to specific events that occurred during the Indians of All Tribe Occupation, I do believe Foote's interpretive framework of obliteration applies and while the shame associated with the event is not a result of the event itself, but a result of the issues it demanded be reckoned with. Foote writes:

Shame can be a powerful motive to obliterate all reminders of tragedy and violence...Obliteration is almost the inverse of sanctification. Sanctification occurs when a community seeks to memorialize a tragedy, remember an event, and honor its victims; obliteration stems from the wish to hide violence and forget tragedy.<sup>16</sup>

Foote continues to explain that the process of obliteration, "does not conform to any widely sanctioned pattern," and it may exist as a form of passive or active effacement

of memory.<sup>17</sup> I speculate that what has occurred on Alcatraz Island, in relation to the Indians of All Tribes narrative, is the result of a more passive effacement and obliteration which emerges from the shame associated with a requirement to authentically engage with the plight of Native Americans demands. To truthfully tell the complete story of the Indians of All Tribes Occupation, the National Park Service would be required to acknowledge the brutal and tragic history of the United States government's relationships to Native American tribes. Without such a foundation, the political demands expressed by the Indians of All Tribes, and the symbolic nature of their occupation, would come across as hollow and without context. An authentic engagement with the trauma of history by the National Park Service would require an acknowledgment of centuries of mistreatment and abuse of Native American people of this land, and the need for reparations for those actions, by the United States government that is conversely depicted as so just and righteous in the prison exhibits and merchandise that abound. The full recognition of the Indians of All Tribes Occupation would instead associate Alcatraz Island with shame, which runs counter to dominant cultural ideologies of national pride which so often pervade the rhetoric of our national parks. As long as such a national pride remains, and guilt is pushed aside in deference to it, the affirmation of the Indians of All Tribes Occupation on Alcatraz Island will be relegated to a former gunpowder storage room in China Alley.

The tourist experience of Alcatraz is not one that has undergone significant changes over the past 40 years and while some exhibits and tours may have become more detailed or elaborate, the acknowledgment of the Native American historical significance of the island has never been more prominent than it is now. The cultural products I have explored have worked to turn Alcatraz into a metonym for the prison, when both historically and culturally the island has been so much more. That metonym dislocates the Native American experience and devalues the principles and outcomes of the Indians of All Tribes Occupation. It is for this reason that we must all keenly and astutely do our very best, when the specters of memory whisper to us, to listen.

Though what has happened here could be called a tragedy, and an act of political violence in itself, I find it difficult to blame any single body in particular. An understanding of power dynamics as both intentional and nonsubjective helps me to realize the complexity of such a predicament. Beyond the accountability of individuals within the National Parks, a more broad awareness and understanding must be placed upon individuals of all associations of the complex history from which our present emerges. The drive to limit, render stationary, and construct as coherent a metonymic memory of Alcatraz amounts to a divestment from truth and a devaluation of alternate narratives. I believe my analysis of the physical forms and spatial arrangements (and lack thereof) tourists are permitted to engage with in relation to Alcatraz demonstrate how the memory of the island as first and foremost a prison is persistently fostered. Additionally, the lack of an alternative or supplementary narrator that would allow guests insight into the Native American experience of Alcatraz detracts from the transmission of a more complete understanding of the island in our cultural or public memory. Put simply, the failure to highlight different aspects of the island in a significant or meaningful way during the tourist experience of Alcatraz forecloses the possibility of transmitting an authentic lasting memory of Alcatraz as a site of contested meanings, memories, and significance.

### **Epilogue: The Night Tour, One Year Later**

Ten months to the day after I conducted my research on Alcatraz Island, a beautiful and magnificent development emerged. In the process of booking a return trip to San Francisco, initially for leisure and not continued research, I decided to check up on the official Alcatraz Cruises website for any new exhibits and possible availability. After 45 years of official silence, the National Park Service announced on its website it would be hosting the first Indians of All Tribes Day to honor the 1969-1971 occupation of Alcatraz Island on February 13, 2016. The celebration would welcome original occupiers and their families back to the island as they engaged with park visitors and reconnected with each other. The event site also promoted, "Talks, walks, music and dancing from 9:30am to 4:00pm will provide the public with a vital opportunity to connect with this rich period of island history through those who were directly involved."<sup>18</sup>

In the aftermath of such a momentous occasion and joyous discovery, I was resolved to return to the island myself and re-discover what had made itself known to me a year prior. This time, however, I would have the opportunity to partake in an activity one usually needs booked several months in advance—the Night Tour. I have had the Night Tour recommended to me by friends and colleagues alike for several years, all of whom tout it as the superior, if not absolutely essential, Alcatraz experience. I purchase tickets for the evening of April 1, and do my best to wait patiently for six weeks to pass until that date arrives.

When it does, my excitement is hard to contain. My ferry departs from Pier 33 at 6:30pm and when it does, the 2.2 mile journey to Alcatraz Island is just as cold and choppy as I remember. There is a special eeriness to this voyage though. The time of day is one factor, but another is the limited number of visitors making this journey. Fewer than 300 people depart on the 6:30pm boat, in contrast to the nearly 4,000 that come to the island during the day trips. Of the 300 on this departure, roughly 50 are part of a paranormal society who have come in search of ghostly apparitions (though different from the ones I find myself searching for). A NPS Ranger begins announcements over the boat's speakers, giving the usual spiel of what to expect and how to behave upon our arrival. This talk is unique, however. Instead of the pre-recorded message played for visitors crossing during the day, we're given a personalized speech that covers some of the unique and varied history of the Island, including (to my surprise) the 1969-1971 Indians of All Tribes Occupation, and encouraging us to experience Alcatraz as, "more than just a prison."

The island and its contents are largely the same as a year ago. Different buildings are tarped and scaffolded for repairs and maintenance, but the available exhibits—and Cellhouse Audio Tour in particular—are unchanged. The night's special presentations do, however, include "How to Rob a Bank" at 7:40 at the Main Prison Entrance and "The Convict Code" at 8:00 in the same location, "Alcatraz is Indian Land" at 8:20 in the cellhouse Library, and finally "Sound of the Slammer" a demonstration of the mechanical cell doors, in the cellhouse's main thoroughfare. I attend the 8:20 talk where a docent narrates the history of the occupation. He covers the political antecedents, the ebbs and flows of support for occupants, the controversial fires (which he believes were set by arsonists seeking to get the IAT forcibly removed), and the tragic loss of Yvonne Oakes, who fell to her death in January 1970. This twenty-minute talk is the single most informative piece of knowledge distributed about the Indians of All Tribes Occupation available to visitors, and it's a shame



that, as far as I can tell, its availability is limited to those few who can obtain tickets for the Night Tour. Apart from these presentations there are no major differences between the day and night experience, unless you are susceptible to nocturnal phantoms which supposedly haunt these cells. On the contrary, the limited window for exploration (less than 3 hours at most) and additional closures actually confine one's experiences to the austere cellhouse and its trifecta gift shops.

Crossing the threshold of the cellhouse gift shop triggers a profound sense of déjà vu, as the racks of souvenirs, books, movies, and CDs all seem untouched in the time since my last visit and, despite the fewer number of guests on the island, the space feels just as crowded. I pass through the store once and notice no changes in what's made available, the same books, magnets, t-shirts, coffee mugs, snow globes, and 'Save the Rock' rocks. I pass through a second time, however, and stop near the postcards for a closer look. There, something jumps out at me—a card I haven't seen before, either here on the island nor the mainland. It is nearly double the height of the others so, if it had been available previously, it would have been impossible to miss. The art featured on the front of the postcard is titled *Modern Militant Indian* by "Indian Joe" Morris (Blackfeet). The back of the postcard describes it as, "Oil on board, 48" x 108" NPS GOGA 51, Gift of the Artist, Donated in honor of Richard Oakes and his daughter Yvonne." The postcard continues, "In November 1969, under cover of darkness, a group of Native Americans landed on Alcatraz and claimed it as "Indianland." Their nineteen-month occupation of the island became a landmark event in the Native American Struggle for human rights."<sup>20</sup>

Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner write in their book, *Mapping American Culture*, that, "Life does not exist in a vacuum: everything takes place, from sweeping historical events ... to the most private occurrences."<sup>21</sup> Though this postcard does little more than the "We Hold the Rock" exhibit in China Alley, this postcard must be reckoned with as an object that contributes to the distribution of memory of an alternate Alcatraz—of a place that does not contrive its entire meaning from a brief stint as a Federal Penitentiary. While the victories may only post card-sized, and only 1 day out of 365 can be devoted to Occupation memories, the progress is imminent. And although the public reconceptualization of Alcatraz in the next several decades is unlikely, we may be inching towards the acceptance of alterity. Alcatraz Island—as the geographical origin for the national Red Power movement—is a location bridled with extraordinary meaning and significance beyond its prison history. To understand that memory is rooted in geography, and to widely acknowledge what else has taken place on the island, would be a revolutionary perspective for both the National Park Service and public alike.

I'm reminded of just how revolutionary that would be on my trip back home. At San Francisco International Airport, with my optimism for the changes in Alcatraz public memory at a high, I stop into a gift shop before boarding my flight. There, I'm faced once again with the ever-present reality that odds can often be insurmountable. Objects in the form of shot glasses and teddy bears more than 15 miles south of Alcatraz remind me of the financial interests invested in maintaining a singular image of the island and its history. I can only shrug and smile as kitsch, applied here in the vein of Marita Sturken, has triumphed yet again over authenticity.

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# The Impact of Emmett Till

Elizabeth Montenegro

American author Jack Canfield once said, “One individual can begin a movement that turns the tide of history.” Though these words were directed towards individuals who used non-violence to make a change, they are also applicable to Emmett Till and how his death opened the public’s eye to racism and discrimination in the United States. The Till murder was a pivotal moment for many Americans, this event forced them to recognize the problems present in the United States. The murder of Till was an injustice to the black community and is considered by many to be the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement. The graphic photo of his body and brutal nature of his death was made public and internationally known, resulting in a realization for a need to change. The public display of his body, emotional impact of Mamie Till, and the acquittal of his murderers altered the course of history.

In August 1955, the murder of a fourteen-year-old boy would change the course of U.S. history and expose the ways African Americans were forced to live. Till’s murder revealed the racism and discrimination present in the U.S. Till’s young age, demonstrated that racism showed no mercy and after being kidnapped, beaten, and shot, his severely mutilated body was discovered in the Tallahatchie River. The traumatizing sight of the boy’s body further fueled his mother, Mamie Till’s, desire to have an open casket at the funeral, to showcase the harsh realities of racism. Her son’s mutilated body horrified the 50,000 people who attended the funeral further amplifying the harsh realities of life in so many African American communities.. This was only one of the millions of undocumented and unspeakable crimes that were committed against African American people, and it was enough to make a point and spark an outrage from society at large.

Mamie Till played a huge role in the start of the Civil Rights Movement, in the late 1950s. Till’s murder was transformed from “a symbol of fear to a symbol that represented the need for change.”<sup>1</sup> Mamie Till’s decision to give her son an open casket at his funeral was critical in evoking an emotional response from the public. She wanted “the whole world to see.”<sup>2</sup> What they had done to her child and how it was wrong. The photographs of Till’s body humanized the event and made it more than just a story. People were shocked by the cruelty of the murder, and many now realized how barbaric lynching was in the South and why it had to be stopped. African Americans were angered by the murder but moved by Mamie Till’s perseverance as she continued to give speeches to crowds of people despite the loss she suffered as a mother. After the murder, Mamie tried to receive help from the U.S. government as well as President Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower, but her efforts failed. This demonstrated how the U.S. government had little concern for the well being and justice of African Americans. It was not until the news became international that the U.S. government responded to the death of Till and chose to support the Civil Rights Movement.

The United States would eventually launch into the Civil Rights Movement, in fear that violent crimes like Till’s murder, would taint the image of democracy. The true motive behind this decision was to uphold the idea that American democracy “was a form of government that made the achievement of social justice possible, and that democratic change, however slow and gradual, was superior to dictatorial imposition.”<sup>4</sup> Seeing as though the U.S. was in the middle of the Cold War, they

wanted to continue to promote democracy over communism. When Till's death became international news, it gave the impression that the United States' government tolerated violence against minorities. This fear of ruining the ideal image of democracy pressured the U.S. government into supporting the Civil Rights Movement.

While the sight of Till's body was enough to evoke an emotional response in many people, the public was even more disturbed by the acquittal of his two killers. Roy Bryant and his half-brother J.W. Milam were both tried for murder, but both were eventually acquitted of all charges. Already outraged by the graphic photos and images of Till, the acquittal of the two murderers incited more shock and anger in the people. The trial was important in exposing the flawed legal system and prominent racism in the South. The killers were found innocent by the all white, all male jury despite there being significant knowledge that the two men were guilty. This caused attention to be raised in regards to the credibility of the legal system in the South. The deliberations in the courtroom "lasted only sixty-seven minutes."<sup>5</sup> This made it clear that the jury never had any intention of convicting the killers. This trial played a critical role in the Civil Rights Movement because people were angry at the blatant injustice and were motivated to make a change. The brutal death of such a young boy and how easily his killers were set free inspired many people to question the way African Americans were treated and try to make a difference for them.

As if things could not get any worse, months after their acquittal, Bryant and Milam admitted to the kidnapping and murder of Till to *Look* magazine for \$4000. An article in the magazine states, "Their own lawyer was doing the questioning. And [he'd] never heard their story."<sup>6</sup> Due to double jeopardy laws, the men were protected from retrial and incarceration. If no consequences were ever imposed on people who committed horrible crimes, then there was obviously no reason to stop committing them. There was no urgency in stopping racism and no pressure on the southern people to change their violent ways.

After the verdict was delivered, thousands of letters were sent to the White House regarding the trial. The thousands of protests against the acquittal of Bryan and Milan showed how distraught the public was about this murder. The notion that a fourteen-year-old boy was killed for allegedly whistling at a white woman put into perspective how severe racism was in the South. The perceived acceptance of kidnapping, beating, and shooting a child for whistling at a white woman was disturbing to see. There is evidence of threats African Americans received on a daily basis during this case. When Till was kidnapped, the two men threatened to kill the others in the house if they ran for help. This illustrates the constant state of fear that African Americans were living in and how there was virtually nothing that they could about it. It wasn't until the rest of the world saw how terribly African Americans were being treated that the U.S. government finally intervened and started to help relieve racism in the country.

An example of one of the individuals emotionally affected by Till's murder was Rosa Parks. Park's refusal to move to the back of the bus, the event that would inspire the Montgomery Bus Boycott, may not have occurred if it were not for the brutal murder of Till. Parks reiterates, "I thought about Emmett Till, and I couldn't go [to the back of the bus]."<sup>7</sup> Many of us think of people such as Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King Jr. when it comes to the Civil Rights Movement, but the murder of Till played a significant role in inspiring them to take a stance against racism.

Ten years after the murder, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a move that signified the government's efforts to support the Civil Rights Move-

ment and help the African American people. In addition to this in 1965 the Voting Rights Act was passed in hopes of helping make voting fair and safe for the black community. These acts were examples of the U.S. government trying to put an end to discrimination and segregation of African Americans.

Nearly sixty years later the murder of Emmett Till is still fresh in our minds. There have been memorials dedicated to Till to honor him and his family. His death helped others truly see the savagery in the south and the severity of racism. The progression of African American rights has come so far and serves to create fairness and equality in the U.S. Till is a reminder to the rest of the world that racism should not be permitted and also the damaging effects that racism can have on others.

In conclusion, the murder of Till was inspirational to people around the world who tried to put an end to racism and discrimination in the U.S. It was a reflection of a southern mentality that sponsored the mistreatment of members of the African American community. The merciless killing of a child caused many Americans to rethink the way African Americans were being treated and how to fix this problem. The emotional impact that Till's death had on the world was so immense that rallies and protests were started and the news went international. Without this murder, it is likely that the Civil Rights Movement would have been delayed or not as strong as it was. The murder of Emmett Till has had a lasting effect on the public and continues to bring sorrow to the hearts of the people who learn of it.

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# The Neolithic Ape Man and Empowered Woman: Transforming Victorian Gender Roles through Popular Culture

Ashely Ongalibang

The ideal Victorian man was one who could control his primitive urges and remain a wholesome hardworking individual. Similarly, an ideal Victorian woman was pure, submissive, and the keeper of the home. To create, maintain, and spread these archetypes, Victorians attempted to use popular culture to shape what their children and non-Victorian Americans consumed and how they behaved. Victorian males were to be conservative and passive, while females were simply to be tools within the home at the disposal of her husband and family. With these characters and archetypes as their guides, neither gender had much of a space in which they could explore their identity, outside of Victorian values. However, the rise of dime novels and modern films in American popular culture helped these groups challenge the very roles for the model man and woman, which Victorians so desperately wanted to keep intact.

The creation of dime novels, fictitious stories produced for the masses, allowed for Americans to have cheap and easy access to stories of all kinds.<sup>1</sup> The mass production of these novels gave way for narratives that offered new perspectives on ideal roles for both men and women outside the Victorian archetype. A prime example of this is the story, *Tarzan of the Apes*. This novel depicts a family that is left on a seemingly deserted island where they must learn how to survive off of the land, but tragedy strikes on the island when both Lord and Lady Greystoke die, leaving infant John Clayton in the hands of barbaric apes. John is forced to develop the persona of Tarzan, a primitive child turned man who fights for his survival in the jungle.<sup>2</sup> Tarzan's character displayed a man that had to swiftly adapt to a dangerous environment. Forced to live amongst a volatile community where death lurked around every corner, Tarzan was taught how to kill in order to survive. He greatly contrasted what most Victorian men were like, especially those that resided in urban cities. Men that lived in the city were not exposed to the rough terrains that Tarzan was; they were more receptive to the calm and domestic type of life. They followed strict rules of conduct and were mainly focused on providing for their household. These men found their manliness within protecting their homes, having pride in their work, and conducting themselves in a manner of good social behavior.<sup>3</sup> Tarzan challenged these ideals of manliness by demonstrating the shift from a man of good social behavior to one that took and did as he pleased.

Many men felt that the closing of the frontier and the rise of the "empowered woman" were leading to the shrinking of their significance and role within society.<sup>4</sup> Tarzan, however, was a new man; he took what he wanted, when he wanted it, and his characterization was used as a way of restoring the rugged individualistic man into American life. When Jane Porter is taken by the ape Terkoz, Tarzan saves the damsel in distress, leading him to do, "what no red-blooded man needs lessons in doing. He took his woman in his arms and smothered her upturned, panting lips with kisses."<sup>5</sup> No "good" Victorian man would have had the audacity to take an innocent woman and smother her in kisses, it was uncalled for and improper social behavior.

The popular Victorian song entitled, *After the Ball*, by Charles K. Harris illustrates the notion that men are to always maintain a safe distance from women. Harris even goes so far as to distance himself from his “sweetheart, true love” because she explicitly asked to be left alone.<sup>6</sup> Despite Jane’s detest for Tarzan’s affection, Tarzan still actively pursued Jane until the very end of the novel. Any proper Victorian man, as depicted by Harris, would never dare to approach a woman let alone be so assertive. The Victorian man at this time focused on self-denial, but *Tarzan of the Apes* allowed men to shift from the wholesome image to one of pleasures and desire, leading them to be powerful and insistent.

Subsequently, with the dramatic shift of manhood, women countered this transformation with modifications of their own. The film *The Jazz Singer* follows the story of young Jakie Rabinowitz, an aspiring actor, on his journey of assimilating to American culture. Rabinowitz rebels against the will of his father, but receives encouragement from his mother, Sara Rabinowitz as well as his confidant, Mary Dale. Victorian women were closely associated with the domestic sphere: they were to be the keeper of the home, the bearer of children, and the supporter of the husband. Through the narrative of Sara and Mary, the viewer is able to see the shift of womanhood out of the domestic sphere. Throughout the film, Sara is torn between undoubtedly supporting her husband or rallying behind her son. She is not the docile wife of Victorian ideals. She questions her husband’s actions towards their son and ultimately chooses to support and love her son regardless of her husband’s feelings.<sup>7</sup> The mere fact that she is not completely in line with her husband shows she is no longer solely a pawn in the domestic sphere, but a player. She is now a freethinker and refuses to let a man, even her husband, dictate her feelings.

This new meaning of womanhood is further defined through Mary Dale. The viewer is first introduced to Mary when Rabinowitz is singing at the cabaret—a place where proper Victorian women were not to be found. Unlike the ideal Victorian woman, Mary is single, employed, and travels for work affairs. Her role in society is no longer to serve the home or a man but to cater to her own needs and aspirations. Evidently, the newly empowered woman finds life outside the domestic setting and her purpose is self-fulfillment. During this time Women and womanhood was undergoing a shift, from the docile bystander of life to a more independent and pleasure seeking counterpart. Through the story of Mary and Sara, women in America were able to see how well one could operate outside of the domestic sphere. Both women carry a new sense of power among men and they thrive in it. Mary refuses to be placed in the confinements of the home, while Sara refuses to be restrained by her husband’s obstinacy.<sup>8</sup> They both exemplify powerful women that push the bounds of society’s sphere in a direction that allows women to be individuals, rather than a pawns in men’s endeavors.

Women continued to push the envelope of their specified gender roles through popular actresses such as “America’s sweetheart,” Mary Pickford. Pickford obtained and uplifted the title of “America’s sweetheart” through her countless roles in various films at the time however, she used her spotlight to discuss issues that resonated deeply with her and the newly empowered woman. Pickford was outspoken and encouraged the movement for women’s suffrage, believing that due to women’s active and positive roles in the public sphere their vote would further empower growth throughout society. She hoped the momentum from her popularity would continue to influence the push for woman’s suffrage and enlighten skeptics of its benefits.<sup>9</sup> Her outspoken demeanor truly embodied the new woman because she

was no longer confined to a man for ideas or a stance on important issues. Pickford utilized her popularity for political sway towards women's rights all throughout her career, not allowing her fears or others' to undermine the significance of these issues. Victorian women were to be docile and solely reliant on keeping the home. Pickford fought against the restrictions that society had placed on her by openly celebrating her body, embracing her sex appeal, all while utilizing her celebrity to spread awareness and challenge the constraints forced upon women in the early twentieth century. It is vital to note that Pickford's popularity and success showed the American people that the division between work and home not only applied to women. Pickford refused to be confined to the home and, with her unique platform she was able to be the voice for important social issues surrounding women.

Mary Pickford exemplified one of the ways in which popular culture consistently served as a tool in transforming American society during the early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> The archetypes of gender roles have become fluid throughout time: transforming from rigidly domestic to empowered and free. This shift was due to Victorians attempting to manipulate gender roles through popular culture, but with the rise of dime novels and the wide variety of films and their leading stars, other groups of Americans were able to challenge these roles successfully and move them in a less constricting direction for society.

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*The American Papers*



# The Influence of *The Tempest*

Jacqueline Rose

There is no doubt that history and cultural trends are often reflective of one another. Culture, politics and social issues often influence literature, theatre, and any art form. However, as scholars and historians continue to take a closer and more comprehensive look at past events, findings show the opposite is also true. Art influences cultural trends or political and social views. In Dr. Ronald Takaki's book, *A Different Mirror*, he effectively uses the character Caliban, from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), as a metaphor for English fears and their perceptions of foreigners. The main characters of the play, Prospero and Caliban, successfully serve as embodiments of English attitudes towards outsiders. The historical context divulged by Takaki's study reveals that *The Tempest* not only serves as an identical comparison to English colonialism, but also as propaganda during European imperialism.

Takaki's decision to refer to *The Tempest* in relation to his study on race in America is most certainly methodical. An unsuspecting audience may believe that like most plays, *The Tempest* is simply an entertaining work of art. However, as Takaki explains in his book, the timing, theme, and historical accuracies in this play render it a very significant artifact in American history. The play was performed for the first time in 1611, after Europeans began colonizing the New World but before mass migrations to the Americas took place.

The opening scene of the play bears an uncanny resemblance to the introduction in Takaki's study. As the scholar discusses the diverse ethnic groups who identify as American he lists the only indigenous American group, Indians, last. Takaki explains why Indians are unlike any other American group by stating "They were the original Americans, here for thousands of years before the voyage of Columbus. They were on the shores of Massachusetts and Virginia when the English arrived in 1607."<sup>1</sup> It is here in the study where history begins to look like a scene out of *The Tempest*. Much like the Native Americans, Caliban was born on the land he inhabited and the only one present as Prospero's canoes found refuge on his island, mirroring European expansion and land settlement. Just as the settlers were encountering Native Americans for the first time, Shakespeare's audiences were exposed to the representation of an Indian for the first time as well.

The political and social landscape of Europe in the 1600s represented a time of imperialism and ethnocentrism for the English. It is then no surprise that any "outsider" was labeled inferior in an effort to influence Shakespeare's audience's attitudes and perceptions. By the 1600s, many English people already had negative perceptions of anybody different than themselves. Ireland was colonized for practice and their human value degraded for good. Settlers returned from Ireland to tell stories of the savage inhabitants encountered. This made it easy for Shakespeare's audiences to envision what kind of beastly savage an island native like Caliban must be. The English labeled Indians as uncivilized and unworthy because they lacked similar English morals and behaviors. Takaki states in the work "Like Caliban, Native Americans seemed to lack everything the English identified as civilized: Christianity, cities, letters and clothing."<sup>2</sup> The English often distinguished themselves from Native Americans by insisting that they were incapable of learning to become civilized.

In *The Tempest*, Prospero establishes his superiority by making Caliban learn

and speak his language. Denying him the right to speak his own language and baring his touch (at the very least keep in touch with the land that has been stolen from him). Takaki explains in the book that this form of coercion took place in history years before the play. The English king insisted that Native Americans should not only give up their land, but also their language and beliefs. In the same fashion that Prospero believed he was enlightening Caliban by robbing him of his native tongue, the king demanded Native American children learn English and study Christianity. Europeans rationalized the governing of Native Americans by cultivating a perception of them as wild, ignorant, savages who could not be trusted to live civilized among the English. Prospero represented this ideology by dispossessing Caliban thus rationalizing colonization in the play and in reality.

English settlers arrived in New England with pre-existing superiority complexes regarding the color of their skin in comparison to the Native Americans. In an unlikely coincidence Takaki points out in his study that Caliban is labeled in *The Tempest* as “a devil” born to a “vile race.” Takaki goes on to explain, “His distinctive physical characteristics signified intellectual incapacity...In other words he had natural qualities that precluded the possibility of becoming civilized through ‘nurture’ or education.”<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare’s work instilled in the mind of audiences that perhaps it was through no fault of his own that Caliban was inferior and incapable of being able to co-exist as an equal to Prospero. Dark skin was unfamiliar to the English and therefore assumed as a representation of darkness in the soul. Takaki explains that in the play, audiences see how Caliban is so far removed in stature that he must even reside in a separate geographic location. The relationship and hierarchy between Prospero and Caliban exemplifies the attitudes held by the English as they settled in New England. The settlers believed that the Native American’s dark skin signified low intelligence or capacity to learn. Englishmen used this stereotype and fantasy to justify their taking of the land. If like Caliban, the Native Americans could make no use of the land due to their incompetence, the English rationalized that they should. As God’s light-skin chosen people, the English believed they should live out God’s wishes and develop the Americas as their own.

Ronald Takaki made an excellent use of an entertainment medium, such as a legendary play, to assist in the fruition of the American character. It is unclear whether *The Tempest* was a reflection of what Shakespeare perceived during the expansion to the New world or if his play was used as a tool to propagate society in reinforcing racist and classist ideologies that would help wipe out a people. Nonetheless, Dr. Takaki’s use of the play demonstrates that all aspects of history should be examined closely in order to find the stories that most accurately describe historical events. In addition, the play is a lesson to all in recognizing the role that popular culture and other mediums play in influencing society.

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# LGBT Inclusive Public School Curriculum: A Gradual Process, Support vs. Opposition, & Effects on LGBT Youth

Michael Paramo

## Introduction

Inclusion is a basic right that every demographic deserves to be granted, especially for minority groups, as they are the most susceptible to being ignored, marginalized, and oppressed in society. The LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) population is one such minority group that is working towards inclusion by pressuring institutions, such as the public school education system, to incorporate curriculum that better represents their community. A lack of representation can result in widespread negative implications for all students as well as for the LGBT community overall since over 90 percent of all students in the United States attend a public school<sup>1</sup>. Curriculum therefore possesses the potential to influence how adolescents in America learn about the LGBT community, and subsequently, how they perceive and act in the world they inhabit.

This analysis will focus on the presence and portrayal of the LGBT community in public schools, describing how implementation of an inclusive curriculum throughout the country is a gradual process from the classroom to the state level. In doing so, it will describe how the vast majority of public schools in the United States are abiding by a hidden curriculum of exclusion by ignoring the LGBT community. In order to understand why implementation is a contentious struggle, support and oppositional groups will then be examined. Finally, the significance of inclusive curriculum will be described, focusing on the detrimental effects that exclusion causes as well as the positive changes that school environments could introduce for LGBT students. The purpose is to portray how inclusive curriculum can be effectively integrated into public education, why this should be supported rather than opposed, and how its implementation could benefit the LGBT community overall.

## Inclusive Curriculum in Public Schools: A Gradual Process

The initiation of inclusive curriculum begins at the classroom level through necessary discussion of LGBT issues in order to introduce acceptance rather than rejection of this community to students. After support is garnered, potential to introduce changes at the school district level becomes much more viable, which may eventually lead to the passage of statewide legislation requiring inclusive curriculum. Full inclusion into public schools only occurs when the LGBT community's presence in public education is completely normalized through curriculum integration along with the potential benefit of specific classes focusing on LGBT issues being offered in schools.

This section will assay regional differences regarding the gradual process of implementing inclusive curriculum throughout the United States as well as examine the general history of this process within the public education system. Much of this analysis will focus on California, since it currently exists as the only state that

has taken the discussion of the LGBT community within public education from the classroom level to the state level. In understanding California as an example of progress, this section will highlight how the rest of the country has opted to utilize a hidden curriculum of exclusion rather than implement one of inclusion.

A “hidden curriculum,” as termed by theorist Jean Anyon, describes the manner in which students in public schools are taught by their respective social class. Anyon concludes her analysis by stating that there is a “hidden curriculum” in public schools that is essentially conditioning students of varying social classes on how they must work and act in society based on the things they are taught in school.<sup>2</sup> Public schools ignoring the LGBT community could be described as engaging in a hidden curriculum in that they are essentially conditioning students to ignore LGBT experiences. California stands as the only state that has managed to overcome this hidden curriculum through full implementation of an inclusive curriculum.

Statewide inclusive curriculum in California was achieved only after the LGBT community began to gain recognition in public schools at the district level. Initiating the conversation at this level can be done in several ways, such as through faculty members introducing LGBT issues in the classroom or by the school addressing issues that LGBT students face on campus through anti-harassment rules. A notable example is California public high school teacher Alta Kavanaugh, who revealed that she was openly gay while giving a lecture on prejudice to her students in 1994. In this lecture she discussed how homophobic slurs can be hurtful towards members of the LGBT community as well as herself.<sup>3</sup> Kavanaugh introduced the LGBT community to a classroom in a manner that was personal, by openly revealing her sexuality, and subsequently allowing a discussion on the detrimental effects of homophobia. This is important as it may have been the first time these students had ever learned about the LGBT community or witnessed an openly LGBT public school figure.

Not every public school will have an instructor as brave as Kavanaugh to initiate a dialogue on LGBT issues in the classroom; however, by establishing anti-harassment rules a similar environment of tolerance and acceptance can be achieved. An example of this occurred in the Los Angeles Unified School District, which banned offensive slurs against LGBT youth in many of its schools in 1988.<sup>4</sup> School districts addressing the harassment of LGBT students and implementing anti-harassment rules are acknowledging the existence and experiences of LGBT youth on their campus to their local communities, and potentially increasing support for changes in the form of inclusive curriculum.

School districts are far more supportive of progress after approval of the LGBT community is garnered at the local level, which is what occurred in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The school districts of these progressive cities implemented inclusive curriculum as a trial and error process in order to test its effectiveness on campus environments. California State Senator Mark Leno remarked upon the success of inclusive curriculum in the school districts of these cities by stating that “we know [in these schools districts], where this inclusive history is already being taught, all types of bullying and harassment are significantly decreased.”<sup>5</sup> As a result of the successful implementation of curriculum changes in these important school districts, support for inclusive curriculum at the statewide level became a possibility in California.

LGBT-inclusive curriculum at the state level was accomplished with the passing of Leno’s Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act, which

was signed into effect on July 14th, 2011. This new law required public elementary, middle, and high schools to integrate LGBT issues into public school curriculums throughout the entire state from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The FAIR Education Act obligated that students throughout the state of California learn about the existence of the LGBT community as well as their historical contributions.<sup>6</sup> This influential legislation transformed the curriculum on a statewide level and subsequently exposed public school students to the LGBT community in a normalized manner.

California's commitment to a more accurate and inclusive description of history has only continued to blossom since the passing of the FAIR Education Act in 2011. In September 2015, for the first time in the nation's history, a public high school course was offered specifically on the topic of LGBT studies.<sup>7</sup> The official lesson plans for the class, offered at Ruth Asawa San Francisco School with instructor Lyndsey Schlax, indicate that the course will explore various topics relating to the LGBT community, ranging from LGBT issues on a global scale to learning about the experience of gay youth in public schools.<sup>8</sup> Courses focusing on LGBT issues are meaningful in promoting acceptance through education that highlights the challenges this community experiences as well as the accomplishments it has achieved throughout history. Although this is currently the only public high school course being offered with an LGBT focus, its existence will likely encourage the creation of more classes on the LGBT community in the future.

Regarding regions of the United States that have yet to implement inclusive curriculum, GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), an organization that supports further LGBT representation in the public school system, has released a guide for educators who desire to support LGBT-inclusion on their campus. This guide, which was published in 2014, gives several examples as to how classrooms can implement inclusive curriculum in order to create a safer environment as well as align with national educational standards. Some of their recommendations include introducing material that would allow students to critically analyze historical events of importance to the LGBT community such as landmark court cases, as well as utilizing statistics relating to LGBT issues such as same-sex marriage rates, in mathematics courses.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, GLSEN is effectively displaying how integration of LGBT issues into curriculum is feasible for states where it is currently absent.

In the majority of public schools, students are being informed of prominent figures in history such as Alexander the Great and Leonardo da Vinci, who would identify as LGBT today, yet this integral aspect of their identity is being omitted from the lesson plans.<sup>10</sup> In respect to Alexander the Great, students will likely learn how he was influential in spreading Hellenism throughout the ancient world, but will not be informed of his bisexual relationships with both men and women that were influential in his life.<sup>11</sup> Structuring history in a way in which every prominent figure is assumed to be heterosexual ignores the realities of human diversity and is arguably propagating a heteronormative version of humanity to students.

### **Inclusive Curriculum: Support vs. Opposition throughout the United States**

California's successful implementing of inclusive curriculum has made the battle between oppositional groups and supporters throughout the country more contentious, as both factions each possess strong convictions concerning its enactment. The opposition mainly consists of conservative organizations and politicians that act as obstacles preventing implementation of inclusive curriculum. Analyzing these oppositional groups is critical to understanding why certain regions of the country have been

able to progress while others stagnate. Supporters consist of LGBT students themselves, who desire to learn more about their own identity as well as the accomplishments of their community to society, along with progressive politicians who frequently support LGBT rights.

Opposition from predominantly conservative politicians and organizations often obstructs the implementation of curriculum changes in public schools. For example in Fairfax County, Virginia, Andrea Lafferty, leader of the conservative Traditional Values Coalition attempted to stop inclusive curriculum by claiming that the aforementioned Democratic school board portrayed a “total lack of responsiveness to the point of hostility to the community of those sharing concerns about family values and respect of faith issues.”<sup>12</sup> Along with the Traditional Values Coalition, other conservative groups have utilized similar arguments as Lafferty in order to prevent inclusive curriculum in public schools. Randy Thomasson, an opponent to Mark Leno’s landmark FAIR Education Act and past president of SaveCalifornia.com, reportedly called Leno’s legislation “sexual brainwashing” and labeled the law a violation of parent’s rights, as it prohibits them from opting out of teachings on Harvey Milk, who Thomasson claims was someone who supported polygamy.<sup>13</sup> Lafferty and Thomasson are effectively using their personal conceptions of what constitutes a family as an argument in opposition to curriculum changes that could benefit all students.

In addition to some conservative organizations, prominent Republican politicians have also acted as roadblocks to progress. For example, when the legislature in California attempted to pass a bill that would have enacted LGBT-inclusive curriculum statewide in 2006, it was vetoed by Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.<sup>14</sup> Once the FAIR Education Act passed in 2011, when Democratic Governor Jerry Brown was in office, Republicans were still ardently in opposition. Republican Assemblyman Tim Donnelly commented on the FAIR Education Act by stating that it was censorship, since it required schools to portray gays and lesbians in a positive manner.<sup>15</sup>

Students throughout the country act as strong supporters in the fight for implementation of inclusive curriculum as well as more accepting school environments. Gay-Straight Alliance Youth Leader Irene Rojas-Carroll reflected on the absence of inclusive curriculum in her public school by stating that it created an environment in which she felt ostracized, in her words, “contributed to me feeling left out, and like I didn’t belong.”<sup>16</sup> Rojas-Carroll’s statement brings attention to the importance of curriculum inclusion as an instiller of both confidence and a sense of belonging in students. These firsthand student experiences on the effectiveness of inclusive school environments and curriculum are important to consider as they provide a strong case for supporting its implementation.

Politicians have also been influential in supporting progress, with Democratic State Representative Mark Leno in California, who is openly gay, being the most notable and successful in introducing mandatory reform to statewide curriculum.<sup>17</sup> Patricia Todd, fellow Democrat and State Representative of Alabama, one of the most regressive states in the country regarding LGBT rights, has attempted to implement similar reforms in public school curriculum. Health classes in Alabama currently reference homosexuality as “a lifestyle acceptable to the general public and that homosexual conduct is a criminal offense under the laws of the state.”<sup>18</sup> Todd is attempting to end this negative classification within public schools in order to generate acceptance in Alabama. Democrats have continued to support inclusive curriculum throughout the country, such as in Fairfax County, Virginia in 2015, in which a school board controlled by Democrats in a conservative re-



gion succeeded in initiating curriculum changes within the county's local schools.<sup>19</sup> These political actions exemplify how some Democratic politicians have attempted to promote change through supporting inclusive curriculum, whether in fairly progressive states, such as California or in more conservative states such as Alabama or Virginia.

### **The Effects of Inclusive Curriculum on American Adolescents**

Both supporters and oppositional groups possess conflicting conceptions about inclusive curriculum's effects on youth. Curriculum that acknowledges the LGBT community promotes progressive change for all students and in turn, the society they live in., With some conservative organizations and Republican politicians actively working to prevent curriculum changes in public schools, they are subjecting students to an incomplete history as well as encouraging exclusion, ultimately leading to detrimental implications for the LGBT community.

The overwhelming majority of LGBT students state that harassment at school is a component of their daily lives, acknowledging that they are targeted on a frequent basis with violent attacks occurring on public school campuses against.<sup>20</sup> The ways in which the public school system is structured, some students may face ongoing harassment for consecutive years at a time, such as from sixth grade to junior high.<sup>21</sup> According to GLSEN, 74 percent of LGBT students have received verbal harassment in the past year because of their sexual orientation, resulting in 30 percent of these students performing poorly with a GPA nine to fifteen points lower than the average or choosing to dropout entirely.<sup>22</sup> This shows how harassment results in negative effects, not only on the student's experiences in school, but also on how well they perform academically.

The effects of this harassment remain long after students leave the environment of an intolerant school campus. In fact, 28 percent of LGBT youth will choose to drop out of school in order avoid this harassment and without a safe place to go they are at an even greater risk. At home the situation is similar, with over 34 percent of LGBT youth encountering physical harm from their parents due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>23</sup> This abuse at school and in the home results in disastrous effects on the lives of these individuals, who are twice as likely to abuse alcohol and eight times as likely to abuse cocaine. Along with increased probability for drug addiction, 30 percent of all suicides occur within the LGBT community, with over 50 percent of transgender youth attempting to commit suicide at some point in their lives.<sup>24</sup> With the implementation of inclusive curriculum in public schools the negative effects of harassment as well as the struggles members of the LGBT community regularly endure, can greatly improve.

Personal experiences are important to consider when analyzing the significance of inclusive curriculum on the lives of students. An early example of public schools recognizing the LGBT student experience relates to the establishment of Harvey Milk High School, a public institution in New York founded in 1985. The purpose of this institution is to address LGBT students who experience frequent harassment at school along with potential issues of homelessness, drug abuse, or bullying in their daily lives.<sup>25</sup> Both LGBT and non-LGBT students have reflected on their experiences at Harvey Milk High School positively, supporting the school's existence as a safe environment that encourages them to accept their identity without outside judgment. Regarding his experience at the school in 2009, LGBT student Matthew commented on how the school is beneficial by stating,

There are kids here who are homeless, kids who dropped out of other schools, kids who've been abused— you name it. The teachers and staff here don't judge you—they accept you for who you are. They help you succeed. I

hate to think where I would be without them.

Non-LGBT student Luis discussed the importance of the school to the LGBT community by stating, “All the LGBTQ students who don’t have a high school like Milk— stay strong! Don’t let anything or anyone get in the way of your education.”<sup>26</sup> Both of these firsthand accounts exemplify how an inclusive and accepting school environment can improve the experiences of both LGBT and non-LGBT students.

GLSEN has done extensive research on the effects of inclusive curriculum and has concluded that its presence improves conditions for LGBT students. This number of students feeling unsafe on public school campuses that had implemented inclusive curriculum dropped from 60 percent to 35 percent in comparison to those schools that had not implemented the curriculum. Students also reported feeling more comfortable discussing their sexual orientation openly with teachers and faculty members when inclusive curriculum is implemented on their campus.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, only a minority of LGBT students are currently experiencing these benefits in the United States. Without inclusive curriculum, many students are unaware they are learning about LGBT figures in social science, health, or English courses, with more than 50 percent of students failing to recognize any LGBT figures.<sup>28</sup> GLSEN reports that when prominent LGBT historical figures were included, only 19 percent of students were informed of them in a positive manner.<sup>29</sup> This absence of positive acknowledgement in public school curriculum for the majority of LGBT students, is only one area in need of improvement.

In addition to utilizing inclusive curriculum to combat harassment, employing supportive staff as well as designating safe spaces on campus for LGBT students can also prove to be worthwhile. Nearly half of all LGBT students in schools do not feel supported by their campus faculty, describing them as inadequate in preventing or effectively addressing reports of harassment against them.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, safe spaces, or staffed locations on campus that promote acceptance for the LGBT community have been proposed as effective solutions to combating the daily harassment that many LGBT students endure on campus.<sup>31</sup> It has been reported by GLSEN that about one-third of LGBT students find many locations on campus, such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and physical education classrooms, to be unsafe and may avoid these spaces entirely as a result of the probability of being verbally or physically harassed.<sup>32</sup> Research shows that a combination of inclusive curriculum, supportive faculty, and designated safe spaces may be the best solution to promoting tolerance and combating harassment on public school campuses.

## **Conclusion**

In understanding that the implementation of inclusive curriculum is a gradual process that has yet to be fulfilled throughout most of the nation, it is clear that Anyon’s “hidden curriculum” is currently being utilized in the majority of public schools in this country. Although supporters, such as LGBT students and some Democratic politicians, are fighting for inclusive curriculum to be employed, the opposition from conservative groups and some Republican politicians has been largely successful in preventing progress. The damaging reality that LGBT youth face on a daily basis in school and in life could be improved with the combined usage of

inclusive curriculum, supportive faculty, and accepting safe spaces. Therefore, it is clear that the continuation of this reality is not acceptable.

Adolescents throughout the United States deserve to be educated in a way



that is both accurate and promotes tolerance, just as LGBT youth deserve to be accepted without fear of harassment or abuse. In analyzing the current state of inclusive curriculum, the LGBT experience in this country can be understood. This newfound perspective shows us that, as a country, we have failed the LGBT community. In the majority of this country, the LGBT individual lives a life in which being ignored in their school's curriculum is acceptable, being verbally harassed in daily life is commonplace, and where physical harm, by others or by oneself, is common. As inclusive curriculum continues to rise in prominence in select regions, such as in California, there is hope that acceptance will be able to overcome the obstacles of hatred and intolerance.

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- <sup>28</sup> Joseph Kosciw and Elizabeth Diaz, *Involved, Invisible, Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K-12 Schools* (New York, NY: GLSEN, 2008), 91-92.
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# Doing Masculinity: The Experiences of the Drag King Community

Lauren A. Flores

I sat at a single round table as I waited for the show to begin. The intimate restaurant started to fill with people. Tables around the small circular stage became more crowded. The sound of “Like a Virgin” by Madonna filled the room as I became immediately wrapped up in the energetic atmosphere. At 8pm, a disco ball danced down the center of the ceiling as the light shimmered across the room. A server stepped up to my table holding a bucket, asking me if I cared to get some “cash for singles.” The pulsating rhythm of 1980’s pop music made it difficult for me to hear him, but I also didn’t understand his question. I leaned in slightly closer. He pointed at the bucket and said, “You know? For the Kings.” I chuckled slightly feeling almost foolish. This was my first time watching a drag performance and I was not certain what to expect. Up until this point, I was only loosely familiar with the definition of a “Drag King.” I only knew it to be a person who performs masculinity on a stage. However during the course of my research, my understanding of these performers gained clarity. A drag king is defined as an individual who could be male or female bodied, personally identify with various gender identities and sexual orientations, but chooses to embody a masculine image on stage for performance value.

Before attending my first show, some of my equally clueless friends would joke that drag king shows were probably boring compared to drag queen shows because “watching someone ‘do’ masculinity isn’t as entertaining as watching someone ‘do’ femininity.” As the music in the room grew louder my attention gravitated to the middle of the room as the stage curtain slowly began to open. Standing center stage was the well-known King show host, Landon Cider, dressed proudly in a bright green top hat and a glittery leprechaun costume. Landon gave the audience a smirk as he began pelvic thrusting and mouthing the lyrics to Kanye West’s song “Gold Digger.” The small audience radiated pure energy as they raised their hands and had their eyes fixated on Landon. It was then that I was certain that this type of performance would be anything but boring. Through my ethnographic research of a group of Southern California Drag Kings, I argue that the community is unique in that it provides a space where its members both embrace and challenge hegemonic images and values of American masculinity and create a supportive environment where this balance is celebrated. This distinctive balance that drives their community is fueled by the intimacy of their relationships with one another, the intimacy of their work, and by their community’s fluid interpretation of masculinity in performance.

## Methodology

My research methods consist of observation and analysis of two drag king shows at two separate venues as well as two interviews with current professional drag kings. My first observation was conducted at a bar and restaurant chain called Hamburger Mary’s in Ontario. I conducted my second observation at the Velvet Lounge club in Downtown Santa Ana. During my first observation, I was fortunate enough to meet professional drag king Landon Cider, who then introduced me to the other kings that performed that night. I also interviewed professional king, Travis

Foxx. Travis has been working in the industry for three years and recently placed in the final round of the 2016 National Drag King Competition. From my interview with Travis, I was introduced to Jay Johnson, a drag king that started performing professionally in 2015 and is Travis's close friend. Along with this research, I watched home videos of their drag king performances and used examples of current academic research concerning drag kings to contextualize my findings. In conducting both my observation and interviews, I have recognized several central themes that appear to be vital to the experiences of this particular drag king community.

Creating the "Illusion": Professional Drag King Prep In Leslee Grey's chapter entitled "Sexuality Education: Lessons from Drag Kings," she highlights the preparation process of a drag king. She informs her reader that, "[t]he majority of Drag Kings bind their breasts with bandages or commercially produced binding garments, apply facial hair (or emphasize their natural 'peach fuzz' with a swipe of a dark mascara), and 'pack' their pants with a sock or latex phallus."<sup>1</sup>

Although this observation is true, I feel that her description gives the idea that the preparation process of a drag king is simple and unelaborate in nature. Through my observations and interviews, I have found the opposite to be true. Kings take immense pride in everything from their makeup, to their facial hair, to their extravagant stage ensembles. Jay Johnson candidly spoke with me in her interview about the amount of time involved in her process of preparing for a show. At the outdoor patio outside of the club during our interview she gave a slight chuckle as she touched her facial hair and explained,

My beard is Barbie hair that I've cut up. So then I use spirit gum to glue it to my face. And then I cover it up with an eyebrow pencil and just fill it in with more hair and glue. Um, you know it's hit or miss. You know, binding or some people even use 'binders.' Everyone has their own style. Actually doing the process on your own can be challenging. I have very long hair. A lot of drag kings have very short hair. So I have to figure out what to do with my hair to make it look more masculine, since I've been told that my face looks very feminine. I used to have my friend do cornrows for me, but she moved. So now I just slick it back and do six smaller braids...which takes like forty minutes. Then I do my beard which takes about...fifty minutes. A lot of preparation! And then I bind my breasts and depending how well my tape is working for me that day it can take anywhere between twenty-five to forty minutes. It's awhile!

This prep work is something that is truly time-consuming and appears to be a labor of love for these performers. It is through this painstaking work that the performers strive for the potential reward and goal of creating a great "masculine illusion" on stage to captivate the audience.



Advertisement for the Velvet Lounge "Monthly Revue."

### “Taping Tits:” The Intimacy of the Work

During my first performance observation at Hamburger Mary’s, the host Landon Cider joked with the audience about how she got prepared for her performance. She openly spoke on stage about “taping her tits” and spoke candidly about other parts of her wardrobe for comedic affect. It was not until I met Landon and some of the other kings in their dressing room that I began to understand the significance of intimacy in the backstage environment. The space in the dressing room at the Hamburger Mary’s was about the size of a standard walk-in closet, for five performers to get ready. Although it is possible that the size of the dressing room changes with the venue, the connections and friendships that spur from these interactions backstage prove to be extremely significant. In my interview with Jay Johnson, shortly after her performance at the Velvet Lounge, shared with me the interactions between her and the other kings as she continued to learn more about the process of preparing her appearance for a show. When describing the lengthy process of getting ready, she chuckled and said,

And taping my breasts, that’s a whole other thing! Because um I’m a little bit larger. So it’s a whole process of trying to get them down and getting them flat. And that always seems to be different every time and I haven’t gotten it down. I mean, I’ve seen other Kings and their process of taping and it’s so fluid. I learned how to do it through watching them and through talking with them about what tape to use.

In their industry, where quality of appearance during performance is vital to one’s success both socially and financially, these connections and tips from other performers are crucial. According to Travis Foxx, these connections are anything but superficial. He asserts that these deep meaningful friendships are an inevitable result of the intimate environment of the everyday closeness of the work. He says,

It becomes a family. I mean it starts just by working with that person for just one night, but you could be in that back room with that person the entire night getting ready. Getting ready and getting naked in front of each other. You’re very exposed, and it really just starts from there.

When Travis says that the community is like a family, he conveys the significant level of trust and emotional value that is gained over the course of their intimate time together and experiences at work. However, it is this work environment that is a stepping stone to an even deeper relationship and bond within the drag king community. In Miliann Kang’s work *The Managed Hand*, she addresses the significance of what she defines as emotional labor in *American Culture*. In her research on manicurists, she addresses the moments of friendship and intimacy between the workers as they arrange the carpool to their workplace. She states, “While the car trip can become a valued part of the workday for women, when they can share concerns and get to know each other, it can also impose added emotional labor, as owners take on the roles not only of transporter but also of confidante and mediator.”<sup>2</sup> The intimate nature of the work of being a drag king certainly allows for emotional connections and sincere feelings to grow among performers. This also allows for greater camaraderie in their community as well as a highly valued sense of brotherhood that is truly unique from a typical workplace.



Landon Cider: “Freaky Money” from his audition for *Rupaul’s Drag Race*.

### “It Goes to Another Level Beyond Drag:” The Intimacy of Their Relationships

Travis Foxx, a successful trans drag king within this close-knit community, opened up in his interview with me as he expressed that the most precious parts of his involvement in this industry are the deep connections and bonds with the other drag kings. In my observations, I noticed immediately that the drag kings I met in the dressing room backstage had close relationships based off of small details they knew about each other’s personal lives and their body language. They appeared to be very comfortable around each other. Travis deeply values this intimacy and bond that is at the root of this community, but in his interview he recognizes that this characteristic makes the nature of the job different from a standard “job.” He explains the difference as he says,

You can create things with drag and create things with people. It’s different. You know sometimes a person can meet the love of their life through drag. Landon Cider met her wife through drag. Ivory Onyx met her wife through drag. You know? It’s cool that you can really build strong relationships and friendships with people in this industry, and for it to be okay.

The fact that Travis emphasized that being a drag king is specifically different from a standard job could highlight a larger issue in American culture. It is possible that there is lack of human connection in our social institutions where one would spend the majority of their time, they are simply not constructed to create those kind of bonds that one needs to feel fulfilled. In Ray Oldenburg’s book *The Great Good Place*, he argues that there are a lack of spaces in American culture where an individual can feel support and community other than home or work place. He argues that this imparts a negative impact on individual happiness “[this] third place is remarkably similar to a good home in the psychological comfort and support that it extends.”<sup>3</sup> For these performers, their drag Community and drag performance spaces are what they value as their “third place.” It is their home away from home where they feel support, acceptance, and where they feel truly comfortable expressing their own thoughts, feelings, or gender behaviors without the risk of judgment.

During his interview, Travis excitedly told me about his next show and that his “drag brother” would be attending. He smiled at me, “Havoc Von Doom will be there! He’s my actual drag brother, so you’ll meet him. We’ll be doing a duet tomorrow.” He goes on to explain that his drag brother is more than simply just his partner. He tells me that this type of bond “goes beyond drag. It’s like ‘family first, drag second.’ You know?” I argue that these bonds are the reason that these particular



drag kings remain within the community. Both of my interviewees emphasized that they “do not do this for the money.” It is clear that this community is giving them an outlet for a type of deep brother-like bond that is powerful, unique, and significant.

### **Personal Life vs. Stage Persona**

In John Water’s interview with well-known drag king Mo B. Dick entitled “In the Company of Drag Kings,” the two discuss the difference between male impersonators and a drag kings. Mo B. Dick makes a clear distinction that a drag king does not have to impersonate any actual living person where a male impersonator does. Drag kings have the freedom of creating their own masculine character<sup>4</sup>. Both interviewees mentioned the freedom of expression associated with creating their own drag king persona. Travis explains to me that “[he] can impersonate whoever [he] wants to impersonate. Because [him] doing drag and [him] outside of drag are two totally different people.” This conscious difference in identity is significant because it creates the idea that an individual can successfully portray a masculine persona, but can also “take off the mask.” This brings attention to the idea that it is possible to reject strict and stereotypical cultural requirements while still being “successfully” masculine. In this case, we can see that an individual can play in multiple gender performances within this community. Travis opened up to me about how his drag king persona helped him during his gender transition. He revealed,

This was actually around the time that I started to transition. And so it was kind of like ‘okay so I’m a male illusionist.’ And it kind of helped me gain confidence in my transition as well. Because I’m performing this masculine persona. I mean I’ve always been pretty masculine, but to put on an even more masculine persona in front of everyone. You know? Getting support from the outside? It helped me gain confidence.

In a culture that does not allow fluidity within gender performance and still holds on to a powerful idea of a gender binary, outlets and communities such as this are essential to self-exploration and overall happiness. This is true especially with LGBTQ youth that possibly feel limited or scared to express their identity proudly. The support of individual expression that is at the core of the drag king community allows for expression and difference to not only be sustained but widely celebrated.

### **“It’s a Good Balance”: Embracing and Challenging Hegemonic Notions of Masculinity Within the Drag King Community**

Through my observations and interviews, I found that this community is unique and fascinating for many different reasons. I feel that it is incredibly distinct because it is an example of a community that balances embracing aspects of stereotypical masculinity and also challenges it. This is done through their community definition of masculinity being something that is an illusion, and can therefore be fluid and can be altered depending on the performers’ own interpretation. During my interview with Travis, I noticed an interesting and truly eye opening rejection of stereotypically masculine roles within his own personal life. He intimately opened up to me about the societal pressure to be the financial provider for his family. In Herrmann’s analysis of gender in her work “His and Hers: Gender and Garage Sales,” she argues that men’s behavior and “[t]he quality of male participation in garage sales is often colored by concerns associated with their historic role as primary breadwinner.<sup>5</sup>” Although it is not expected for a man to solely financially contribute, the pres-

sure in some ways looms over men to make at least the majority of the income, which in turn affects their behavior. In his experience as a trans man, Travis Foxx opened up about his experience with this pressure,

And I will never be...a real man....but I am probably more of a man than any real man will ever be, because I have learned to accept that. There are probably lots of men who don't know how to swallow their pride. You know? And they just need to be this certain way and...and...you know? Uh... (coughs) they need to have the whole 'oh you're a stay at home wife and I'm bringing the money.' No. It doesn't have to be like that, because my relationship's not like that. You know? I don't make most of the money. And at first it was hard for me to accept that, because I was like, 'Wait, no no no no, I'm the man. I should bring in all the money. You know? I should be the one taking care of this family. I should be.' But, me being me is good enough to take care of the family. You know? And because I'm not bringing in a million dollars a year...or whatever...however much people make...doesn't make me any less father to my partner's kids. Doesn't make me any less of a partner for her. (long pause) Because money can't buy love. Money can't buy friendships. Money can't buy more masculinity. You know? (laughs)

Travis is challenging a traditional definition of masculinity involving the lack of emotion and the breadwinning role. In this he is invoking an alternate image of what a man should be and believes that there needs to be different ways for how our culture measures "real" masculinity. Travis's interpretation of what a "real" man is, is largely associated with the biological sex assigned at birth. It is his opinion that given this particular definition of a "real" man, it would be impossible for him to achieve this status in his life. However, he embraces the idea that genuine masculinity involves being true to yourself, challenging cultural notions of male gender expectations, and rejecting the idea that gender roles should control your behavior. I truly believe that it is because of individuals like Travis that this community provides an accepting and supportive environment for self-expression.

Another aspect of this community that challenges stereotypical masculinity is the theatrical and occasional feminine nature of the masculine goal-oriented performances. At my first observation, Landon Cinder joked on stage that she has a "dick that [she] bought from Amazon.com. It has glitter on it." The audience laughed along with her, however I feel this brief instance symbolizes the balance of feminine interpretations of a masculine performance in the drag community. In Judith Halberstam's research on drag kings, she argues that "[t]heatricity depends on whether [the performer] relies totally on impersonation, or whether her own masculinity flavors the act."<sup>6</sup> Some performers impersonated political figures and stereotypical characters related to masculinity, that people would be familiar with (Donald Trump, Desi Arnez, etc.) however I found when the performers decided to incorporate their freedom into their own character, they embraced a slightly feminine flair. This was done both through dance movements as well as expressive masculine clothing during their performances. This observation connects to C.J. Pascoe's ethnographic analysis of the masculinity of high school men in their "Mr. Cougar" pageant. She analyzed the teen boys during the competition skits "showed that they were men [...] through their deep voices, their physical strength, and their rejection of femininity."<sup>7</sup> As a culture, this idea that true masculinity requires the rejection of anything feminine is learned early on. However, the existence of the drag king community directly challenges this notion that has become hegemonic in our culture.

Leslee Grey argues that the further popularity of these types of drag king



performances are extremely significant because they “can help to break down binary thinking and draw on the lived experiences of those who identify outside of more “mainstream” gender/ sexual identity categories.”<sup>8</sup> The drag king community is an example for the wider culture that loosening the grasp on the strict gender binary is not only possible, but a truly freeing experience. In Eve Shapiro’s work, “Drag King-ing and the Transformation of Gender Identities” she argues that the performance of drag is unique as well as significant in that the action expands the borders of gender identity.<sup>9</sup> Shapiro expresses that the action of “drag can destabilize hegemonic gender, sex, and sexuality by altering and changing rigid cultural norms about gender performance and masculinity.”<sup>10</sup> During the course of my research, I have learned that there are common perceptions and cultural myths by those outside of this drag king community regarding performers’ gender identity and sexuality. Significant amounts of people have little insight and knowledge about this community and assume that most kings identify as lesbian women. Jay Johnson addresses this common misconception in her experience as a king. She explains that, “A lot of people think that this is my first step in transitioning into a male. But that’s definitely not what this is. I’m very happy with my body and being a female. But that perception is definitely out there.” There are certainly drag kings that identify as trans and identify as gender nonconforming; however, this community openly allows a space for cisgender females to express masculinity without reservation. This notion directly destabilizes what is culturally learned about gender norms by allowing anyone the opportunity to perform masculinity when it is stereotypically exclusive for heterosexual men.

#### **“I’m Trying to Emulate a Male:” Embracing Stereotypical Masculinity**

Although drag king performances greatly contradict hegemonic notions of gender identity and sexuality, the ultimate experience of the performance relies on creating an illusion based on culturally stereotypical masculinity. Shapiro argues that most drag kings strive to “pass” as male, or at least “to expose the obvious markers of masculinity.”<sup>11</sup> While observing the performances, I noticed that the majority of them relied on masculine dance moves as well as a masculine based wardrobe. In their preparation, drag kings take a lot of time to understand the details of masculine behavior in order to incorporate them into their performances. Jay Johnson talks about how she takes the time to emulate stereotypical hyper-masculine behavior to incorporate to her personal on stage,

When I’m trying to emulate a male, I’m trying to emulate someone who is pretty masculine. Usually hip-hop. I feel I’ve looked at people like LL Cool J a lot, but then I’m looking at people like Ginuwine for th facial hair. [...] I’ll look at certain males to see how I should be walking or talking.

It is necessary for drag kings to look at the details in masculine behavior in order to complete the illusion on stage. They understand that without this attention to detail, the audience cannot be immersed in the performer’s embodiment of being a male. The balance that drives the unique drag community lies in the preparation toward the performance of masculinity.

#### **“[It] Opens People Up to Exploring:” Celebration and Freedom of Alternate Forms of Masculinity**

The drag king community is deeply rooted in changing cultural understandings of gender. However, the value of celebration and the freedom of exploring alter-

nate forms of masculinity is at the community's foundation. Shapiro addresses this essence of freedom when she explains that, "Drag communities aren't spaces of total gender anarchy, but they do appear to allow freedom of movement between subjectivities and identities."<sup>12</sup> The action of performing drag does not completely disregard preexisting gender norms and behaviors, but it creates a forum for exploration and celebration. A performer can alternate from one end of the gender performance spectrum to the other in a single night. While viewing my first drag king performance, I witnessed a unique variety of masculine interpretations ranging from "the latin lover" to an Irish leprechaun to a masculine hip-hop break-dancer. This community allows its performers an outlet to transform themselves on stage and embrace alternate masculine images where it would not traditionally be culturally accepted. Jay Johnson mentions that this freedom is what immediately appealed to her when starting drag. She understands that there are rigid cultural interpretations of masculinity as she explains to me, "What we do doesn't change what other people think of masculinity. But I think it puts a new perspective and a new play on masculinity. And it kind of opens people up to exploring other things other than their own masculinity." The individuals in the community pride themselves on empowering one another and celebrating the idea of self-expression. This exploration, freedom, and celebration is where the individuals in the community find acceptance.

### Conclusion

In reflecting back on my experience conducting this research, I find myself deeply connecting to Caughey's stance in his work, *The Ethnography of Everyday Life*, as he states the reasons why ethnographic research is important. He argues that "[i]n our multi-cultural society, fieldwork often confronts the ethnographer, face to face, with people who live other realities. As such, fieldwork often involves a powerfully affecting and self-transforming experience."<sup>13</sup> A self-transforming experience is exactly how I would describe this journey through my research of the drag king community. I have met some incredible people and I truly felt honored to be welcomed in such a unique and open community. My discussions and observations of Travis Foxx, Jay Johnson, and Landon Cider allowed me to acknowledge and truly understand the incredible cultural significance of their way of life. Their community has values that are based on deep connections with people and celebration of differences.

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<sup>8</sup> Grey, “Lessons from Drag Kings,” 180.

<sup>9</sup> Eve Shapiro, “Drag Kinging and the Transformation of Gender Identities,” *Gender and Society* 21 (2007): 257.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

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*The American Papers*

# Art and Advocacy: Providing Support to Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

Elizabeth J. Ugalde

## Introduction

While driving down the road or out shopping I have noticed groups of adults out together on what appear to be field trips. Like most situations I take notice of, they are not part of my world and I find myself searching for an explanation as to why they are together and what they are doing. Some members of the group have clear physical disabilities, while others, based on their need for guidance, appear to have intellectual disabilities. There are usually two to three other adults in the group who are directing and seem to be in charge. I tried to piece together the circumstances that brought this group together and how the caretakers came to be responsible for the others. However, my limited understanding of how our society provides support to adults with intellectual disabilities left me without an answer. I now believe what I saw was most likely an outing from a group home. Group homes, along with other facilities including the art program I studied, are one part of the network that provides support to adults with intellectual disabilities.

This network is large and multi-faceted, with different entities working in conjunction to maintain the welfare of this population. The network includes state agencies, non-profit foundations, for-profit companies, as well as the families of the individuals (if there are any). Ideally this large network provides not only the essential resources, but the accountability necessary to ensure the proper care and protection of individuals who are not able to advocate on their own behalf. In this paper I will be examining this network and how it operates; I will do this by examining the experiences of the employees of one non-profit center that specializes in teaching art and providing care for adults with intellectual disabilities. I will argue that the dual purposes of this center creates a unique environment that makes the employees of the Studio the most effective advocates for the clients.

I conducted my research at the Downtown location of Exceptional Children's Foundation (ECF) Art Program in Los Angeles, California. When referencing this particular location, I will be referring to it as the *Studio* to distinguish between this location and ECF as a whole. The Downtown location is one of four in Los Angeles County. The ECF website states the purpose of their Art Program as follows:

The Art Center program encourages, assists and supports personal artistic development for adults with developmental disabilities. The Centers provide full-day programming five days a week with professional art instructors in studio facilities. Art instruction is offered in a variety of mediums, such as, water color, oil, pen and ink, printmaking, and ceramics. ECF artists express themselves and build on their innate artistic abilities. In addition to art instruction, the Art Centers offer independent living skills, counseling, and behavior management. Through juried art shows, gallery and museum exhibitions, silent auctions, and online sales, artists are given exposure and the opportunity to benefit financially from their work, which helps cultivate a sense of accomplishment and self-worth.<sup>1</sup>

The origins of the Exceptional Children's Foundation began in the 1940's with a

group of parents seeking day care and educational options for their children with intellectual disabilities. By the 1950's it had developed into a non-profit foundation providing a wide variety of services and educational opportunities to both children and adults with intellectual disabilities. The art program began in the 1960's with one studio teaching art therapy.<sup>2</sup>

I spent two days observing the Studio, its employees, and the forty-four participants. I conducted formal interviews with three employees who hold different positions at the Studio. I began with the supervisor, Mary, who is responsible for overseeing the teachers and collaborating with the case manager on developing goals for the participants. Next was the case manager, Sophia, whose primary responsibility is to monitor the progress and ensure the well-being of the participants in the program. Sophia does this by setting goals with the participants, the teachers, and Mary. Based on these goals she creates monthly as well as annual reports on their progress. Lastly, I interviewed a teacher, Robert, who has been with the art program for nineteen years. In addition to the formal interviews, I spoke and interacted with other teachers, gallery curators, and the participants during my observation. I also visited Mary's art studio, in order to see her personal work and conduct my original interview with her. Her follow-up interview, as well as the other two employee's original interviews, were done at the Studio during my second observation.

### Labels

During my research, some of the labels that were used at the Studio struck me as being valuable to understanding this group's culture. Learning the meaning behind these labels, as defined by the people that use them, became a focus for me during my interviews; they became an emphasis because I believe labels indicate how people view themselves, others, and the world around them. For example, I chose to use the term *network* rather than *system* when labeling the collection of entities involved in the support structure. In my opinion, network more accurately reflects the human element I witnessed at the Studio. I view systems as mechanical-like structures that intentionally remove people, while in my experience, networks are driven by people. The human element is critical when looking at the support structure for a vulnerable population that is unable to advocate for themselves. Making decisions that affect the welfare of another person requires empathy and a connection to that individual.

The individuals that receive services from the Studio are diagnosed as *adults with intellectual disabilities*. According to the California Department of Developmental Services, this means they are "characterized by significantly sub average general intellectual functioning (i.e., an IQ of approximately 70 or below) with concurrent deficits or impairments in adaptive functioning" Receiving this diagnosis makes them eligible to receive special assistance through the network.<sup>3</sup> *Adults with intellectual disabilities* is the most recent label used and has developed as the cultural attitude about disability has evolved to acknowledge the individual ahead of their disability. As Heather and Kenneth D. Keith mention in *Intellectual Disability: Ethics, Dehumanization, and a New Moral Community*, "times change and so does language—in ways that can be critical to people who are categorized and labeled."<sup>4</sup> The critical part of labels is that they change the way an individual is viewed and treated by society.

*Clients* is the term used by ECF in reference to the participants in the program. This word-choice created a conflict for me since most of the employees at the Studio have the title of teacher or instructor. I expected the participants to be referred

to as students or artists. When I asked Mary why she uses the term *client* rather than student, she replied:

Client is what I use the most because they are referred to us, and I guess I like to use the word client because they are definitely in a vulnerable position to their instructor, me, the case manager, and to the organization. They are coming here because they need a service and they need assistance with something, and we are helping them and providing them a service. We're not just mentoring them in that same way. It's also not like a mutual relationship where there is a mutual exchange.<sup>5</sup>

Mary's explanation and her use of the word vulnerable reflect how she views the position the clients are in when they are at the program and the responsibility the employees have to respect that. The label of client helps her to remember that they are dependent on the employees at the program. The importance of labels was explained to me by the case manager, Sophia:

I don't like to call them disabled. I call them adults with disabilities. I personally just like to do that because I treat them as adults. I would like everyone to treat them as adults without looking at their disabilities. You know if people just focus on their disabilities then they don't really get out what the client really knows and actually understand (them). I never focus on their disabilities. Never.<sup>6</sup>

For Sophia, focusing on a client's disability prevents someone from being able to connect with the client as an individual and limits the client's ability to be understood. As Keith and Keith state, "When people are labeled, others of course see them differently and the effects of labels can be powerfully stigmatizing, taking on a life of their own."<sup>7</sup> The effort made by Sophia and the rest of the staff to view the clients as adults first became apparent during my observations. They were seeking to connect and communicate on a personal level. *Practicing artist* is another label that was used by the employees. I asked Mary to explain what it meant:

I think you sort of have to use the word practicing to indicate that you are trying to be a career artist and that you are practicing as in it's like a career and you're seeing it as a professional pursuit and you know. Probably a lot of practicing artists strive to have a relationship with a gallery, exhibit their work, and produce a certain amount of work each year.<sup>8</sup>

Mary, as well as the teachers I spoke with, self-identify as practicing artists and work to accomplish the criteria she mentioned. With this in mind I made the assumption that they would feel resentment about working at the Studio because the employees are not supported in the pursuit of their own careers as practicing artists. In essence, they have to work two careers. The first is at the Studio and the second is striving to do everything Mary describes as being a practicing artist. These things, which include producing art, gallery representation, and sales are provided to the clients as part of the service they receive.

What I learned upon further inquiry is that the employees see the clients as also being practicing artists, which causes them to consider the clients as professional peers. One teacher informed me that she feels working at the Studio has helped her grow as an artist. The clients inspire her to be less inhibited when working on her own projects. The connection of practicing artists shared between the employees and the clients is a unique aspect of the Studio's environment that helps the employees to

provide care and advocate for the clients in a way that differentiates it from the rest of the network.

### **The Network**

Sophia spent close to an hour telling me about the struggles she has in advocating on behalf of the forty-four clients in her care. She is required to act in many different roles. Her main job function as case manager is to create goals for the clients so that they are developing independent living skills. Some goals she mentioned were learning how to care for tools, trying new mediums for projects, and correcting any behavioral issues. In addition, she acts as an advocate for the clients when she sees they need additional support, or if she suspects they are being abused or neglected. She works directly with Regional Center, a non-profit service that refers the clients to the programs and services they need. The employee at Regional Center that is responsible for handling the requests and making the referrals is the Service Coordinator. Each client is assigned to a Service Coordinator, and Sophia reports the progress of each client to them on a monthly and annual basis.

The California Department of Developmental Services is the primary government agency that funds the services the clients receive. Their website describes their role in distributing resources as:

Services are provided through state-operated developmental centers and community facilities, and contracts with 21 nonprofit regional centers. The regional centers serve as a local resource to help find and access the services and supports available to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.<sup>9</sup>

Another government agency that the Studio works with is Adult Protective Services (APS). This agency investigates abuse and neglect allegations. I did not speak to anyone from the Regional Center, DDS or APS, so I cannot speak to their perspectives. My analysis is limited because of this, but I believe that the Studio employees have an intimate understanding of what the clients need because of their daily interactions.

### **The Studio**

The Studio is located in Downtown Los Angeles. There is a bright and airy gallery in the front that sells the artwork for all four locations in Los Angeles. When I arrived I tried to enter through the gallery door and found it locked. The Studio has a separate entrance from the gallery and there is a wall separating the two. I was led down a long hallway that feels confined, and into a large area with high ceilings and white walls. There were no windows and the closest door was down the hallway so there was no natural light. The space was divided into four sections: One was the lunch area, another was the painting area, and a third was the ceramics area, which was located in the back. In between these three spaces were offices for Mary and Sophia.

There are two separate purposes at the ECF Art Program. First, employees provide the service of caretaking for the clients. Second, employees mentor the clients as they develop into practicing artists. The Studio is a day program that began with a therapeutic focus. However, the program has changed over the years and now provides employment training in conjunction with teaching independent living skills.<sup>10</sup> The first service of caretaking reminded me of the emotional labor described by Arlie



Russell Hocschild in *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. I came to view the caretaking service the employees perform as emotional labor. In her book, Hocschild, illustrates emotional labor by comparing it to the production of goods: “In the case of the flight attendant, the emotional *style of offering the service is part of the service itself*, in a way that loving or hating wallpaper is not a part of producing wallpaper” (emphasis author’s own).<sup>11</sup>

The employees need to be able to engage with the clients on an emotional level in order to do their jobs well. If they perform the caretaking tasks without trying to develop a personal relationship with the clients, they will struggle to communicate and help the clients to achieve their goals. The employees are also held accountable for the physical well-being of the clients. They are mandated reporters, which makes them responsible for reporting suspected or known abuse to APS. Some of the other responsibilities the employees have to the clients are: assisting them at meal time, keeping them on schedule, and teaching them how to perform tasks and reach their goals.

While observing their lunch process, I witnessed the performance of caretaking duties as well as emotional labor. The teachers had to heat up and distribute the meals the clients brought from home because clients are not allowed to use the microwave. They had to tell one client to wipe his nose because he was unaware that it was running. Another client needed to be reminded to wash his hands after using the restroom. One client had to be repeatedly asked to sit down because he kept wandering away from the table. There are rules and expected behaviors for lunch time, and teaching the clients these is part of the life skills training offered by ECF. While the employees performed these functions they were also interacting with the clients and each other on a personal level. There was an upbeat tone to the meal and the way in which everyone engaged with each other and me.

The clients were curious about who I was and wanted to tell me about themselves. The employees communicated on the clients’ behalf to tell me stories about their art work and their experiences at the Studio. They wanted the supervisors to show me photos of field trips they went on and parties they had. The communication style between the employees and clients was interesting to me; clients’ communication abilities range from being completely non-verbal to being able to speak in basic sentences. The employees and clients created understanding through words, gestures and clarification questions asked by the employees. This, to me, takes a level of engagement that goes beyond providing a service. The employees do what Sophia mentioned to me earlier: employees look past the clients’ disabilities in order to understand them. The staff could have ignored the clients while performing the function of distributing meals, but instead chose to interact and seek to communicate with them.

The second purpose of the Studio is teaching art to the clients and helping them to be practicing artists. The teacher I interviewed, Robert, tells me about a particular student whose progress he is the proudest of. He recently transferred to this facility from one of the other three, and was assigned a client by the name of Jasmine. He shows me examples of her work from before and after she was his client. I have a limited education in art but can immediately see the difference he is referencing. Her previous work was in primary colors only and lacked intention. The works she has done since he has become her teacher have a range of colors and technique she didn’t accomplish before him. He speaks with a Boston accent and explains to me the difference: “look at this” (holding up her earlier work), “you can’t sell this.” Then holding

up a newer piece, “this right here, this can maybe be sold, they’re a little more sellable because of the color. It takes the instructor asking ‘how do I shape and guide this young lady to making sellable art that is just gorgeous?’”<sup>12</sup> I asked him how it makes him feel when one of his students sells a piece, to which he replied:

Awesome. Oh, because they just beam. Or if one of their pieces gets put in a show. Oh it just elevates them. It’s like any student of any kind, um, of like math or English when their paper is up on the bulletin board or your piece is over here, it’s on the wall. They get a sense of encouragement. It’s great. I think it’s wonderful.<sup>13</sup>

The joy that Robert gets out of helping his clients to achieve their goals was clear to me. It shows that he has a connection and an interest in their success. His experience as a practicing artist and his dedication to helping his clients experience the pride of achievement creates a connection between them.

The employee I found most representative of the importance of art in creating a unique environment was the case manager, Sophia. She worked at other programs for adults with intellectual disabilities, but it wasn’t until she started working at the Studio that she started to practice art. She couldn’t articulate what caused her to begin. I believe it was because she recognized that art is something that bonded everyone else around her, so she started in order to be included. Miliann Kang also understood the importance of participating in shared activities in order to be accepted as part of the group. In her book, *The Managed Hand: Race, Gender and the Body in Beauty Service Work*, the employees of the nail salons she studied bonded over shared meals that were contributed to by the women:

I experienced firsthand the mixed blessings of participating in this shared meal when in one salon the manicurists teased that I needed to stop eating all their food and start cooking something to share with them. After overcoming my initial embarrassment, I was glad to do this and took it as a sign of being welcomed as an insider.<sup>14</sup>

Participating in the common interests and behaviors of a group helps an individual to be included. While no one at the Studio told Sophia she needed to start, she picked up on the importance of being an artist to the environment around her. The positive results of her efforts come through in this excerpt:

I also enjoy doing it because the clients, I don’t know if you noticed, they come in here. So, they know I only do it during break time. They come in and they are like “can we see?” They’ll see me drawing and they are like “you are so good”. If they see something wrong, they tell me how to fix it. They tell me like its “good” and I’m like no you teach me. They get so inspired. Another one would just criticize, he actually liked it too, Mark, you met Mark. Mark does the grids. I started without the grids and one night the teacher told me to do the grids. When he saw it he was like ‘whoa you do like me’. Even before that he would come to my office to see them. I had another client when I was doing the first one he would get inspired by the colors. He asked me how I was doing that. I told him I guess I’m just mixing them. He said I guess I should start doing that.<sup>15</sup>

She tells me this during her lunch break and students are peeking into the office asking her if she is going to be painting today and if they can watch. Sophia’s choice to participate in the shared community activity of art has helped her to bond and com-

municate with the clients and the other employees. Having this commonality helps everyone to engage with each other beyond the primary role of caretaking services.

### Advocates

Mary and Sophia both expressed frustration in navigating the network in order to advocate on behalf of the clients. In spite of this, their commitment to the clients they serve was apparent to me through the stories they shared. They both told me about a situation they had with the same client, Martin, but from their own perspectives, so I merged their accounts for clarity. Martin is someone that lives at home with his mother, and his welfare had been a cause of concern for the employees of the Studio for months. His story and the effort it took to get him help was unsettling to me.

Martin was suffering from rectal bleeding caused by untreated hemorrhoids. He would show up to the Studio with blood leaking through his pants. Mary and the teachers would notice and report it to Sophia. Sophia made multiple calls to his mom to get her explanation and to work with her on correcting the problem. The mother would respond that she was “working on it,” or would make excuses—according to Sophia—about him not practicing good hygiene. When it didn’t improve, Sophia filed an incident report with Regional Center, and they told her that she needs to contact Adult Protective Services. APS told her to go back to Regional Center to request more services. Sophia requested Regional Center provide additional resources such as having someone go to the house and work with Martin on his hygiene. The situation escalated up to the supervisor of the service coordinator. The supervisor responded with an e-mail to Sophia telling her, “they can only provide resources at the client’s request.” And yet, how does a person that can’t communicate advocate for themselves? Unfortunately, this combined lack of autonomy and expectation of personal responsibility is not unique to adults with disabilities; it occurs in other populations in our society as well.

Philippe Bourgois and Jeffrey Shonberg documented this struggle amongst the homeless of Edgewater Boulevard in San Francisco, California in their book *Righteous Dopefiend*. The challenge faced by this group was described as:

The Edgewater homeless were unable to adapt to the economic metamorphosis of the 1970s and 1980s. The structural adjustments caused by globalization were rendered even more disruptive by the historical shift in the U.S. mode of governance away from rehabilitative social service provision toward punitive containment.<sup>16</sup>

The economic and social forces that controlled the lives of the Edgewater homeless were outside of their control. These forces contributed in a significant way to their homelessness and addictions, yet they were punished rather than supported by society. They are expected to take personal responsibility without having the power to create opportunities for self-reliance.

While the population in this book and the one that I studied are different not only in their circumstances, but also in the levels of empathy they receive, there is a parallel in the expectations of self-reliance. They are all adults in need of support but their ability to advocate for themselves is limited either by their disability, in the case of the Studio clients, or their social standing as homeless and/or drug addicts. With four different parts of the network responsible for the well-being of Martin, I would expect an immediate and coordinated effort to assist him. Instead, because

there are four, each can claim that it is not their responsibility, and the accountability is removed. This caused delays and Martin ended up not getting his needs met in a timely manner.

After months of e-mails and phone calls, Sophia was able to convince the service coordinator at Regional Center to provide additional resources to help Martin with hygiene training. When there is physical evidence of an issue and an understanding that Martin cannot articulate what he needs, I wonder why his service coordinator and the supervisor would expect a specific request from him for additional services? A problem that seems clear to me becomes muddled when you see the bureaucracy that surrounds the clients' lives. I believe part of the problem and the solution can be found in how Sophia described her typical experience while working on behalf of her clients:

Again, service coordinators only see them [clients] once a year and they don't get to talk to parents or group home every day or see the clients so I am either the one e-mailing or following-up. Service coordinators don't pick up their phone, so it's me like calling all the time, all the time. But it's ok because I get them to do, not what I need, but what my clients need.<sup>17</sup>

Another client, William, also received inadequate resources. William is a large man, standing around 6' tall with a big build. Sophia described to me the struggle she had trying to get his group to provide him with adequate nutrition. Every day he arrived at the Studio with one peanut butter sandwich that was supposed to sustain him for six hours. She relates his meals to what she needs in order to get through the day, and that creates the conflict for her. "A peanut butter sandwich. That's not a meal for me. I'm tiny, small, and that would not be enough for me. I would need a big meal. A good one."<sup>18</sup> Her frustration is evident when she talks about her inability to monitor the lunches of all forty-four individuals she is responsible for. She recounts her experience of trying to look as meals are distributed but feels like it is impossible for her to monitor everything. She is aware that there is a menu outlining the meals that group homes are required to provide, but she doesn't have access to it so she is unable to verify whether the clients are getting the meal they are supposed to. Also, she is not allowed to tell the group home what to feed him; she can only request that they send "more food."

Another experience that she recounted was of a client in his early twenties that came in one day missing his front four teeth. This concerned her because while it's not abnormal for clients to lose teeth, his age made it unusual. She already had a meeting scheduled with his service coordinator the next day and she asked the coordinator if he knew about the missing teeth. He admitted that he had not seen the client in over a year and had not been informed by the home that there was an issue. Only seeing the clients one time a year puts the service coordinators at a disadvantage when determining the services needed. Again, the clients cannot advocate for themselves and request additional services so they rely on someone that can do this for them—someone that can physically see there is a problem and can communicate with them, to step in on their behalf.

I asked Sophia if there are regular meetings between the service coordinator, the clients' home, and herself in order to coordinate efforts. She said there are not, and I found this odd since they are all responsible for the clients and should be working together to help them. She will only meet with the service coordinator or the home if they schedule it. She is not authorized to schedule meetings or coordinate

efforts. All of Sophia's communication about the clients is done through the progress reports she files. If something comes up outside of that, she is put in the position of having to file incident reports and make phone calls trying to force accountability from the people authorized to help. I look at Sophia and the other Studio employees as the "boots on the ground" for their clients. They are the ones that interact with the clients every day and are, in my opinion, in the best position to advocate for them.

### **Conclusion**

When I finished my final interview and walked out of the office and into the Studio, I noticed a change in the atmosphere. Everything was calm and quiet. The employees were all engaged in different projects and I asked the room "what happened?" They all glanced up, startled by the intrusion to their peace. Mary informed me the clients had left for the day and this is the staff's time to work on projects they can't do when the clients are there. I watched the interactions and behaviors of the group as they went about their business. There was a slight conversation about what happened during the day. They shared antidotes about things the clients said or did. Everyone enjoyed the stories but there was not the exuberance I had witnessed earlier at lunch when they were also engaging with the clients.

By contrasting the behavior of the employees when they were with the clients versus how they were during this quiet hour, the emotional labor the employees perform becomes apparent. While it is emotional labor, I do not think it carries the same negative connotation for these employees that I attached to it coming to this project. Rather than what Hochschild and Kang discovered about the forced emotional labor performed by their subjects as part of the services they perform, my subjects have a connection with their clients through their art and their efforts to see the clients as individuals beyond their disabilities. Between this and the ability to have daily interactions with the clients, the staff become the best available advocates. However, they are also the ones with the least amount of authority.

The Studio staff cannot authorize additional services; this is done by the Service Coordinator who has limited interaction and accountability. They cannot investigate and punish abuse and neglect; this is done by Adult Protective Services who hesitates to get involved because of the complications that come with this population as witnesses. The group home and the family have the most authority, but they have a direct financial motivation as well as private access that can, and unfortunately does, lead to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. I believe that having these different entities, without one independent person or organization that is in regular contact with the clients and directly accountable for the decision-making and advocacy, renders the clients without the best care available.

The employees of the Studio are in the unique position of having daily access, no personal profit motives, and a unique connection to the clients that makes them the most effective advocates. Giving the case manager more authority over coordinating these services and the different groups would help ensure the well-being of the clients and expedite the process of getting them the services they need. The Studio is just one aspect of this network; similar research of the other components would provide a deeper understanding and maybe reveal other problems as well as solutions. But, from what I have come to understand, there first needs to be more accountability and coordination of effort to protect and care for adults with intellectual disabilities.

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# Food Trucks: A Means of Mobility

Olivia Alvarado

There it was. Los Angeles on a plate. Maybe it wasn't everyone's L.A., but it was mine. It was Koreatown to Melrose to Alvarado to Venice to Crenshaw crumpled into one flavor and bundled up like a gift. The elements looked like city blocks. The flavor tasted like the streets. And the look said home.<sup>1</sup>

-Roy Choi

The Korean taco is Chef Roy Choi's claim to fame. This seemingly simple entree is much more than just a tortilla filled with meat. For Choi, this dish represents the city that he calls home. It represents the streets, the buildings, the cars, the people, the food, and the feel of Los Angeles. Every experience Choi had growing up in Los Angeles laid the foundation for this taco. This taco is emblematic of it all, from dark alleyways to bustling city blocks to low-riding to drugs and gambling. The taco tells the story of an immigrant finding his way in the midst of a city struggling to find its own identity. Kogi Korean BBQ food trucks serve this taco on the streets of L.A. to the people who helped inspire its creation. This taco was at the heart of a phenomenon that has swept the city and the nation off its feet. Kogi Korean BBQ revolutionized the food truck industry in Los Angeles and became a vehicle for crossing lines of race, class, and ethnicity in the city that influenced its very existence.

The Korean taco is a symbol of Los Angeles because it is reflective of a city that is constantly being shaped by the mixing and mashing of a wide variety of different races and cultures. The various groups of people who all call L.A. their home contribute to the City's constantly changing nature and blending of traditions, attitudes, and food. Kogi Korean BBQ took the concept of fusion that was already in effect elsewhere in the high-end food industry and applied it to the food served each day. It resonates with the masses because it is not confined to the flavors of one dominant culture. Instead, it attempts to encapsulate the spicy and savory flavors of the city that so many have grown accustomed to.

Kogi and the food truck revolution have been talked about across all media platforms. It's been discussed in business articles, written about in Roy Choi's memoir and cook book, displayed in a *National Geographic* photo gallery, and featured in Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown*. Interviews have been conducted on the topic and entrepreneurs have realized that the food truck industry is a thriving business that is destined to remain a part of Los Angeles' landscape.

## Los Angeles at the Core

Long before the Kogi Korean BBQ trucks roamed the streets of L.A., Choi was an immigrant in the city among many seeking out his version of the American Dream. Influenced by his Korean heritage, Choi had the desire to achieve success even if the avenues he explored to reach it were not all that conventional. In 1970's Los Angeles, there were approximately 240,000 Asians living in the city, comprising only two percent of the population. After the Immigration Act of 1965, which ended the nationality-based quota system, many Koreans began arriving in L.A. Most of these middle class Koreans became merchants, opened up grocery markets, massage parlors, dry cleaning shops, and liquor stores in areas where major chains did not want to be and where other business owners did not want to tread.<sup>2</sup> The Korean im-

migrants, especially drawn to the cheap real estate in the Old Hollywood area, soon took over and transformed the neighborhood into Koreatown.<sup>3</sup> It was here where Choi roamed the streets of the city and took in the cultural diversity of the people and the food surrounding him.

The 1992 Rodney King riots served as a major turning point for Koreatown and its inhabitants. Roughly a quarter of Korean businesses burned to the ground during the riots due to animosity between African Americans and Koreans which forced Koreatown to later rebuild itself. The hostility between the two groups was fueled by cultural differences and a resentment towards the growing Korean merchant community. Surrounding Koreatown at the time were several Hispanic communities including Salvadorian and Guatemalan. After the riots, there was a further bonding of these Korean and Latino neighbors as there was an emerging notion that the ethnic minorities and immigrants should come together to form better relationships amongst all of the racial tension in the city. Because of the growing Hispanic community in the vicinity of Koreatown and its expanding borders, Choi was exposed to the culture's ingredients and flavors that would later help make him famous.

In Anthony Bourdain's "Parts Unknown: Los Angeles" episode, Koreatown and the greater Los Angeles area are both examined to reveal their undeniable influence on Choi and his business. While discussing Korean cuisine with Choi, Bourdain comments that,

Pretty much any Korean you meet anywhere, you can take it for granted they like food, that they're passionate about food, particularly their food. Which of all the immigrant cuisines, has possibly been messed with the least. Unlike many other new arrivals, Koreans seem to have been the most unwilling to accommodate Western tastes.<sup>4</sup>

Bourdain and Choi consider this Korean passion for food and for feeding family and friends alike. The fact that in Bourdain's opinion, Koreans, unlike other immigrants, have not largely assimilated or altered their cuisine to please the palate of Westerners is ironic when analyzing Choi's selection of choices on his menu which contradict this very notion. If one was to examine the menus of the Korean restaurants in the city, she/he would find menus rooted in authentic Korean cuisine that are telling examples of the importance of food and tradition to the Korean-Americans living in Los Angeles. In Nicola Twilley's article about Josh Kun's book and exhibition, "To Live and Dine in L.A.," she touches on Kun's findings that the collection of menus in L.A. not only maps the growth of the city but also ties together eating habits.<sup>5</sup> This relates to how these Korean menus are emblematic of a strong culture and how diverse Los Angeles is with its availability of a wide range of ethnic food.

By adhering to the stereotypes of Korean culture and avoiding deviations from tradition, a typical Korean-American is considered "good." Bourdain argues that Choi however is not a typical Korean-American. He is what Bourdain refers to as a "bad Korean" who "just didn't give a fuck."<sup>6</sup> This bad Korean reputation is one that can be applied to any Korean who does not adhere to certain standards. Choi did not choose the path of doctor, lawyer or engineer that is praised by the Korean community because of the expectation for success and stability. Instead, he became a chef who works against the traditionalist ideal of an unchanging-cuisine that stays true to Korean heritage. Choi has been deviant in the way he has fused traditional Korean dishes like kimchi with those belonging to Hispanic culture.

Before he was introduced to Hispanic flavors, it was the traditional Korean



food that Choi grew up on. In his memoir, Choi reminisces about his house smelling of kimchi and sour soybean paste from his mother's cooking, something he was always perfectly fine with.<sup>7</sup> However, when Choi decided he wanted to be a chef, it was not Korean or Asian food that he wanted to cook. Choi wanted to master traditional French cuisine and distanced himself from what he knew best. In the end, it was his great relationship with Korean food that was half of the puzzle that would result in the birth of Kogi Korean BBQ once completed. After fighting against the urge to be an Asian chef who never cooked Asian food, Choi developed an insane idea with fellow chef Mark Manguera, and the food truck industry would never be the same.<sup>8</sup>

### The Kogi Effect

Kogi Korean BBQ trucks drastically changed the food truck game in the city, creating a ripple effect that has since taken the entire nation by storm. Street vending and street food have a long history in L.A. from tamales being sold from the back of wagons to the fruit vendors cutting fresh mango on street corners. Then there are the *loncheras*, the traditional food trucks that have been slinging tacos around L.A. for over forty years. In the *National Geographic* feature, "How One Korean Taco Truck Launched an \$800 Million Industry," David Brindley claims that, "for decades they've offered cheap eats along roadsides and at construction sites across Southern California. But they were often disparaged as 'roach coaches.'" This "roach coach" image of food trucks has begun to be chipped away ever since Kogi and its 2008 debut. This was caused by the overall changing image of food trucks but is also related to the different audience that the gourmet food trucks appeal to.

The rise of the gourmet food truck has begun to shift the public perception of these traveling restaurants-on-wheels, altering the belief that these food trucks must be inherently unsanitary or something to be avoided. This perception is largely to do with the fact that *loncheras* have historically been owned and operated primarily by the Latino community. It has been the case that when Mexicans do something it may be considered dirty, while it is perfectly acceptable when others decide to adopt the practice. This has been seen in the past with the celebration of "Spanish fantasy" in which elements of Spanish culture were sought after amongst animosity towards actual Mexicans in California. This is reflected in Patricia Nazario's *LA Weekly* article, "The Original Food Trucks" in which Nazario asks a food truck customer if they would eat from a plain white catering truck and they say they would not consider it.<sup>10</sup> Little do they know that the gourmet food truck they were waiting in line for was a plain white catering truck or *lonchera* only a year before, serving the factory and construction workers around Los Angeles. These traditional *loncheras* have begun to transform their image and business because of the success of Kogi Korean BBQ and the rise of gourmet food trucks, giving them the opportunity to "shed the 'roach coach' stereotype--and giving them the freedom to innovate on the food front."<sup>11</sup> By altering their image, they are opening up the opportunity to appeal to a larger clientele base, but arguably by changing the nature of their business, they may alienate the working class customer base that has been their historical source of income. The poorer people who often frequent *loncheras* on a weekly basis are probably not concerned with a truck's clever name or image. Instead, they want good food at a low price, something that most gourmet food trucks cannot accommodate when they are selling food comparable in price to brick and mortar restaurants.

In order to shed previously conceived notions about food trucks in Los Angeles, the importance of image has emerged on to the forefront. Displayed in Gerd

Ludwig's photographs in *National Geographic's* "Food Truck Revolution" gallery, the newfound importance of branding your food truck is reflected in every image. The first photo in the gallery is a composite of sixteen different photographs of a variety of different food trucks in the city.<sup>12</sup> Each one has created a different personality through imagery. The TacoZone truck is covered in silver plates and stickers added by customers while the Komodo truck is painted black with an oversized Komodo dragon painted over the whole side. Underneath the flashy wraps, stickers, logos, and graphics sits a plain white catering truck. Today, as a result of the Kogi effect, they are a gourmet food truck with the ability to serve creative and outlandish concoctions to the people of Los Angeles, at a considerably higher price.<sup>13</sup>

What first separated Kogi BBQ from the other food trucks in Los Angeles was Choi's undeniable innovation. His innovation in his cooking and innovation in his business model has affected many fellow food trucks in the city. Kogi's Korean taco is the fusion of Korean barbeque meat in a Mexican taco, marrying elements of both cultures in its salsa and slaw that top the critically acclaimed dish. Brindley argues that, "Choi unleashed the power of food to cross cultures and race."<sup>14</sup> One of the reasons Choi is so popular today is because he combined elements of two cultures in L.A. that had never widely been mashed together before. His food appeals not only to the Mexicans and Koreans in the city but to individuals who, like Choi, feel that this dish is representative of the mixing of cultures and races in L.A. There are also those people who just like a great taco.

In addition to his interesting melody of ingredients, Choi capitalized on the power of social media to attract customers to the curbside of the roaming Kogi truck. Using Twitter, Choi regularly updated followers on the truck's changing location. This led to *Newsweek* calling it "America's first viral eatery."<sup>15</sup> No longer would Kogi or fellow food trucks be limited to reaching only the neighborhoods or cities they normally frequented. For the first time, you had customers driving out of their way to come to them, to hunt trucks down for a chance to eat a delicious Korean taco or kimchi quesadilla. The truck shifted from a convenient food spot for people passing by and local residents to a coveted experience sought out by foodies across the city. In this way, it goes against the very nature of the *loncheras*. It has become increasingly important for these trucks to build hype around them in order to attract customers willing to stand in lines for hours for a quick and informal bite to eat. This struggle between celebrating a part of authentic Hispanic culture and adapting it to fit the needs and wants of the masses is a conflict within the food truck scene. For the *loncheras* that have been operating in Los Angeles for years, the digital divide could have an impact on their ability to grow their business. If customers are not talking about your food on their social media platforms or sitting idly awaiting a twitter update, then there is no urge for them to go out of their way to eat at your food truck, forcing *loncheras* to continue frequenting their regular routes.



Traditional Lonchera truck awaits the lunch rush.



Sampling of Korean-Latino street taco fusion.

### Latino Influence

Choi may have popularized Latino influence with his fusion of Hispanic and Korean elements but it's a combination that has a rich history and an affluent future. In the National Public Radio(NPR) radio feature, "When Asian and Latin Food Collide: Spicy, Tasty or Confused," Celeste Headlee discusses Korean-Mexican fusion and the fact that the influence of Asian people into Mexico began in the 1560's. After the Spanish conquered Mexico, they began looking for what they called the "Spice Islands" which took them to the Philippines where they found spice. Headlee concludes,

"In Mexico, we have Chinese cafes and Chinese coffee shops and Chinese restaurants galore, and the funny thing is, as you're saying, if you go into a Chinese restaurant, you will find enchiladas along some chop suey.<sup>16</sup>

It therefore only makes sense that these two cultures share more similarities in their food than you may think. For example, in both cultures food is wrapped either in tortillas or wonton paper, it's usually spicy, and there is always an endless supply of dipping sauces and salsas to drench your food in.<sup>17</sup> The combination of these two cuisines seems only natural to occur in a city that is inhabited by such a large population of Koreans and Latinos, especially with such a great availability of restaurants and vendors selling these types of ethnic foods in close proximity to each other.

This resurgence in the adoption of Hispanic culture and the "re-Mexicanization of Los Angeles" is an idea proposed by Eric Avila in the epilogue of his book, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*.<sup>18</sup> Avila discusses the notion that we are witnessing an ethnic transformation of the urban landscape. This concept is illustrated in the fact that the gourmet food trucks of Los Angeles, who are driving the food truck revolution, have adopted the *lonchera* concept vital to the Los Angeles Hispanic community. This adoption of the *lonchera* tradition of Los Angeles Latino culture can be seen as a form of cultural appreciation. People of different races, cultures, and backgrounds are now experiencing an element of Latino culture that has been celebrated in Los Angeles for decades and in Mexico long before that with the plethora of street food offered all over Mexico City.<sup>19</sup>

From a different perspective, the adoption of the *lonchera* tradition into mainstream culture can be viewed as a form of cultural appropriation. Gourmet food trucks have essentially taken the *lonchera* concept and have made it more appealing in order to cater to a more widespread community, and perhaps a community of more middle and upper-class individuals who are looking for creative and innovative food at any cost. However this separation of audiences among *loncheras* still operating

in Los Angeles and the gourmet food trucks may be a positive ramification for the traditional trucks. In terms of the inherent increase in competition that comes from so many new up-and-coming food trucks entering the scene at the same time, the impact on their customer business has been limited. In Casey Prottas' *Along the Line* article, "Loncheras in Boyle Heights: The Influence of the Original Food Truck," USC Professor Sarah Portney explains that the new wave of gourmet food trucks spearheaded by Kogi aren't competing with the traditional *loncheras* of Los Angeles because, "they are catering to two separate groups of people and attract completely different audiences." Portney attributes this to the fact that many *loncheras* are seen in the same locations every day, do not utilize social media as a means of advertisement, and are typically meant to serve the working class, while gourmet food trucks are constantly changing and updating their locations via their social media platforms and are catering to a foodie audience.<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that gourmet food trucks are not authentic in their own right, but they are less of a *lonchera* and more of an adaptation of the concept altogether.

While many food trucks specifically cater to a wealthier and trendy audience, Kogi prides itself on supposedly operating under a different philosophy. Choi claims he did not create Kogi to appeal to a narrow audience of upper class consumers, which may have been the case when he originally launched his first truck but does not necessarily apply today now that he has three trucks operating and four brick and mortar restaurants. When talking to Bourdain, Choi said that Kogi stands for serving all parts of Los Angeles and all kinds of people in Los Angeles, making sure that his trucks travel to "every single corner of the county and the city, not just the trendy areas."<sup>21</sup> Upon further examination of this statement, CSU Long Beach sociology professor compiled a map of every stop made by a Kogi truck in the course of a year, according to Kogi's Twitter feed. His findings show that Kogi trucks' routes tended to avoid South and East L.A.<sup>22</sup> These areas of the City are known for being rougher neighborhoods and would not appeal to the foodie customer base that most gourmet food trucks seek.

It seems that the mission Choi and Kogi first set out on may have been warped when profits yielded higher in areas with a higher income which would also result in the ability to charge more for menu items. The income-based separation of people across the City is the argument in Thom Anderson's documentary, "Los Angeles Plays Itself," that Los Angeles is a city divided between the rich and the poor, the old and the new.<sup>23</sup> Within the street food world, Los Angeles is divided between the old *loncheras* and the new gourmet food trucks like Kogi. Perhaps when Choi said that he wanted to serve people in Los Angeles all over the city, he essentially meant that he would make sure to serve all of the areas in Los Angeles that were inhabited by people who would be able to afford his food. He still has the ability to serve people of different classes and ethnicities, but it may be that he is more focused on the middle and upper classes as opposed to the working class that the *loncheras* seem to appeal to.

Whether or not Kogi travels to all corners of the city, Choi does believe in the cultural traditions that are embedded in the Hispanic *loncheras* of Los Angeles. Eating at a food truck is not just a convenient or trendy spot to pick up a taco. It is about people sharing a meal on the curbside, enjoying time with family, friends, and complete strangers. Kogi stands for what the *loncheras* mean to the Hispanic communities in Los Angeles. I do not think that Choi created the Kogi Korean BBQ food truck to capitalize on a concept from a different culture. I believe he appreciated the

very essence of *loncheras* and wanted to bring that to more of Los Angeles than just the Hispanic community who already knew it so well. Even if this meant bringing the concept to a different audience of people who could afford it.

### Aftermath

The *lonchera* and the gourmet food truck alike are the quintessential means of bringing people together within different communities. At the end of Brindley's article, he comments that, "There's a social nature to lines. Strangers spark conversations."<sup>24</sup> Frequenting a food truck is about sharing a meal and an experience with others outside of your typical circle of friends and family. It is different from a restaurant where everyone is separated by their individual tables and booths. Trucks provide an opportunity to be together sharing a plate of tacos outside, free from obligations and boundaries, with the ability to communicate with a diverse range of people. Food trucks have provided a way for chefs who do not have a lot of money to serve their food to the community without having to open up an expensive brick and mortar restaurant. No matter what type of audience a food truck is trying to appeal to, most owners are hard-working individuals who are trying to run successful businesses in a tough city.

Some critics believe that the ease of operating a food truck in relativity to operating a full-fledged restaurant is not something to celebrate. In Jessica Gelt's *Los Angeles Times* article, "A Wrong Turn for L.A.'s Food Truck Scene," she discusses the criticisms of gourmet food trucks with RoadStoves partner Josh Hiller who said,

The problem came when the other commissaries and truck owners saw money and basically just prostituted the whole culture. So what you ended up with was 15 so-so trucks parked on Mid-Wilshire, the city unhappy, a mediocre food product, and all the truck owners cannibalizing each other's business.<sup>25</sup>

With hundreds of food trucks now roaming the streets of Los Angeles, it is quickly becoming an over-saturated scene. Many food trucks owners are only in the business for the bottom line, and as a way to make a quick buck. Hiller isn't thrilled that the concept of the *loncheras* and by extension a part of Latino culture is not being understood by the mass of mainstream gourmet trucks. I do not believe this is a good argument. Just like any business, there is competition and you do not typically see backlash when two restaurants open up next to each other. There also is not such publicized backlash against an individual if they are white and happen to open up a Mexican restaurant. For example, Del Taco, one of the largest fast-food chains in the country, was founded by two White men. As long as the food is good, it does not matter how or why they got their start.

Hiller is not the only person or group of people who are upset about the growing business of food trucks. Brick and mortar restaurants in Los Angeles and across the United States are feeling the impact of the \$800 million food truck industry. Discussed in Sarah Needleman's *Wall Street Journal* article, "Street Fight: Food Trucks vs. Restaurants," restaurants claim that food trucks are heavily impacting their bottom lines. Restaurant owner Pablo Silva argues that, "We spend a lot of money on advertising and promotions to bring people downtown, and the food trucks benefit from that."<sup>26</sup> It is definitely a newfound source of competition that restaurants do not want to compete with, but in a free-market, the consumer gets to decide where they are going to eat regardless of whether the restaurant owners are happy about it. If it



were up to Choi, gourmet food trucks would not be crowding around restaurants and high traffic areas anyway. Choi encourages food trucks to follow his lead and venture out into the neighborhoods of Los Angeles where restaurants are not as heavily concentrated, to feed the people in the city who are not flocking to downtown areas. This is somewhat hypocritical of Choi who uses social media to entice people to flock to his food trucks all across the city, where they may stand in line for hours for a plate of food.

Owning and operating a food truck is about being with the people day in and day out, feeding the streets of Los Angeles with good food to get them on their way. Choi asks of the food truck community, “If you don’t serve and honor the culture and soul of L.A.’s neighborhoods, what differentiates you from that Marie Callender’s across the street that you are so blatantly fighting against?”<sup>27</sup> Part of owning a food truck is about having the freedom to run a mobile restaurant that is inherently different from mainstream chains like Marie Callender’s, but just because a chef decides to open up a food truck does not mean she/he is fighting against these larger chains or businesses. Everyone has to start somewhere, and for many food truck owners, this concept has given them the ability to start their careers and possibly to own a brick and mortar restaurant in the future. Once everyone gets past the craze surrounding the food truck industry, perhaps then the entrepreneurs will realize the cultural importance of their business and the power they have to bring people together with their street food. By embracing the cultural history of the *loncheras* and of street food around the world, people may just celebrate the ability of the food truck to be a vehicle for bringing people together all across Los Angeles, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Los Angeles has evolved into a city rooted in mobility. From drive-ins to drive-thrus and freeways jammed with cars, L.A. is a city that could not survive without vehicles and constant movement. What better representation of Los Angeles could we have than a mobile restaurant that serves the food of the people that have made the city what it is today? Food trucks provide the opportunity for groups of people to come together in places they do not normally gather, no matter their race, class, or ethnicity, to share a social experience. It does not matter if you are a construction worker taking a quick break from a job site or a hipster foodie traveling across town to try your first Korean taco. Either way you are taking part in the movement of food trucks that represents the archetypal way of bringing strangers together to share something that we all want and need—food.

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*The American Papers*



# Grand Theft Auto: A Vehicle for Public Memory and Prosthetic Identity

Drew Bahna

When *Vice City* is released on Oct. 29, it will freak out millions of parents and sell millions of copies, but it will also force us to realize that video games aren't toys anymore; they're sophisticated, thought-provoking entertainment for grownups. At their best, they're art.<sup>1</sup>

-Lev Grossman (Time Magazine)

Two days before the release of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, Lev Grossman of Time Magazine published an article that explained how the series has “grown up” and will take the world by storm. It is not the violence that is propelling the popularity of the series, he argued, but sophistication and realism (both in graphics and **context** [author emphasis]) that has become the driving force of the game's fan base. From the inception of the series in 1997 to 2015, Grand Theft Auto (GTA) has sold over 220 million copies worldwide, a large portion of which came from the most recent title *GTA: V* (54 million sold); the series is only behind the Mario franchise (which has had a twelve year head start) and the Pokémon franchise.<sup>2</sup> On an economic level alone the game merits scholarly work, but perhaps an unexplored area is the series's ability to provide a glimpse into public memory and identity. This paper argues that the GTA series is capable of and excels at depicting issues of race, identity, and class within the context of the games' timelines (1980-2015) through the creation of public memory. By allowing players to experience a form of “prosthetic identity,”<sup>3</sup> GTA encourages players to empathize with identities and experiences that differ from their own.

GTA offers players the opportunity to create what I call “prosthetic identity” in which players can place themselves into various identities in a given time period which they may not be familiar with and experience these identities in an empathetic way. It is important to note here that empathy, as opposed to sympathy, plays the most significant role when exploring identity in this way. Sympathy implies a shared or similar feeling toward an experience; for example, an older mother may sympathize with the pains a new mother will experience during pregnancy. Empathy, however, allows for a production of knowledge, in which one identifies with someone who has had a different experience than that of the empathizer. This term will become especially important later in the essay.

Ian Bogost, professor of interactive computing at Georgia Institute of Technology, describes a video game as a smaller abstracted version of a complex system that “describes the logic of how things work.”<sup>4</sup> These miniaturized systems consist of three key components, the model, role-playing, and world building.<sup>5</sup> Video games use models to help show human experience and ideas; for example, some show civilizations expand and grow (Sid Myer's *Civilization* series), while others show how aircraft fly, tractors plow, and trains tug freight (found in any “simulator” game). The player performs a role as a character in the game and makes decisions within that role that is constricted by the rules of the model itself. Instead of freeing the player to act at will, the model always constrains the role of the player. Even in so-called “sand-

box” games such as *GTA*, where the player does not need to play the linear story, the player remains constrained within the limits of the model. The consequences of attempting to deviate from the model by just shooting anyone on the street, for instance, constrains the player within the model itself by sending the police to arrest/kill the player character. In *GTA* the player performs as a criminal (the role) subject to the programmed rules of crime and punishment (the model). More than the vehicle in which the game is played, these roles enable the player to empathize with the character by giving him/her the experience of life under the constraints of a model they may not be familiar. *GTA*, for example, allows any player, regardless of identity, to experience the life of crime that an inner city youth may turn to when capitalism and gentrification have left his family in poverty, invoking prosthetic identity in the process.

Video game models and roles exist in artificially created worlds. These worlds can be simple, such as a player’s personal farm in *Farmville* or they can be complex such as in the massive monster-laden world in *Final Fantasy VII*. In *GTA*, the game developers at Rockstar, headed by founders Dan Houser, Terry Donovan, Gary Foreman, Jamie King, and Sam Houser (a group of privileged white males), create a world that mirrors the reality set by the time period of the game. In the case of *Vice City*, for example, the world that is created is meant to immerse the player in the 1980s lifestyle of Miami, Florida. From the array of 1980s vehicles to the clothing that pedestrians wear, the images on screen resemble the streets of Miami beach in the 1980s. To immerse the player’s even deeper the soundtrack of the game is filled with hits from the 1980s as well. Rockstar (*GTA*’s developer) does not stop there; in the newest installment of *GTA*, the game world production team took its world creation to new heights. Several members of the team took field research trips throughout the Los Angeles region and documented with both photo and video footage what they had seen in order to replicate it in their fictional world of Los Santos.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, they consulted with Google Maps to help design the various road networks of the city and sprinkled a diverse demographic of individuals pulled from research done on several years of census data onto those roads.<sup>7</sup> The idea here is to make the game so immersive that the player sometimes forgets what is around them and instead projects themselves into the player-character.

In every game of the series, the player takes on the role of an individual who has turned to crime as a means of upper mobility. In the first game of the series, the player traverses three cities over six different levels: Vice City, San Andreas, and Liberty City (locations that would have games dedicated specifically to them later in the series). Little is known about the character, aside from the fact that they are a small-time car thief looking to move up in the world, (eventually amassing \$1,000,000 allows you to progress into the next city). Though there is not much in terms of character development and story, what the original game in the series sets up is the model, the role, and the world of *GTA* that would be the foundation in its sequels.

Aspects related to player and non-player character interactions from the first game in the series carry over to future games. For example, punching a pedestrian results in that pedestrian punching back, picking a fight, and (likely) becoming your next victim. This violence signals the need for police presence to deal with the consequences of your actions. In the game’s model the police act as a constraining force. Other aspects include gang warfare such as crossing into an enemy’s territory results in them using some sort of excessive force against the player. Several non-violent crimes such as car theft are another aspect that carries over from game to

game and if done in front of witnesses may result in police pursuits, jail time, or even death. Finally, the mission system provides a linear narrative to drive the game from a beginning, middle, and end. As the series and the consoles on which the games were played developed better graphics, game creators placed more emphasis on the roles of playable characters and the world of the game, primarily on the protagonist of the games.

Typically, player-characters change from game to game; however, their characteristics rely on the context of the world to best associate their place in the game itself. In *GTA: Vice City* (2002), the year is 1986 and the player takes the role of Tommy Vercetti, a member of a mafia organization who has just been released from prison after serving 15 years for killing 11 men in Liberty City (New York City). After moving to fictional Vice City (real world Miami), the player encounters a world that greatly resembles films such as *Scarface* and *Goodfellas* where the pedestrians dress in garb of the 1980s and mimic the leisure suits and V-neck styles of *Miami Vice*. Clearly, the game relies on tropes of 1980s Florida; it even includes gang relations and story plots surrounding Hattians and Cubans, with emphasis on drug use and drug dealing. The player-character Tommy is essentially a mafia member seeking to move up in rank via drug trade.

In the following game, *GTA: San Andreas* (2004), the player performs as Carl Johnson (CJ) in the year 1992. CJ, an African American man, has just returned to Los Santos (Los Angeles) after spending some time in Liberty City. Painted by game developers as an individual with a troubled youth, CJ lives in an inner city world where gangs have rooted themselves in the community. Violence is increasing and there are several black on black crimes depicted in the game. CJ himself is often found with his friends known as the Grove Street gang, a group of African-American men who assist CJ in the tasks he has to complete for the corrupt Los Santos police officers and is often depicted wearing their “colors” as a symbol of identity, in this case, black and green. The images portrayed by these characters may seem stereotypical on the surface, but they are also the vehicle for the creation of prosthetic identity because they give the player an opportunity to perform the roles depicted by the games.

For some critics, such depictions of race and crime are damaging to the progression of racial equality. According to media scholar, David J. Leonard these two games depict stereotypical tropes of African Americans and Latinos “*San Andreas*,” he writes, “features an array of Black and Latino men, all with braids, bandanas, and guns. The game allows players to form gangs to rob, commit drive-by shootings, and even rape.”<sup>8</sup> He continues by arguing that the game “does not merely give life to dominant stereotypes but gives a legitimizing voice to hegemonic discourses about race.”<sup>9</sup> On *Vice City*, he complains that Cubans are portrayed as drug dealers and that Latinos are depicted as criminals. “Such stereotypes,” he claims, “do not merely reflect ignorance or the flattening of characters through stock racial ideas but the dominant idea of race, contributing to our commonsense ideas about race, acting as a compass for both daily and institutional relations.”<sup>10</sup>

What Leonard fails to realize about these games is that they are largely based on historical context; although they emphasize poor racial stereotypes, they are also capable of bringing awareness to where these stereotypes come from. Additionally, through the game’s medium, frames of public memory from a time in which race relations were either poor between races, or often where being a specific race becomes synonymous with being a victim of circumstances are easily on display for the gamer.

Finally, Leonard fails to see the value of prosthetic identity, in which video games are capable of allowing a player to empathetically enter a situation in which their identity is not their own. Like many games, GTA enables players to experience life through the eyes of someone of a different race, gender, and ethnicity who, because of historical circumstances, holds different beliefs and values of society and the means toward the “American dream.”

CJ's lifestyle, world, and character development as a youth in what is essentially South Central Los Angeles is actually a mirror of the events that occurred in reality during the period in which the game takes place. *GTA San Andreas* captures events such as the LA Rampart scandal (direct plot devices involve doing dirty work for corrupt police officers in the CRASH division), the rise of rivalry gangs such as the Bloods and Crips, the crack epidemic and most importantly the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. Tommy Vercetti's world is no different when depicting historical context. In Miami, Florida during the late 1970s and 1980s heavy trafficking of cocaine was being distributed by members of the Latino Community.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the game itself depicts a fictional version of Carlos Lehder in the form of the character “Ricardo Diaz.” The two games are not depicting racial stereotypes, as Leonard argues; instead, they are depicting a sign of the times for poverty ridden Latinos in 1980s Miami (Vice City) and African Americans and Latinos in 1990s Los Angeles (Los Santos). By encapsulating a historically specific world, both of these games create a public memory in which players encounter a past removed from their day-to-day experience. Through its immersive use of sights, sounds, and events of the 1980s and 1990s the Grand Theft Auto Series allows individuals to partake in public memory through an interactive medium and create a form of prosthetic identity that competing mediums such as film, art, and performances, for example, may fall short of because they lack the interactivity that places the participant in the role of performer.

The character played in *GTA: IV* can also be broken down in relation to his world. A veteran of an unnamed war in Eastern Europe, Niko Bellic emigrates Liberty City (New York) and immediately experiences the struggle of upward mobility. Niko's primary struggles are centered on a financial dilemma in which his cousin has placed them both. Niko moves to Liberty City in 2008 where his cousin Roman has been living for the past few years. This reflects the reality of immigration in the United States during the early 2000s in which the country received the highest amount of immigrants during that decade since the early 1900s.<sup>12</sup> Roman has made little in terms of financial advancement since his move to Liberty City, and as a result is only able to put Niko up in a very shabby apartment on the wrong side of town. It is later found out that in the process of immigrating and trying to start a new life, Roman sought out a large loan to make ends meet from a loan shark (a very real and often times unfortunate reality for some immigrants). CJ in *San Andreas* similarly longs for upward mobility. Like Niko, CJ lives in a poverty-stricken area and attempts to escape gang life.

The newest game in the series *GTA: V* does an exceptional job at exploring three levels of class dynamics. Throughout the game, players assume the roles of the affluent former bank robber Michael Townley, the upper lower class former repo man Franklin Clinton, and the lower-class hick turned drug dealer Trevor Phillips. Each of these characters lives in the Los Santos/San Andreas area of GTA's world and each possesses the physical markings of class status. Michael (a white male) lives in the hills of Los Angeles in a home that boasts a large two-car garage, tennis court, and three bedrooms, and in his driveway is a more affluent looking vehicle similar

to a BMW. Franklin (an African American male) lives in a single-story, three-room bungalow that was left to his aunt by his grandmother; the home is surrounded by a chain link fence and is decorated in a retro design. Finally, Trevor (a white male) lives near Sandy Shores, an area out in the country in his mobile home that contains a living area, a small bedroom, and the small restroom. For Franklin, one of the biggest draws toward a life of crime is to find a way out of his lower class situation and move toward that American dream of upward mobility through financial security. Playing as these three exceptionally different characters allows players to experience empathy for and identification with the struggles of people in similar situations.

Throughout the series, GTA introduces players to several different kinds of main protagonists. Though none of the games allow players to customize their characters according to their desires, which actually preserves the public memory found in the games, the game does offer customizable attire and haircut styles. These customizable options may allow scholars to identify how some groups of players interpret race and stereotypes and even personal identity.

Several of the game's mechanics enable player immersion by empowering players to make choices that reflect their player identities while still experiencing life as the character. In GTA, music plays a central role in connecting the player's identity to the game by triggering the public memory presented within the game. As Simon Firth wrote in his essay "Music and Identity," music helps in the formation of one's mobile and imagined self i.e., the status of one among his social group and how one perceives themselves respectively.<sup>13</sup> The *GTA* series as a whole places an enormous emphasis on the importance of its soundtrack for the purposes of immersion. Any time the player is in a vehicle (or sometimes in cut scenes) the game mimics radio stations that include everything from the genre, deejay banter, and commercials mixed in with music either from the era or specifically composed for the game itself. So if the player identifies themselves with popular music, and popular culture, perhaps their radio station of choice for *Vice City* is Flash FM, which features artists such as Hall & Oates, Michael Jackson, The Outfield, and The Buggles, while someone who may identify more with Rock or Metal may listen to V-Rock, which features artists such as Twisted Sister, Ozzy Osbourne, Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. The various stations to choose from are just one example of GTA's developers giving players the ability to be themselves while engaging with the life of another. The significance here is the fact that choice of music allows the player to decide just how much immersion and how much loss of self they experience in the game. Juxtaposing this idea with film and television, directors dictate what the viewer should feel, however in a video game, the player dictates the terms and the level of immersion through music.

Players of GTA will experience the immersion through music in varying ways. While playing *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* on the *Playstation 2*, Kyle, a 28-year-old Caucasian, was quite vocal about the music and his choices. During gameplay, Kyle would often gravitate to the fictional radio stations *Flash FM* and *Emotion 98.3*, which play pop and power ballads respectively. Because of the setting of *Vice City* these radio stations play 1980s music which includes artists such as Michael Jackson, Hall & Oates, Laura Branigan, INXS, The Outfield, REO Speedwagon, Toto, Luther Vandross, and other pop music stars of the time. While driving through Vice City Kyle was casually singing along with the music on his favored radio stations and on more than one occasion would park his vehicle in front of mission markers to finish a song before beginning or ending a specific objective. Michael A., a 26-year-old



Middle Eastern, who chose to play *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, showed similar affinity toward a select few fictional radio stations, he primarily fixated on the *Radio Los Santos* station which predominantly plays West Coast hip hop music. Some of the artists featured on the radio station include 2Pac, Dr. Dre, Too \$hort, N.W.A, Ice Cube, Cypress Hill, and Kid Frost. He too was quick to bob his head to the music as he drove along the racially segregated streets of fictional Los Santos while singing along with the music.

Both Kyle and Michael A. remarked on the music from the game, Michael A. stating, "This brought me back, I grew up in Los Angeles, and this is all I listened to growing up, it is what I identified with the most, and it's why I always switch to these stations. Life was hard for me growing up." He continues, "I didn't have the same issues that CJ did in the game with drugs and police involvement, but I did have gangs living on the corner and lived in pretty shi\*\*y conditions, so it was easy to relate to this kind of music." Similarly, Kyle also reflected on the past stating that "It reminds me of growing up with my parents; my dad was a big fan of pop music and owed every MJ [*sic*] (Michael Jackson) album. He even used to take me to concerts from all these bands who had revival tours." Kyle also adds, "It just kind of makes me happy to listen to this stuff because it's nostalgic, it's not really that mainstream anymore for someone my age to pop in some REO Speedwagon, I'm sure I'd get weird looks, but man this is good stuff."

Both of these examples exhibit the power that music has when combined with the linear story of the game. Collectively music and the story create moments where the players themselves were mentally, aurally, and in some cases visually transported through their immersion and into the public memory of the events in America's history replicated in the game. However, the power of the music's immersion does not just lie within the ability to recall public memory and events that happened surrounding the release of these songs. According to Carla Kaplan, professor of American Literature at Northeastern University, music shapes our identity in our early stages of life. "Personal identity," she writes, "conventionally arbitrates taste and lifestyle."<sup>14</sup> What one person may listen to may dictate their outward and social identity. For example, a person who listens to rap and hip-hop music may dress and carry himself or herself in a style similar to that of the artist themselves, typically looser kind of clothing, brand name shoes, and possibly chains. At the same time, their mode of inflection or vernacular may carry a certain swagger or prose as Michael A. frequently does. While music often shapes our identities, the kinds of music that we listen to may not always be displayed for the rest of the world to know. As Kyle mentions in passing, the music he enjoyed from his childhood is no longer mainstream.

Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey, a gender, race and identity scholar and professor of human and organizational development at Fielding Graduate University respectively, argue that within the mesosphere of identity, that is, where communities to which an individual belongs such as work, school, and the street, make perceptions and judgements of individuals based on the physical appearances, values, interests, and culture.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, someone like Kyle who may enjoy REO Speedwagon may hide his interests and part of his/her identity so not to be ostracized by individuals within his mesosphere. Kirk and Okazawa-Rey also argue that individuals alter their identities depending on their social location. "Because social location is where all the aspects of one's identity meet," they argue, "our experience of our own complex identities is sometimes contradictory, conflictual, and paradoxical." They continue, "We live with multiple identities that can be both enriching and contradic-

tory and that push us to confront questions of loyalty to individuals and groups.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, one may assume that the game’s soundtrack becomes an outlet for some players to embrace their personal identities within their own privacy without fear of displacing their social identity in any given social location.

While playing *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* on the PC and allowing me to observe via an online stream, Patrick, a 28-year-old Caucasian, chose to dress CJ in clothing purchased from the fictional stores *Binco*, *SubUrban*, and *ProLaps*. These stores typically offer some of the least expensive clothing options and more often than not reflect the stereotypical style of a “gangster.” The styles offered at these stores include tank tops, hoodies, track pants, long shorts, sagging pants, and high top shoes. Though there are other stores such as *Victim* and *Didier Sachs* that offer higher end formal and semi-formal clothing at a more premium price, Patrick never chose to customize his character in clothes purchased from these stores, despite his large sum of in-game money. When asked why, Patrick responded, “I live in Idaho, I think my whole life I’ve met like 5-6 black people. I just wanted CJ to look like what I think a black guy from the streets would look like. Like 50 Cent or like Usher or something, cool but still come off hard. I can’t have him represent his gang in some suit like some pu\*\*y.” His response which is clearly gendered offers insight into his interpretations on performing black masculinity through the character of CJ.

Stereotypes of the African American thug play a part in Patrick’s reasoning as he identifies black males in urban communities as this gangster type identity, and associates a more formal representation of an African American as lacking in masculinity. This supports the claims that Leonard makes in his article regarding the reinforcement of racial stereotypes to a degree. However, the remarks made by Patrick are more telling of popular culture as a source of stereotype than what the video game specifically reinforces. Patrick’s choices for choosing the thug-like persona are derivative of the images he finds in rap and R&B music videos, not that of the default character CJ in the game. The options for placing CJ in a more respectable suit or higher fashion is available but Patrick chooses to keep the persona best stereotyped by the images of African American men depicted in the popular culture Patrick is most familiar with, in this case, music icons. Though the game allows—not forces—Patrick to indulge in stereotyping, it also allows him to place those stereotypes in a concrete historical context in which CJ must play the role of a manly thug and represent his identity accordingly if he desires to survive.

Kirk and Okazawa-Rey associate this type of interpretation of identity as that of the macrosphere, where “Classifying and labeling human beings, often according to real or assumed physical, biological, or genetic differences, is a way to distinguish who is included and who is excluded from a group, to ascribe particular characteristics, to prescribe social roles, and to assign status, power, and privilege.”<sup>17</sup> In Patrick’s interpretation of his African American persona, the character of CJ prescribes to a particular social role of a thug and must represent this identity and role through his clothing choices.

While some players like Patrick may try to incorporate stereotypes into their characters to make them more realistic from their vantage point, other players like Michael S., a 27-year-old Filipino, choose to use the clothing customization to represent their own personal style. Like *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *Grand Theft Auto IV* also offers the customization of clothing from various stores and while playing on the XBOX, Michael S. chose to represent himself. “I like picking out clothes for Nico that I know I would wear, denim jeans with a crisp shirt and a suit jacket. I

guess I do it to relate more to the guy. My family comes from a different country like he does but I was born here, so I can't really relate to him like that, but I can relate to him when it comes down to clothes." Michael S. chooses to portray Nico as close to his own personal identity and image as possible while playing. This once again mirrors the same way music gives direct player control in the amount of immersion they want from the game, These two examples show reflections in representation of identity, one on a personal level based on the mesosphere and social identity in the case of Michael, while the other on stereotypes of race, and masculine identity through Patrick's choices.

As Patrick plays as CJ, he is empathizing the experience of what it may have been like for a young African American male living in 1990s Los Angeles among the scandals of the Los Angeles police department's gang unit. During his gameplay, Patrick discusses his thoughts on what it is like to play as an African American protagonist. "It's different, there are a ton of games with white dudes as leads but not many show a black guy as the main character." He continues, "The shi\*\*y thing is, I know Rockstar tends to try and put real history type stuff into their games so if they're basing this story on some black guy who had to do things for a bunch of dirty cops just to keep his brother out of jail that just blows." Despite being unaware of the Rampart scandal, Patrick's prosthetic identity through the video game is allowing him to experience a very real public memory of several African American youths in the late 1990s when officers of the LAPD were planting false evidence, framing black men, committing heinous crimes, and forming pacts to cover up any evidence of their wrongdoings.

When playing the story driven plots from predetermined save states, the participants were introduced to some of the most controversial aspects of the series each reacting in different ways but exhibiting the empathy garnered through prosthetic identity. For example, *Grand Theft Auto V*, the newest installment of the series offers a quest named "By the Book" in which players are ordered by the FBI, which play an antagonist style role in the game by forcing the player to do things they otherwise may not do in reality, to torture an NPC (Non-playable character) for information. During the scene, the player takes on the role of Trevor, one of the three protagonists of the game. Trevor's comedic demeanor, however, derails the satirical purpose of the scene which was meant to be critical of the use of torture by government organizations to retrieve information. When the mission was played by the group of four individuals, their pleasurable behavior quickly vanished. Both Michael A. and Patrick were visually disgusted by the scene, commenting that, "this is fu\*ked up" and "I hate this part." Michael S. Continued to play the game and showed his signs of discomfort by "button mashing" the scenes, attempting to speed along the process. When asked afterward what he thought, he stated, "I get what Rockstar was doing here, but I still don't like having to do this to move on in the game. It's like I'm being forced to do it." Though unbeknownst to Michael this seems like a nod to the control placed by the model and programming of the game. Finally Kyle, who I later found out had a grandfather who was a P.O.W outright dropped the controller and refused to continue playing.

What these reactions tell us about the player is that despite being a game that involves extreme vices, murder, drugs, crime, prostitution, and sex, there are limits to the type of realistic portrayals of a seedy life in the underbelly of crime that an individual will recreate through gameplay. Additionally, we can see multiple facets of prosthetic identity being played out here as all four of the players were introduced



to situations they were not familiar with. Though the game is attempting a satirical point about the damages of torture, it is placing these four players in positions of power. This particular prosthetic identity comes into struggle with the player's own as they attempt to either find ways of bypassing the scene, speeding it along, or outright refusing its play through. When at its most cinematic in the game, prosthetic identity begins to break down. Though the model is forcing the player through the scenario, questioning the mechanics of the mission or refusing to continue with it offers insight on the values and morals that shape the identity of these players and their limit on just how far they are willing to subject themselves to this particular identity.

Rather than a vehicle for stereotypes, *GTA* is a vehicle for the production of knowledge that enables players to forge a connection with the past as well as with identities and the labels society places on individuals. In forging this connection, players experience a public memory of real historical events of the American urban crisis in the 1980s and 90s, from the perspective of participants. The series addresses historical context in the form of public memory by allowing players whether they are aware or not—to experience through empathetic approaches of role play (the storylines of characters) some of America's darkest moments in terms of race relations, drugs, and criminal activity. Through its use of prosthetic identity, *GTA* and video games in general allow for the interactivity and immersion of these stereotype roles in ways other popular culture cannot replicate. The fact that one is capable of placing themselves in the shoes of a different race, class, or even gender and capable of immersing themselves in the culture of said identity through this prosthetic medium allows for a production of knowledge that may bring awareness to social injustices played out by the stereotypes that are initially being reinforced. It is important to note that the interactivity and immersion of playing a video game, in this case *GTA*, allows for a player to merge his/her identity with another person. By allowing the player to remain themselves through their choices in music and clothing for instance while playing as someone else, the game creates a unique form of memory that in my opinion resonates with the individual on a deeper level than other forms of public memory may offer.

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# Playing by the Numbers: Sabermetrics and Understanding in American Baseball

Judson Barber

## Introduction: Power in America's Pastime

When you think about the word *power* in the context of baseball, the first few things to come to mind are probably hitters: Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Ted Williams, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Fox, maybe even Barry Bonds and Mark McGwire depending on how you feel about the legitimacy of their achievements. If you're a statistics person, you're probably triggered to consider things like SLG, OPS, ISO, 2B, 3B, HR, and RBI when thinking about power. If you want to determine a hitter's power, you might think to calculate,  $(H + 2B + [3B \times 2] + [HR \times 3]) \div PA$ . I'd like to consider a different kind of power though, one not so easily quantified as offensive output: political power in baseball (and no, not U.S. Presidents throwing out the first pitch at the World Series with hilarious ineptitude—though that almost certainly does warrant its own consideration), but something slightly more theoretical. I'm interested in who has *control* on a baseball team. A type of control/power that, as one French philosopher puts it, "operates on the field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects is able to inscribe itself," working as a set of actions upon possible actions. This kind of power, as Michel Foucault says, "incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; [it is] a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action."<sup>1</sup> How has that kind of power, the control over in-game decisions, moved throughout the hierarchy of baseball clubs in recent history?

It's been common practice throughout the history of baseball for game decisions to be the duty of the manager. The manager (often affectionately referred to as the Skipper) is in the dugout with the players during games, and unlike coaches in other North American sports, wears a team jersey (thereby situating him more among the players than the ranks of upper-management in suits). It's his call to determine, among other things, who bats, who pitches, and whether players bunt, steal, pitch around a batter, and how they're positioned defensively. It's common practice for managers, and player-managers in the past, to be former players themselves with not only a good understanding of game strategy, but good 'baseball instincts' cultivated from decades in and around the game. This sort of experiential knowledge can, in the minds of many baseball purists, only be attained from playing the game and developing a keen eye for situational decision making. Many managers in Major League Baseball (MLB) today are still former players, however, it would appear their status as the chief body for making game decisions has become more and more symbolic in its role. As statistics analysts in the sport have become more and more prominent since the 1980s, the instincts of the manager have become beholden to the facts statisticians produce and the probabilities they endorse. As that happens, and *teams are built* rather than players simply acquired, control of the game has shifted away from players and former players to those with an understanding of the mathematics and probabilities of a game with few possible outcomes. The lived experience in the sport has become devalued as new understandings, like sabermetrics, come to

dominate baseball strategy. In that same way, agency is being removed from players and coaches, who previously had abundant free will, as number-crunchers and calculator savants vie to achieve the most productive of determined outcomes.

This paper is about the way the game has transformed in the 21st century, both visibly and otherwise, as well as how American culture has responded to and interpreted those changes. It will examine the ways the game has been reinvigorated and subtly transformed over the past 25 years by those few brave individuals who sought to leave their mark upon it. Grounded in an understanding modern of baseball economics as fundamentally “unfair,”<sup>2</sup> I hope to explore the ways in which the sport, and those who play it, have struggled to compete and remain relevant in the face of adversity in American culture. However, this is not meant to be an exhaustive look at any of the aforementioned. My focus instead is limited to the profound and sweeping influence of advanced statistical analysis on baseball, how that influence has thus been represented in popular culture, and how its impact has shaped the public image of baseball at large.

### **Part I: New Approaches to an Old Game: Sabermetrics, Bias, and Baseball in the 21st Century**

A few people have tried to “reinvent” baseball over the past 150 years in America. By and large, the majority of these attempts were unsuccessful. The structure and aesthetics of the game as its played today are still largely reminiscent of traditions and rules from the late 19th century. For the sake of brevity I will assume some familiarity with the basics of the game, such as the field of play, rules, equipment, and other facets that won't be essential to the understanding I attempt to articulate in the forthcoming pages. What is important to understand is that above all, modern baseball is deeply rooted in tradition. As with anything, that tradition can often be a hindrance to progress. There are many who have believed, at different periods throughout history, that there is ‘a certain way’ to play the game. At times, that has justified everything from the exclusion of blacks and other minorities from playing in the Major Leagues, to matters of humility and sportsmanship among players when playing the game. At the present, an ongoing debate has raged through dugouts, clubhouses, front offices, and, perhaps most furiously, online blogs and baseball press: *What wins a baseball game, head or heart?*

The 1990s proved to be a confusing decade for the sport. It began with promise as the Oakland A's returned to the World Series for the third consecutive year (though losing to the Cincinnati Reds), young talent was plentiful, salaries soared after the boom of 1980s, several new state-of-the-art stadiums were under construction, and game attendance was reaching historic highs. But after 4 seasons of optimism, the future of the national pastime became abruptly uncertain during the 1994 season. Amid a contentious debate between the MLB Players Association and club owners over the necessity of salary caps for player contracts, and with the existing collective bargaining agreement set to expire at the end of the year, the players walked off the field on August 11 and didn't return to work for 232 days—the longest such stoppage in the history of North American professional sports.<sup>3</sup> For the first time in 90 years, the MLB playoffs, including the World Series, were cancelled. When the also-truncated 1995 MLB season began, fans emphatically voiced their displeasure. Blame was directed at both sides, and the league suffered tremendously as a whole. Average ballpark attendance plummeted league-wide nearly 20% during the 1995 season and took nearly a decade to recover to its pre-strike levels.<sup>4</sup> Toward

the end of the decade, as the bitterness of fans gradually subsided, the game, and interest in it, was re-energized by a new generation of players who managed to bring spectacle to the game on a scale it had never seen before. In 1997, special attention was paid to two players; Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr. and St. Louis's Mark McGwire, who seemed to be on track to accomplish the unlikely, if not impossible.

The home run record set by Roger Maris in 1961, who clubbed a remarkable 61 that season and broke the record set by Babe Ruth in 1927, was in danger of being surpassed. When the 1997 season ended with Griffey Jr. and McGwire each finishing 56 and 58 home runs respectively, the interest of fans was officially piqued. The following season, the quest to break Maris's record, and the race to see who would do it first, captivated baseball fans throughout the nation.<sup>5</sup> By mid-season the home run race was down to McGwire and Sammy Sosa, and despite stirrings about the use of androstenedione in clubhouses (though it was not a banned substance at the time), the race to eclipse 61 had reinvigorated interest in the sport. At the end of the season, Sosa would belt 66 home runs in total, and McGwire an astonishing 70. Thus, a confusing era of the game began. Interest in the sport was as high as ever, but concerns swirled about the widespread use of performance enhancing drugs throughout the league—by its biggest and most prominent stars in particular. The home run, and the steroid era that fueled its popularity, became a central part of baseball in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Team's offenses were built around big hitters ("sluggers") and the salaries they commanded broke records and defied logic. Of the 50 most lucrative contracts of all time in Major League Baseball (#50 being a 7 year/\$110,000,000 deal between Dustin Pedroia and the Boston Red Sox), none were initiated before the steroid era, and only 13 (26%) of those contracts have gone to pitchers (tasked with striking out those fearsome sluggers). This amazing ballooning of player salaries is largely bolstered by the then-record 10 year/\$252,000,000 contract signed by Alex Rodriguez in 2001 (who would later admit to using performance enhancing drugs in his career). To put that in perspective, Rodriguez's annual salary in 2002 of \$22,000,000 was more than 55% of the opening day payroll of the entire Oakland Athletics that same year, who managed to put together an entire team for \$39,679,746.<sup>6</sup> In a climate like that, how were small market clubs like Oakland expected to compete when they had no chance of acquiring the sport's most talented young players?

The answer was found in the often-underutilized approaches of sabermetrics. Though the use of statistics to evaluate player performance has been a part of baseball since its earliest days, sabermetrics—distinguished as, "the use of statistical methods to analyze player performance and game strategy,"<sup>7</sup>—came into vogue in the late 1970s and 1980s with annual publications of Bill James's *Baseball Abstracts*. Sabermetrics, a term coined by Bill James for the statistical analysis of baseball performance and a reference to the Society for American Baseball Research (or SABR for short), had been used by a select few within professional baseball who bought into the research of James in the late 20th century. But in 2003, when Michael Lewis's book *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* (the story of the 2002 Oakland Athletics attempt to put together a winning team on a shoestring budget with a heavy reliance on James's sabermetric principles) hit shelves, the use of sabermetrics spread like wildfire throughout front offices of Major League Baseball.<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Baumer, a professor in statistical and data sciences and former sabermetrician, and Andrew Zimbalist, professor of economics, write in their co-authored book *The Sabermetric Revolution*, "the impact that *Moneyball* has had on the baseball industry is

seismic and undeniable. The book has been massively influential within front offices from coast to coast, and has been an important catalyst for the explosion of data and analytics currently roiling the larger sports world.<sup>9</sup> The moneyball approach to baseball that worked so well for Oakland in particular, defined by Baumer and Zimbalist as, “the application of sabermetrics with the goal of identifying player skills and players that the market undervalues,”<sup>10</sup> worked to change the way the game is played professionally. This was, in many ways, a direct response to the big sluggers and home runs that rich ball clubs had come to rely on for wins.

The moneyball strategy requires offense to be generated differently than what had become tradition by the early 2000s. It comes down to a fundamental distinction between looking for players as individuals, and looking to build a team. It’s a more holistic approach to the game of baseball and to creating offense within that game. The key difference here is the objective: to buy wins, instead of players. With moneyball, it’s out of necessity that teams spend as little money as possible to generate the offense, and ultimately wins, required to compete. In short, moneyball seeks to efficiently exploit offensive statistics that the market undervalues (the most notable and obvious example being an emphasis on targeting a player’s OBP—on-base percentage—instead of their batting average—AVG) to build a team that can generate the necessary production to win games based on statistical probability. Traditionally, the strategy of baseball clubs had been to rely on hitters—players with good batting and slugging (SLG) percentages, virtually disregarding the value of the walk (BB) and hit-by-pitch (HBP) as offensive generators. At different times throughout history, the value of the home run also became inflated because of the spectacle it generated rather than its actual offensive impact. At these times, big hitters like Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle, Carl Yastrzemski, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Ken Griffey Jr., Jason Giambi, Mark McGwire, Alex Rodriguez, and Barry Bonds—categorical “sluggers”—would drive in the majority of runs and produce offense for their teams with their big, and often timely, hits. During those times, usually (though perhaps not coincidentally) when baseball interest has been highest, every club that hoped to compete required at least one of these hitters. On a moneyball team, there could effectively be none, and the team would still produce the necessary and sufficient offense.

On defense, sabermetric approaches have become even more apparent, and their impact can be seen in the game more every day. What has become colloquially known as “the shift” has pervaded defensive alignments in baseball over the past decade, but most notably since 2011. The shift changes the traditional alignment of defensive players on the field, moving them into positions where managers, GMs, and sabermetricians think the opposing batter is likely to place the ball. They analyze “spray charts” which map the ball placement of any given batter over a selected timespan, project the likely outcome, and position their defense accordingly, tailoring their arrangements to specific players. Though it’s not a new strategy, irregularly used in baseball as far back as 1877, it’s become almost commonplace in today’s MLB. “The number of shifts has nearly doubled every year since 2011, from 2,357 to 13,298 last year, according to Baseball Info Solutions. And there has been another spike this season, to 10,262 by the All-Star break,” writes LA Times reporter Zach Helfand.<sup>11</sup> This stat-reliant defensive strategy has paid its dividends too, as more runs are being saved by teams across the league as defensive shifts are more widely implemented. In 2014, John Dewan of the site *Bill James Online* estimated the shift saved 195 runs across the league from the 13,296 defensive shifts that were made.<sup>12</sup>



What impact this might have on excitement levels baseball generates is yet to be seen, though in the context of an entire season, across 30 teams, the result is relatively menial (19,761 total runs were still scored in the 2014 MLB season).

Sabermetrics and the strategies it endorses, like defensive shifting, have had the striking accomplishment of equalizing Major League Baseball. Though league-wide profit sharing has also played a tremendous role in leveling the playing field for small-market teams, the wider use of sabermetrics has allowed teams with comparatively small budgets to compete throughout the regular season and into the playoffs. Sabermetrics has arguably also made the game more egalitarian, evaluating players based solely on their numbers and cutting through biases and perceived flaws such as age, athleticism, race, or character. One might imagine there is less excitement in the sport, given the transition away from the bombastic spectacle that the 1998 home run race generated, somehow dulling today's game or making it more boring to watch and possibly driving fans away as other, more popular and more violent sports, vie for their attention. With the NFL's popularity in the U.S. near an all-time high, this prediction is understandable, "but baseball has only grown in popularity over the years," and the prevalence of statistical analytics along with it—within and outside the sport.<sup>13</sup> Today, stat analysis is paramount to winning in baseball. However, I don't think were in any immediate danger of seeing the scorecard become a regular fixture in the hands of fans at ballparks in the near future, nor sabermetricians sitting in the stands with their calculators frantically trying to generate Win Probability Added (WPA) as the game progresses in front of them.

## **Part II: "The Human Record Versus the Human Heart": Making Meaning of Baseball and Statistics<sup>14</sup>**

No matter the institution, a new guard coming in is seldom welcomed with open arms. This is in part because to do so would be to accept one's own passing, mortality, and obsolescence. In baseball, there is no exception. Ever since the publication of Michael Lewis's *Moneyball*, and even more so since that book was adapted into a feature film starring Brad Pitt and Jonah Hill (among others), there has been much debate over the legitimacy of high level statistical analysis replacing traditional methods of scouting in Major League Baseball. Detractors of the new approach, situated both within baseball organizations and outside, make claims that range from 'ruining the game' or 'not doing enough,' to simply 'missing the point,' as they try to debunk the real world value of sabermetrics and its claim to becoming the new dominant wisdom in the sport. Proponents stick to the scripts of 'numbers don't lie' and the triumph of reason over feeling, now with ample evidence to support their claims with the success of the 2004 Red Sox, the almost-perennial Tampa Bay Rays, and most recently the Kansas City Royals. Throughout the blogosphere however, the debate still rages over the meaning of this transition, and what its implications are for the future. Headlines like, "The 'Moneyball' Effect: Are Sabermetrics Good for Sports?", "Are Sabermetrics stat gurus destroying Major League Baseball?", and "What Have The Numbers Done To America's Pastime?" abound, though the conversations contained within these pieces rarely reaches any sort of definitive answer or provides a deeper or more nuanced understanding of sabermetrics or what it seeks to accomplish. The story of sabermetrics has been an uneven and wavering narrative. A line has been drawn and sides have been taken. Gradually, however, those sides are becoming less and less balanced, in favor of sabermetrics.

"The randomness and unpredictability of sports is one of the biggest reasons

I watch, and the more you throw yourself into advanced metrics, the more that goes away,” writes Sports Roundtable contributor Jake Simpson of *The Atlantic*.<sup>15</sup> Simpson’s opinion of sabermetrics falls within a range of moderates who decry the phenomenon because it not only demystifies the game, but can at times be incorrect (as can instinct, in fairness). A more staunchly opposed voice can be found in Chicago White Sox play-by-play commentator Hawk Harrelson, who has notoriously called sabermetrics “overrated” as it doesn’t account for what he calls TWTW (the will to win, cheekily acronymed by Harrelson).<sup>16</sup> Harrelson has been one of the most outspoken critics of sabermetrics since its wider implementation, and a voice that its detractors have been able to rally behind. The argument presented by Harrelson and others is that sabermetrics have yet to determine ways of quantifying certain “intangibles” deemed valuable in baseball players—qualities like leadership, clubhouse chemistry, grit, and Harrelson’s beloved TWTW. There has been a very distinct (and perhaps tired) refrain from Harrelson and those that rally behind him that sabermetrics “isn’t there yet,” as a resource to turn to for making decisions in baseball.<sup>17</sup>

On the other side of the debate, sports writers and fans of the game continue to portray sabermetrics as not only worthy of consideration, but altogether undeniable. Another contributor to *The Atlantic*, Patrick Hruby, writes, “Have I converted to the church of Sabremetrics? Conversion isn’t necessary. Numbers don’t negate stories. Numbers are stories, a narrative way to process and describe reality.”<sup>18</sup> Hruby continues to say, “The danger, I think, comes when we forget that numbers are simply stories—when we convince ourselves that they’re something more. Something akin to Gospel. . . . [Statistics and stories] are much better at dissecting the past than predicting the future.”<sup>19</sup> This nuanced understanding of sabermetrics opens a door unto the world where the statistics-stories Hruby talks about are used to evaluate probabilities and future outcomes based on patterns, and is where the divergence of opinion becomes most pronounced—where factions believe player performance in the past can/can’t be effectively analyzed to produce a desired outcome in the future. In some cases out of desperation, in other’s because of a “why not try it?” attitude, sabermetrics has had many adopters in the Major Leagues. The perpetually disadvantaged and seemingly cursed have been able to find success in the new school of thought, which continues to fan the flames of the debate in pop culture. Though some seem to think sabermetrics has maxed out its potential,<sup>20</sup> there has been a growing acceptance and implementation of statistics-based strategies. Many breathed sighs of relief as the Philadelphia Phillies announced this offseason that the organization would *finally* embrace sabermetrics in their decision-making. “Honestly, it’s about time the franchise put something like this together. Every single major-league team has an in-house analytics system at this point,” writes Yahoo! Sports columnist Chris Cwik.<sup>21</sup> After a decade of back-and-forth in public opinion over the validity of sabermetrics, the new school of thought is widely accepted as an integral part of playing—and more importantly winning—the game in the 21st century. Even if sabermetrics are utilized in moderation, and clubs strike a balance between analytics and traditional scouting and instinct, it’s a part of the game the public, by and large, understands can no longer be ignored.

In the first decade of the 21st century the skepticism was much more pronounced. But after the story of Billy Beane’s 2002 Oakland Athletics had its deep cultural impact with the 2011 film adaptation of *Moneyball*, the tables of public opinion began to turn. In many ways, the film acted as a propaganda piece for sabermetrics, by spinning it into a romantic and inspiring narrative of underdogs taking



on the antiquated and unjust establishment. It helps that *Moneyball* was well received both critically and commercially, as director Bennett Miller's flawless style and Aaron Sorkin & Steve Zaillian's quick, witty, and fierce screenplay ushered the movie to 6 Academy Award nominations (including Best Picture, Actor, and Supporting Actor), a 94% score on the popular (though often mischaracterized and overvalued) review aggregator site Rotten Tomatoes, and \$110 million at the worldwide box office. Bennett Miller's *Moneyball* (2011) energized the pro-sabermetrics crowd and invaluable shaped the public image of the new school for the better with the framing and context it provided. The film adaptation took Michael Lewis's story to a much wider audience and helped to spread the view of sabermetrics as the weapon the underdogs could use to level the playing field in the unfair game of baseball. It was the salvation of the Oakland A's and could be the same for small market, downtrodden, or cursed ball clubs everywhere. Since its release, most of the sabermetrics backlash in popular culture surrounding baseball has really just been backlash to the film itself, keeping public opinion of the new school approach mostly strong.

However, what interests me most is what this debate over sabermetrics can tell us about ourselves. Sabermetrics and statistical analysis, what Bill James explained simply as "the search for objective knowledge about baseball," has seldom before been more important in our culture.<sup>22</sup> The popularity of sabermetrics illustrates our need for immediate, quantifiable, reliable, and deep understandings of the situations our world presents us with, and the predictable outcomes that can be sought as consequences. Sabermetrics, and the debate surrounding it, represents a cultural desire for certainty in this increasingly uncertain world. Economically, the response to 2011's *Moneyball* (fittingly released just as the Occupy movement in the U.S. was taking shape) is representative of the desire at the time for social and economic equality in the United States—the New York Yankees standing in for the 1%. Billy Beane and the A's in *Moneyball* are the people, the little guy, the 99%, who, if they continue playing by the rules of tradition, are destined to falter. Instead, they opt to challenge the status quo with the hope of changing the game. Sabermetricians and their public supporters champion math, science, and reason to triumph over the fickle and indeterminate nature of feeling which the establishment, bolstered by their financial resources, has been able to translate into success.

The embrace of sabermetrics in baseball speaks to the need for certainty in the context of the economically uncertain 21st century. It's representative of a larger cultural transition to hard facts and evidence being used to dictate one's course, and reliance on those facts for an advantage. *Moneyball* and its reception speaks to this phenomenon especially. The ongoing debate over sabermetrics in our culture, though a seemingly futile one as statistical approaches expand even beyond baseball into basketball, football, and even outside the realm of professional sports,<sup>23</sup> demonstrates an institutional resistance to change and alterity—a resistance that seems to be crumbling. The trend toward institutional distrust or a dissatisfaction with the status quo appears to be a largely generational shift within the sport, as those who think differently assume control of decision-making positions of power among Major League front offices. The emerging dominance of the new school potentially speaks volumes to the world changing outside of baseball.

Sabermetrics continue to change the way the game is played and opinions on that change remain divided. This new approach still has many dissenters, despite having walked the walk. Sabermetrics can work, and there is yet to be any evidence of it killing the game.<sup>24</sup> Several Major League ball clubs have now leveraged statisti-

cal analysis to give themselves an advantage in the 21st century (Tampa Bay Rays, Oakland As, Kansas City Royals, and Boston Red Sox to name a few). At the other end of the spectrum, it seems those who refute the legitimacy of statistical analysis and its strategic implementation will persist in public discourse for the foreseeable future. Although statistically sabermetrics has proven itself worthy, the jury of public opinion is still not unanimous. However, that is slowing inching towards a verdict. Time, the one thing the establishment can't help but succumb to, will be the deciding factor. The turn to sabermetrics, and the increasing public embrace of it, is indicative of contextual struggles, both economic and social, of the 21st century, where—as in baseball—underdogs are kept down by a system of privilege and the uneven distribution of resources. With these new methods, they won't be kept down for much longer.

### Part III: Qualifying Sabermetrics's Impact on the Game's Image

Although the film adaptation of *Moneyball* appears to have had a positive impact on how people view and can relate to sabermetrics as a viable avenue for achieving success in baseball, the same can't necessarily be said for the changing perception of the sport of baseball at large. Though it was at one time the sport most closely associated with American patriotism and masculinity, baseball's popularity and public image have ebbed, flowed, and transformed in a multitude of ways since the early 20th century. In recent years baseball has yielded to football as both the most popular and most masculine sport in America by public opinion, and is today is regularly invoked as "boring," "slow," or "gay," as Google would suggest for a keyword search. It's interesting to consider that, in the same way *Moneyball* shaped opinions of sabermetrics, sabermetrics has shaped the opinions of baseball.

Staying with the 2011 film *Moneyball*, I'd like to look at the character representation of Peter Brand, played by Jonah Hill. It's first worth noting that Peter Brand is a fictional character created for the film. The character's name was changed when Sony Pictures and producers could not obtain consent of Paul DePodesta (who appears in the Michael Lewis book as Billy Beane's right-hand-man and protégé) to use his name in the film adaptation. Though he does wear glasses and did study economics in college, DePodesta is otherwise trim, and a former college athlete himself (having played baseball and football at Harvard). The casting of Jonah Hill as Peter Brand, the cinematic analog for DePodesta, can be taken on a film of this scale as nothing if not deliberate and intentional. Portrayed in the film as the vessel and champion of sabermetrics, Brand is an overweight, bookish, socially inept economics major from Yale. This representation provides a strong dichotomy for Brand's opponents in the film, the aged and weathered player scouts and coaches who have spent their lives playing and watching baseball up close. Peter Brand functions as a completely emasculated figure, counterposed to the entrenched masculinity of the sport, that threatens to upend established order and meaning. This representation, reproduced in other shows and films since (another of which I'll cover ahead), belittles the sabermetrician and illustrates the argument that baseball can be better played by computer jockeys and mathematicians than athletes. In popular culture at least, sabermetrics is represented in part as stripping baseball of its masculinity, taking power away from the traditional men of the game and moving it towards those who have broken the sport down into a game of numbers, logic, and rationality.

Nearly a year before the release of Miller's *Moneyball* however, the long-running television series *The Simpsons* took its shot at sabermetrics. The Season 22 episode "MoneyBart" aired in October 2010 in the U.S. and features a story where

Lisa is tasked with managing and coaching Bart's Little League baseball team. She's able to achieve enormous success by applying sabermetric principles and evaluating statistics and probability. The episode provides biting commentary on the sabermetrics predicament, and often comes down in favor of the "gut" argument—not calling sabermetrics worthless, but perhaps worse—criminally un-fun. Early in the episode, Lisa comes across a group of "nerds" huddled inside a booth of Moe's Tavern where they dissect stats and discuss a fantasy baseball league. When Lisa asks them how the game can be managed by those unfamiliar with playing it, Professor Frink coyly remarks, "Baseball is a game played by the dexterous, but only understood by the pointdexterous!"<sup>25</sup> Frink then invokes the founder of sabermetrics, Bill James, who dryly explains in a video, "I made baseball as fun as doing your taxes! Using sabermetrics, even an eight-year-old girl can run a ball club with the sagacity of a Stengel, and the single-mindedness of a Steinbrenner."<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the episode, Lisa's aptitude for playing by the numbers brings the team success, until her most contentious player, Bart, decides to defy logic & probability and steals his way around the basepath. In this moment, as Bart runs towards home plate, Lisa realizes that mathematics and probability aren't as exciting as the spontaneity of a play like this—a play sabermetric logic would say never to make because of the almost-statistically-certain failure. She comes to the realization that baseball is about that chaotic human factor just as Bart is thrown out at home. In reconciling with Bart, she tells him that she can now, "love baseball not as a collection of numbers, but as an unpredictable, passionate game, beaten only in excitement by every other sport."<sup>27</sup> One thing this episode quickly forgets though is that sabermetrics can provide that unpredictable excitement, too. The best evidence for that would be the true story at the heart of *Moneyball*, and the 2002 Oakland A's pursuit of baseball's longest winning streak. They hold the American League record after stringing together 20 wins in a row, 1 shy of the Cubs record 21. That chase was one of the most exciting occurrences in modern baseball, as the streak itself—though achieved using sabermetrics to win games—was a statistical anomaly. Just because outcomes become probable—or even certain—does not necessarily preclude the possibility of excitement. Yes, the outcomes of each game in that streak can be seen as mundane with popular memory reconstructing it as a series of walks and singles, but, like sabermetrics itself, the beauty lies in the result more than the process.

As baseball continues to shuffle through yet another prolonged identity crisis, looking into its foolishly glamorized, idealized, and nostalgized past for direction and inspiration (take a look at "retro-classic" ballpark architecture since the late 1990s), the present for the sport remains uncertain. It's unclear whether sabermetrics is here to stay, or whether it will come to pass as many other trends have in the game. Regardless, its impact on the game has been felt. General managers (GMs) and the front office have taken agency away from players and on-field managers and constructed teams from the top down. They are now the decision makers, with skippers in place that will obey their orders and carry out the machinations of their overlords. The player-as-individual, historically an essential part of the game, has been pushed aside and made a pawn in the scheme of GMs and their sabermetricians. Baseball, once dominated by jocks and life-long athletes, is now run by "nerds." Now, perhaps more than ever, baseball players have simply become game-pieces, meeples or pawns, in the game *played* by GMs. Now, with the overwhelming popularity and saturation of fantasy sports leagues (one need look no further DraftKings and FanDuel), everyone with a Lisa Simpson-level-grasp of statistics and probabilities is qualified to manage a baseball team.

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*The American Papers*

# De-linking from Neoliberalism: Indigenous Resurgence and Community- based Agriculture

Raul Ruano

Global agriculture is in a state of crisis. During the middle of the 20th century many countries began to adopt an economic ideology that focused on expanding the global market by freeing up the movement of goods, resources, and enterprise for the sake of profit. Under the neoliberalist framework, practices that do not seek to maximize profit are perceived as “backwards” or “deviant.” Often, policy initiatives or military action is taken against practices that establish equitable wealth distribution. The proliferation of Neoliberalism throughout the globe has resulted in rapidly depleted resources, unequitable agricultural competition between nations, the destruction of land, the displacement of bodies, the erasure of cultures, the loss of agricultural knowledge, and food insecurity and inaccessibility. The constructed dependency on easy consumption in the neoliberal framework makes it difficult for Indigenous communities to subsist ontologically and epistemically because their lifestyles are considered to be outdated and inefficient. However, indigenous practices, specifically in agriculture, are sustainable alternatives in comparison to the neoliberal agronomic model. Glen Coulthard, author of *Red Skins, White Masks* introduces the topic of indigenous resurgence, a call for the revitalization of indigenous political values and practices to decolonize settler establishments.<sup>1</sup> Neoliberal economic models sustain and support neocolonial market expansion by creating the legal and structural platforms for companies to control space for the sake of profit. Agricultural companies like The Untied Fruit Company and Monsanto operate as settler establishments within the agronomic component of the neoliberal market because these companies often displace and dispossess indigenous communities from their locality for the sake of profit. Indigenous resurgence movements that challenge neoliberal agronomic models are necessary alternatives for environmental sustainability, as well as indigenous ontological and epistemic subsistence because indigenous agricultural practices decolonize the relationship we have to land and space by displaying the natural limits that exist for our desire to consume.

Neoliberalism is a new form of liberalism that emerged during the middle of the 20th century. It is an economic ideology that seeks to expand the global market by freeing up the movement of goods, resources, and enterprise. In *What is Neoliberalism? A Brief Definition For Activists*, Elizabeth Martinez and Arnold Garcia list four key characteristics of Neoliberalism: The rule of a non-regulated capitalist market; cutting social welfare programs; privatization of state-owned enterprises, goods, and services; and the elimination of the concept of community.<sup>2</sup> Under a neoliberalist economic framework, the goal of development and globalization is to make more money so that the wealth of the rich can “trickle down” into the rest of society. Unfortunately, “trickle down” was a Reagan-era fantasy that never happened, since the wealth gap between the poorest and the rich continues to expand. Neoliberalism is rooted in the writings of Adam Smith. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith suggested



that if a nation wanted to develop and maximize efficiency, then all forms of government intervention in economic issues should be removed, as well as tariffs or restrictions on manufacturing and commerce.<sup>3</sup> Maximizing efficiency requires imperialistic and colonialist practices by a government in order to obtain the resources required to produce wealth. The desire for access to cheap resources to generate wealth justifies military and policy action in the name of national interests or “national security.” This has resulted in unequal relationships between developed and underdeveloped countries, where developed country’s extract resources from underdeveloped ones, creating an economic dependency that only benefits those in the developed world. As J.W. Smith notes in *The World’s Wasted Wealth*,

Occasionally one powerful country would overwhelm another through interception of its wealth through a trade war, covert war, or hot war; but the weaker, less developed countries usually lose in these exchanges. It is the military power of the more developed countries that permits them to dictate the terms of trade and maintain unequal relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Those who resist the desires of a neoliberalist government are usually met with brutal repression or military/police interventions. In the *Global Problems of Culture of Capitalism*, Richard H. Robbins states that as a result of imperialist [and colonialist] expansion in the name of global development, subsistence farmers all over the world were forced to become wage laborers producing goods for [and purchasing from] European and American neoliberalist markets.<sup>5</sup>

Agricultural practices within the United States today operate under the context of a neoliberal economy. This context has had devastating effects on global agriculture. By lowering barriers to trade, American and European businesses and policy makers have integrated local economies into global markets. As a result, local businesses are forced to compete with global ones for profit essential to living. Within the agricultural sector, local farmers are in direct competition with industrial farmers of the world, a clear disadvantage for local farmers. This occurred when the United States, Mexico, and Canada signed NAFTA (The North American Trade Agreement). NAFTA is part of America’s neoliberalist agenda to ensure free trade between nations. When the United States signed NAFTA, tariffs for trade between the three countries were eliminated. This brought local Mexican farmers into the global market, making it impossible for them to compete and make a living. Under NAFTA, Mexican farmers had to receive structural adjustment loans in order to obtain resources for their farms, while the United States and Canada maintained subsidies on their own crops.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the U.S. and Canada were able to sell their crops below the cost of production, resulting in a dumping of imports into developing countries like Mexico. NAFTA destroyed the livelihood of Mexican farmers, forcing them to either adopt industrial agricultural practices (which is much too expensive for them even with government subsidies) or move to the United States to earn a minimum wage, more than they could ever make in Mexico. Additionally, neoliberalist agricultural practices result in a dependency of markets as a method for food security. The individuals within a population no longer hold the knowledge necessary to cultivate the land and, instead, workers on factory farms learn one step in the long process of factory farming/neoliberal agriculture. The dangers of a reified system of agriculture showed during the 2008 global economic crash, where millions were left without food or water.<sup>7</sup> Along with the dangers it brings to the international community, Neoliberalism also presents problems within local agriculture.

Shaped by a neoliberalist framework, urban communities have experienced

the erasure or decline of local agriculture. Indigenous communities value land as a set of relations. To them, every living thing is connected to every other living thing. The land is living, thus land sustains every aspect of life; from spirituality to physical, social, and cultural health. The land shapes their way of life and it is their responsibility (and ours) to take care of it, just like a family member. Within a neoliberalist economy, land is seen as something to capitalize on, and the winners are those who acquire the most “productive” or “profitable” land. The idea of a competitive free market represents all landscapes as something to own and sell. Land as property and as a trading object is a distorted characterization of nature, as something to own and take control of for the sake of private gains. Land practices that do not produce profit are perceived as undesirable, non-valuable, and “backwards” by city officials and urban developers. Thus, community based agricultural practices are perceived as wrong or deviant, since they do not seek to turn the land into profit. The documentary *The Garden* provides a clear example of how neoliberalism resulted in the destruction of an urban community’s agricultural practices.<sup>8</sup> The documentary follows the story of a 14-acre community garden in South Central, California that had been established in the ruins of the L.A. riots in 1992. After thriving for a decade, the urban farmers are told that they were being evicted. In a back room deal, the city of Los Angeles sold the land back to the developer who originally owned it. That developer was named Ralph Horowitz, who stated of the urban farmers of the garden, “I don’t like your cause ... I don’t like what you do,” referring to the urban farmers’ use of the land as non-profitable. Eventually, the garden is plowed under and the farmers are left without land to provide them with sustenance crops. Unfortunately, neoliberalism has brought the erasure of community-based agriculture, since it does not fit the profit-driven goals of a neoliberalist regime. There are communities throughout the United States that have been able to establish community-based agricultural practices. However, because these practices still operate within a neoliberalist economy, problems abound.

In his book, *Working Towards a Just, Equitable, and Local Food System: The Social Impact of Community-Based Agriculture*, Thomas Macias examines the social impact of a community garden based in Burlington, Vermont. The garden is run by the community, for the community, but requires a buy in. Macias concludes that given class-based disparities in local agricultural participation, local food projects should consider promoting programs designed for broader social inclusion, including subsidized farmer-to-family coupons.<sup>9</sup> He correctly identifies a feature of a neoliberalist economy: class divisions. Neoliberalism operates with the idea of individualism, where an equal playing field is assumed and everyone is expected to simply pick themselves up by the bootstraps and achieve success. Unfortunately, this is a mere fantasy, since racism, sexism, classism, all constitute an unequitable playing field. The result of this is an economy that predominantly favors those with wealth (the middle and upper class). Laws and policies are passed that are in the sole interests of those who are willing, and able to play the game of capitalist accumulation. Those without capital are systematically left in the margins, displaced, and erased. Accessibility is thus a key concern for community based agricultural practices, since those without wealth should still have the opportunity to participate. Macias’ suggestion for farmer-to-family subsidies for participation in community agriculture is important to take seriously and implement in order to overcome neoliberalist class divisions. However, this is difficult to do in an economic structure that does not want to facilitate public welfare programs. Overcoming the societal constraints that a neoliberalist economy

has established requires restructuring our very lives and respecting and/or adopting different cultural practices and lifeways, specifically those of indigenous communities.

Indigenous people around the world are the most affected by neoliberalist economies. Indigenous tribes and nations have historically survived off of community based ecological agricultural practices. Corporate expansion of cash crops are forcibly implemented on land that provides indigenous communities with the necessary nutrition for survival; this has been observed in nations like India, Rwanda, Paraguay, Kenya, Canada, and the United States. The proliferation of neoliberalist ideology within global practices has led to worldwide neo-colonialism. Neoliberal international and national legislation has disenfranchised indigenous communities by allowing big companies to settle in any space deemed profitable. Many of these spaces were and are spaces that are already occupied by indigenous communities. The international trade of bananas especially contributed to the formation of neocolonial states. In the early 1990's, several U.S. companies merged to form the United Fruit Company, a banana empire operating in Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela. The United Fruit Company acquired millions of acres of land in Central American countries for plantations. Banana companies created company towns in Central America that were inhabited by company managers, engineers, and agronomists from the United States. They formed miniature U.S. neighborhoods, sealed off from the country around them, forming 20th century colonies. The United Fruit Company reserved managerial positions for white U.S. citizens and hired indigenous people for machete work, similar to 18th century colonies.<sup>10</sup> Once these banana companies withdrew from their established agronomic polities in Central America, the ex-banana choppers were left landless and jobless; not to mention the indigenous workers were left without an opportunity to educate themselves on how to subsist in an abandoned neoliberal society. Unfortunately, because indigenous people were and are perceived as having fallen behind modernity, i.e., not wanting to profit off the land but rather co-exist within the limits of nature, indigenous people's rights were and are continuously dismissed by their governments. Recognizing Indigenous rights requires more than a neoliberal politics of recognition because this type of recognition seeks to include indigenous communities within the neoliberal economy, but excludes the possibility of recognizing indigenous practices as valuable and sustainable. In *Red Skins, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard proposes an Indigenous resurgence politics of recognition as a potential solution to neocolonialism.<sup>11</sup>

The recognition of the United States as a country stems from a constructed settler imaginary that rejected and continues to reject the sovereignty of indigenous tribes and nations. Lorenzo Veracini explains that the settler colonialism is the process of domination for the purpose of territory dispossession and the coercive displacement of Indigenous people through various modes of transfer.<sup>12</sup> Thus, sovereignty is both granted and negotiated within the settler polity, in this case the United States, because it is recognized as the sovereign order of the land. Glen Coulthard proposes that indigenous people should engage in what he calls "a resurgence politics of recognition." Coulthard's resurgence politics of recognitions suggests the following: indigenous people empower themselves against the colonial state via self-recognition; and they should use this self-recognition for critical cultural recognition that actualizes indigenous sovereignty and nationhood. The shift away from a rights-based form of recognition is a shift away from the efforts to interpolate the legal and political discourses of the state to secure recognition of indigenous rights to land and self-determination because, as Coulthard explains, this often leads to the interpellation of

indigenous people as subjects of settler-colonial rule.<sup>13</sup>

The resurgence politics of recognition is a politic that calls for the revitalization of indigenous values and practices in building national liberation efforts and shaping community policies as a method of decolonization. Coulthard further notes that resurgence demands that we shift our attention away from the right-based/recognition approach that has emerged within the hegemonic neoliberal order. Instead, we should look to a resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender emancipatory, and economically non-exploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority on a refashioning of the best Indigenous legal and political traditions.<sup>14</sup> Anishinaabe feminist Leanne Simpson describes Indigenous resurgence beautifully:

Building diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences means significantly re-investing in our own ways of being: regenerating our political and intellectual traditions; articulating and living our legal traditions; language learning; creating and using our artistic and performance based traditions. [Decolonization] requires us to reclaim the very best practices of our traditional cultures, knowledge systems and lifeways in a dynamic, fluid, compassionate, respectful context in which they were originally generated.<sup>15</sup>

Indigenous resurgence means turning away or, as Walter D. Mignolo states, “de-linking”<sup>16</sup> from the hegemonic social and political order, in order to re-build a world that centers indigenous knowledge.

The need to adopt new models of agriculture is urgent, as neoliberal models have proven unsustainable and harmful. However, adopting a new model is no easy task, as Neoliberalism continuously seeks to re-create itself through the suppression of different forms of life and economy. Taking indigenous knowledge seriously will require what Glen Coulthard terms the “resurgence politics of recognition,” a politics that calls for the revitalization of indigenous political values and practices in building national liberation efforts and shaping community policies. Community-based agricultural practices that stem from indigenous practices in agriculture fall into the “backwards” category within a neoliberalist ideology, since food wealth is distributed throughout the community without the intent of profit. Switching to community-based agricultural practices is a step the United States could take in order to ensure equitable global food practices. Indigenous knowledge is valuable for equitable eco-based agricultural practices, as such, we need to take seriously the knowledge Indigenous communities have to offer in shaping our own agricultural practices and policies.

Indigenous resurgence is desperately needed for all Indigenous communities for the sake of their ontological and epistemic survival. Within the agricultural sector, a de-link from the current Neoliberalist and Neocolonialist frameworks and a simultaneous turn towards silenced agronomic models is needed in order to re-establish a healthy relationship to land and food. Indigenous agricultural practices often operate using knowledge of the local eco-system to ensure nutrition for the community without the need for exterior inputs. Adopting indigenous agricultural practices would shift us towards community-based agriculture within urban and rural environments. It would provide communities with accessible food, and re-establish the knowledge of sustainable agricultural practices. However, for resurgence to occur, de-linking from the neoliberalist order is necessary. De-linking from hegemonic neoliberalist agricultural practices means re-structuring our communities and lives, since the

way we consume constitutes a major factor as to how we currently structure society. Indigenous resurgence is thus the implementation of a different way of life, one that is not centered on the idea of capital accumulation but rather the self-cultivation and equitable distribution of resources.

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# Chicago World's Fair Residue: How Pop Culture Recreated the White City and Midway Plaisance in 20th Century Los Angeles

Sara Roberts

In the 20th Century Los Angeles became a battleground for a series of racially-based confrontations. California's role in World War II dynamically changed the cultural and racial landscape of the area, inflaming racial tensions and inciting altercations that persisted throughout the decades. Popular culture became a tool in the fight for physical and cultural space, and was used to both legitimize and delegitimize the presence of particular groups of people in particular places. Aiming to reestablish a semblance of racial order in the ever-diversifying Los Angeles cityscape, white America politicized three forms of popular culture in particular: zoot suits, Disneyland, and hip hop music. The moments at which these forms of popular culture became politicized are critical because they racially polarized Los Angeles into a metaphorical White City and Midway Plaisance. As mentioned by Gail Bederman in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, these were two physical spaces existing within the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. They were used to demarcate the "proper" place for whites and the "dark races," and depicted American civilization at its most perfectly evolved form.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the implementation of these ideas into an actual city did not create a perfect civilization, but a society that suffered from constant, exponentially-increasing racial tensions and violence.

Los Angeles in the 20th Century is an undisputed example of this, particularly after the breakout of World War II. The war spurred rapid development and migration to the city and created a more culturally and racially diverse landscape. Yet, white Los Angelenos' archaic attitudes toward race created animosity between whites and their new neighbors. Popular culture was the weapon of choice—and sometimes the casualty as well. Politicization of zoot suits during the 1943 Zoot Suit Riots, Disneyland after its opening in 1955, and hip hop music during the 1990s Federal Court hearings helped to inform and legitimize the White City and Midway Plaisance ideology.

In the midst of the war, on the night of June 3, 1943, tensions between whites and Mexican American youth climaxed when a confrontation between servicemen and colored youth erupted in violence. The fight prompted several subsequent days of rampaging, caused numerous injuries, and resulted in droves of arrests. This series of violence became known notoriously as the Zoot Suit Riots, and marked the first major racially-motivated physical altercation in Los Angeles. While the servicemen provoked the fight, most of the detainees were Mexican American youth; this demographic was targeted because they explicitly flaunted the zoot suit style. As Kathy Peiss points out in her book, *Zoot Suit: The Enigmatic Career of an Extreme Style*, the systematic attack on the zoot suit is ironic given that most of the Mexican



Americans involved in the altercations did not wear the style, and that most of the suit's wearers did not have a political agenda in doing so.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the media racially-politicized the style: they used it as a demarcation for a specific group of people, an explanation for their behavior, and as justification for political action against said group of people.

The media's focus on the suit diverted attention away from the real inner-city issues, which according to Peiss, was really "years of growing apprehension in white Los Angeles over racial and ethnic minorities."<sup>3</sup> The zoot suit was an effective way to put certain people back in their designated place, for it was easily subverted into a symbol of criminality and non-patriotism. The suit became a casualty of White America's racial politicization after it was touted by media sources, community leaders, politicians, and older generations as an affront to established standards of respectability, a violation of wartime conservation measures, and a sign of juvenile delinquency.<sup>4</sup> Because the style was sported primarily by Mexican Americans, they faced the brunt of racial discrimination and violence during and after the zoot suit fiasco. However, the style was also worn to a lesser extent by other racial and ethnic minorities, making it a nearly universal symbol of the "darker races" in Los Angeles.

Overall, the realities of inner city life in Los Angeles were ignored because the forms of popular culture that addressed the issues were delegitimized and the people who suffered the most were demonized. Like Midway Plaisance, inner city suffering was explained as a *symptom* of the inherent criminality of the "dark races." The conversion of the inner city into Midway Plaisance prompted the creation of a not-so-metaphorical White City: Disneyland. "Extolling the virtues of consumerism, patriarchy, patriotism, and small-town Midwestern whiteness," Disney created an America as it *should* be—according to white America. Through the implementation of a system of "order, regimentation, and homogeneity," Disneyland manifested as a physical and spatial counterculture to inner city Los Angeles, providing a solution to an ever-expanding Midway Plaisance.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, Disneyland was a 20th Century manifestation of the White City, particularly in the way it reestablished a racial hierarchy. While there was not a place within the park openly labeled "Midway Plaisance," Frontierland obviously fulfilled this role; in this section of the park, the segregation between whites and racial and ethnic minorities was all too clear. Here the "dark races," were depicted in all their savagery and barbarism, yet remained under white control. Just like Midway Plaisance, the "dark races" in Frontierland grossly reflected racial caricatures and embodied ethnic stereotypes, and existed only for the consumption of whites.<sup>6</sup>

The parallel between the Chicago World's Fair and Disneyland was solidified by one character in particular: Aunt Jemima. Aunt Jemima became a cultural icon at the 1893 World's Fair, and was adopted as America's post-slavery mammy. Disney paid homage to the cook by permanently placing her in the Pancake House, a restaurant that recreated the setting of a southern plantation kitchen and allowed customers to "relive the days of the Old South."<sup>7</sup> By including Aunt Jemima in Disneyland—and in this specific role—Disney aligned his park with a very particular set of racial ideals. In *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima*, M. M. Manring analyzes how Aunt Jemima's success as a cultural icon "requires not only a sense of racial supremacy but a dependency on a racial inferior, the mammy, in maintaining the order."<sup>8</sup> This becomes especially troubling when considering the internal conviction that propelled Disney to construct his park in the first place: "that human values and behavior [are] conditioned by their surroundings, and that proper surroundings



[cultivate] proper values and behavior.”<sup>9</sup> Through his construction of Disneyland, generally, and his inclusion of Aunt Jemima, specifically, Disney aimed to *cultivate* a society in which whites remained the racial superior and “dark races,” the racial inferior. Thus, Disneyland was an appealing place for white Los Angelinos seeking to escape their increasingly diversifying city.

The perpetuation of these racially hierarchical ideas and systems had serious ramifications, demonstrated by the fact that antagonism between whites and “dark races” continued to plague Los Angeles throughout the rest of the 20th Century. Fast forward decades later from the zoot suit and Disneyland, and the racial divide only intensified. The Zoot Suit Riots were a mere scuffle when compared to the violent events that preceded it: The Watts Riots in 1965, and the Los Angeles Riots in 1992—two of the most destructive riots in the nation’s history. Combined, the riots caused over \$1.5 billion dollars’ worth of property damage and were responsible for nearly 100 deaths.<sup>10</sup> They were the physical, violent manifestations of Los Angeles’ increasing racial division. Yet, like the Zoot Suit Riots, they only legitimized the perpetuation and hardening of racial lines.

Perhaps this was because the outcome of the Watts Riots and the Los Angeles Riots were all-too reminiscent of those for the Zoot Suit riots. Less attention was directed to the actual causes of the riots, and more toward a form of popular culture; in this case, hip-hop music. Born out of the decades of racial discrimination, police misconduct, and power inequality that have become characteristic of Los Angeles’ inner city; hip hop music was created by African Americans as affront to their own social, political, and economic disenfranchisement. However, as in the case during the Zoot Suit Riots, this was a reality that critics of hip hop music ardently obscured.

While hip hop artists and supporters claimed the music was a reflection—a *symptom*, if you will—of their reality, critics argued that it was a cause of it. Chuck D., a member of the rap group Public Enemy, stated “Hip hop music is not exactly a music. It’s damn near real life.”<sup>11</sup> Yet some of the harshest critics, namely politicians and prominent members of the black community invalidated this motivation by attacking hip hop music and claiming it was a producer of these issues. C. Delores Tucker, a member of the National Political Congress of Black Women, argued that hip hop music was the reason children were uncontrollable and why “we have more black males in jail than we have in college.”<sup>12</sup> The majority of rhetoric against hip hop music parallels Tucker’s statement, especially the criticism offered by politicians and community leaders. The resounding negative attitudes toward hip hop incited an extreme form of censorship that is arguably unmatched in all of music history. Some records were brought all the way to federal court on obscenity charges and allowed individuals to face punishment for selling “obscene” records or even singing “obscene” songs in public.<sup>13</sup> Hip-hop music was seen as such a threat that the FBI addressed a letter with a not-so-subtle message to the record label Priority Records: put a stop to N.W.A’s “F---- the Police,” or become a subject of the Bureau’s investigation.<sup>14</sup> Similar to the zoot suit, hip hop music was an easy target. The lyrics were oftentimes explicit, misogynistic, and violent. Older generations viewed it as a bastardization of jazz, bebop, and rock ‘n’ roll—all of which faced similar suppression. Black community leaders saw it as a step backwards, and a threat to everything African Americans had achieved since the end of slavery. White Angelinos saw it as an incredibly vocal threat that had the power to incite havoc on their White City. Very few people in positions of authority readily defended hip hop and recognized or accepted that it

was a direct reflection of inner city problems.

This demonization and censorship of zoot suits and hip hop music, paired with the embracing of Disneyland, created a world in which reality was denied and fantasy was promoted. It created a world in which the White City was able to hoard an inordinate amount of power, which it used to relegate racial and ethnic minorities—and their various contributions to popular culture—to the Midway Plaisance margins. And finally, it created a world in which, as stated by George Lipsitz in his book, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*, “people in power refuse to take responsibility for their own actions, for the policies that have created the very problems they purport to decry.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the damaging cycle was, and still is, allowed to continue.

While the new millennium offered Los Angeles a chance to redefine its social and racial boundaries, the residue of pre-20th Century racial and ethnic discrimination made the reality of a clean slate unrealistic and improbable. In truth, White City and Midway Plaisance ideologies persisted, both in spite of and because of popular culture. By turning expressions that reflected racial and ethnic identity and reality into causes of inner city problems, White City citizens attempted to relegate the “dark races” back to Midway Plaisance and protect the “darkening” of their city. However, as Los Angeles continues to increase in racial and ethnic diversity, these attempts may prove fruitless, engulfed by the same tide that allowed them to persist in the first place: popular culture.

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# Plead The Fifth: The Progression of the African American Lawyer

Ashley Loup

The African American lawyer has become a cultural staple in various societal arenas. Whether it be as the fictional character Annalise Keating on ABC's *How to Get Away with Murder*, the prominent Johnnie Cochran who made headlines in the infamous O.J. Simpson murder trial, or Eric Holder who became the first African American attorney general of the United States serving under President Barack Obama. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the African American lawyer has been seen and depicted as a highly respected individual in the black community, as well as a social justice advocate who had the education and the desire to improve the plight of all African American people. However, it seems as though the profession of lawyering, up until the middle of the twentieth century, was seen as the "starvation profession"<sup>1</sup> within the black community — the law was an instrument of oppression rather than a path to redemption. The widely recognized perception of the African American lawyer as social justice champion did not seem to hold true until after the watershed case, *Brown v. the Board of Education*, when African American lawyer Thurgood Marshall had challenged the unconstitutional nature of segregation and proven himself in the Supreme Court. The victory in this case proved to be a pivotal moment in the careers of African American lawyers as proponents of civil rights, as well as elevated them to a more esteemed status within the black community.

During the time between the *Plessy* and *Brown* decisions, the African American lawyer underwent a substantial transformation. This transformation was one that was riddled with hardships, such as a lack of community and familial support, an absence of consistent clientele, and a scarcity of opportunities in law school. Despite all of these misfortunes, the African American lawyer was able to triumph in the Supreme Court and recreate his identity as a champion of social change in the black community. By reclaiming and redefining a career that had for so long been marred by damaging beliefs and detrimental outcomes, the African American lawyer was able to reestablish what it meant to be a practitioner of the law.

For many, the Supreme Court is seen as a force for social equality and one that creates boundaries around what is considered just and what is deemed acceptable. Law is the vehicle by which these expectations are thus carried out. However, the law we know today is not exactly as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century when interactions were carried out that would ultimately form popular understandings of the African American lawyer. The notion of law itself is one that has gone through many recreations; in its earliest stages it was carried out at a localized level and was characterized by connections amongst townspeople willing to attest for one another. This form of localized law, without any interference from federal powers, was one that largely abided by preexisting social structures and therefore placed African American people on the outskirts. Laura Edwards describes how the marginalization of enslaved people throughout the nineteenth century ultimately affected their ability to have a positive engagement with law,

Most slaves' primary social connections, though, were to other slaves, who

could often provide considerable information about the system and those involved in the case, but little direct assistance in the actual process. In general, slaves' subordinate social status moved them so far to the margins that they could barely negotiate the localized legal system themselves. At the same time, slaves' subordination was so central to the maintenance of the order that it resulted in stricter controls and more severe punishments.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, the relationship that African American people had with law was one that was characterized by small contributions from time to time, but one that was diminished by their social standing within society. This longstanding tradition of being placed on the outside of the law was further amplified regarding the treatment through the law that many African Americans received after the abolition of slavery, and this non-interaction only proved to be a restrictive exclusion that would taint the future of African Americans and their views of African American lawyers.

The training and schooling of the African American lawyer is important when aiming to track their progression in the field. For many, the law school experience was characterized by realizing the harsh reality of how legal practice looked as well as what it felt like to be one of the few African American people entering into a tremendously white male dominated profession. For many of these men, their motivations for becoming lawyers were prompted by many experiences, "...lynchings, rioting, and racial violence exploded in the face of laws and legalities stacked against Black people. Black men and women were beginning to wage their own battles; in modern parlance, the consciousnesses were being raised."<sup>3</sup> Although these experiences seemed like causes that should be fought for, African American men wanting to enter into lawyering faced struggles early on. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the idea of an African American person becoming involved with the law was one that was not widely supported, in fact it was discouraged. According to Walter J. Leonard in his 1976 book, *Black Lawyers: Training and Results, Then and Now*,

Apparently, the experience of the Black Americans with the law played a part in keeping Black students away from the legal profession. But, Then again, perhaps their experiences with law and legal institutions, combined with the conditions in which most Blacks lived, prevented many Black students from taking advantage of the opportunities existent within American life.<sup>4</sup>

In the early 1860s the way for many prestigious law schools, including Harvard Law School, to measure diversity within the program was through geographic fragmentation rather than accepting students of different racial backgrounds. It was thought that geographic disbursement itself provided enough variety in the program, "Geographic diversity, it was felt, implied varied life experiences and points of view; it is taken to indicate the potential for healthy interchange among students."<sup>5</sup> With many law schools effectively overlooking the lack of racial diversity in their student population, it is easy to see the reality of nineteenth century social norms being reflected in the realm of education, in that African American opportunities were limited. Through this scarce landscape came the first African American person to graduate from Harvard Law School. George Lewis Ruffin completed the program in 1869 and successfully earned his law degree, thus leading the charge for future African American lawyers. While Ruffin earned his degree, law was just beginning to develop into the tool that was used to institutionalize racism and create the infamous 'sepa-

rate but equal' clause that was the cornerstone to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision.<sup>6</sup>

The *Plessy* case was brought to the Supreme Court in 1869 after a man, Homer Plessy, was refused entrance onto a 'whites only' railway car in Louisiana where segregation of public railway cars was lawfully enforced by the state. The lawyers in this case were two white men, Albion W. Tourgée and Samuel F. Phillips, who both delivered oral arguments in the Supreme Court on behalf of Plessy. The result of this case was that the constitutionality of state laws requiring racial segregation was upheld, as well introducing the 'separate but equal' clause. This clause essentially affirmed that states had the right to have separate public facilities for both whites and blacks, as long as the two were presumably equal, effectively legalizing segregation. The *Plessy* case is integral for numerous reasons, but it is most important to the progression of the African American lawyer because it signaled the beginning of the long fight to restore equality in the Supreme Court, a fight that would be almost sixty years in the making.

By the turn of the twentieth century the transformation of the African American lawyer had become apparent. More and more African American lawyers were receiving degrees from prestigious law institutions and heading into the professional workforce. They were vying for clientele and eager to show off their newly minted lawyering skills. However, early in the process these men were confronted with the truth that they were not viewed as champions of the people, but rather as coconspirators in a legal system that had consistently denied rights to African American people. In addition to this notion, these lawyers had also been seen as lacking in skills and experience, in which their white counterparts seemed to dominate without question. With this awareness, the needs of their communities informed their professional practices; "...the Negro lawyer must be seen as a product of the social processes at work in American communities. Thus fostering a career, he must develop methods and techniques that are expediently applicable to the minority status of his clientele and to his role as a special "trouble-shooter" for them."<sup>7</sup> This sense of the African American lawyer as a "general practitioner"<sup>8</sup> in the community is one that seems to mold their identities as potential voices of the people and shape the scope of their practices early on. The African American lawyer was seemingly bound by social constructions within the black community, which did not always translate to practicing law in the traditional courtroom setting or fighting for the betterment of the people.

The African American lawyer was viewed as a professional man, but one who was essentially relegated to the periphery. Thus being unable to capitalize on the advantages associated with the professional class. According to Charles Godwin Woodson's 1934 book, *The Negro Professional Man and the Community*, the African American lawyer was almost immediately practicing menial tasks that had no real effect on furthering the civil rights aspects of black communities:

Negro lawyer, as a rule, has ceased to function as such; and, although he may be registered as a lawyer it has been necessary for him to practice civil matters which do not involve frequent appearances before the courts themselves. His practice is chiefly what is called office work. In most of such cases he is confining himself mainly to real estate matters, the drawing up of papers for the sale and transfer of property and the handling of insurance, loans, and rents for his own people.<sup>9</sup>

These early professionals suffered from the belief that they were not worthy of the patronage of their own communities, mostly due to the fact that they had yet to prove themselves on matters of civil rights or in any meaningful court cases thus far. This restrictive reality and lack of clientele against the African American lawyer had an increasingly damaging effect on their abilities to become more of a force in the courtroom earlier on and in the profession as a whole. In Woodson's book, *The Negro Professional Man*, he discussed the patronage of many lawyers in these communities and one unnamed African American lawyer noted in an interview,

The wealthier and more intelligent Negroes give their patronage to white lawyers. Their clients in the main, come from the masses. Yet even the Negro intelligentsia are slowly turning to the Negro lawyer. They are waiting for the Negro lawyer to prove himself. The American Negro is the last to be converted to Negro lawyer.<sup>10</sup>

This idea, that the African American lawyer had yet to prove himself, becomes a theme throughout the early careers of many of these lawyers and is not fully reconsidered until midway through the twentieth century.

When discussing the clientele that these lawyers were able to procure, the communities and social realities with which they had to contend greatly influenced their potential. According to William H. Hale's 1952 piece examining African American lawyers and their clients, in many cases these lawyers went to work in places where the people made low wages, "it is as a defender of the poor that the Negro lawyer's career begins, but the possibility of advancement appears to be limited at that level."<sup>11</sup> Due to this lack of monetary deftness, the clients of these lawyers were unable to pay the cost that was required in order for these men to move up in society as well as in the lawyering profession. Without the ability to gain work outside of their implicit communities, "The Negro lawyer, denied free access to 'big money,' must take whatever cases he can get. The majority of these cases fall under the heading of minor civil matters."<sup>12</sup> This quote encapsulates the idea that although many African American lawyers had the education and gravitas to handle large-scale cases that could have altered the social circumstances of the black community, the actuality of the basic needs of their clients dictated the reach of their abilities. In addition to this idea of attempting to climb the ladder of professional success, William Hale notes that, "...In line with the precepts of the 'American Dream' he aims at success in our society means an 'improvement' in one's condition of life."<sup>13</sup> Between trying to improve themselves and not receiving adequate opportunities to do so, it seems as though the African American lawyer was caught in an impossible position, a position that was further magnified by their relentless depictions on television.

The widely recognized *Amos 'n' Andy* was originally a radio sitcom that was created, written and voiced by two white men. The radio show ran from 1928 to 1960 and was wildly revered, so much so that it was adapted into a television show. In 1951 CBS began airing its first season of *Amos 'n' Andy*. The television adaptation included an almost exclusively African American cast and was classified under the comedy genre. Both the radio and television versions were widely influenced by popular minstrelsy traditions, most notably the characterization of the 'Zip Coon' stereotype within the lawyer character of Algonquin J. Calhoun. Calhoun, who is the somewhat unconventional lawyer, was played by actor John D. Lee Jr. and was a recurring character on the series. In an episode titled, "The Rare Coin," Calhoun is supposed to represent two men, Kingfish and Andy, who have been accused of at-



tempting to steal money out of a payphone. The accused men are shown sitting in the courtroom awaiting the arrival of their lawyer who is clearly late, when they are asked by the judge to approach the bench. Once the two men walk up to the judge and are asked if counsel represents them, Calhoun rushes into the courtroom disheveled and disorderly. He immediately tosses his briefcase on the table and goes to address the bailiff, when he is notified that he is addressing the wrong person, he puts on his glasses, corrects himself and begins to speak to the judge. "I'd like to enter a plea of not guilty for these two crooks,"<sup>14</sup> Calhoun immediately says to the judge. It is fairly clear that he has no idea what he is doing and is essentially acting in a manner which he thinks a lawyer should. He follows up this question with, "But they done learned their lesson, they never gonna break open nothing in front of a cop no more."<sup>15</sup> With this statement Calhoun solidifies his dismal attempt at being a lawyer by incriminating his clients.

By the end of the scene the judge realizes that Calhoun has in fact been disbarred and barred from practicing law, to which Calhoun replies with, "so long boys!" and hurriedly exits the courthouse. This episode and scene in particular are integral to the study of the progression of the African American lawyer because the comedic and stereotypical depiction of the lawyer, through Calhoun, very closely resembled the actuality of the feelings towards lawyers at this time. Due to the African American communities' turbulent relationship with law itself, lawyers were widely viewed as untrustworthy and unqualified to represent clients in the courtroom and Calhoun essentially worked to fortify this notion by his actions within the episode.

In addition to this, Calhoun also works to reestablish the minstrel Zip Coon character within the episode. According to minstrelsy traditions, "...the character of the black dandy, sporting his flashy attire and projecting a slick, urbane persona, (this, of course, within the overall demeanor of the ignorant black buffoon mimicking the manners of sophisticated white folks)."<sup>16</sup> Calhoun dresses the part of the lawyer, speaks to the judge in a manner that would suggest he knows what he is meant to do and attempts to speak to the innocence of both of his clients. However, the underlining ignorance and comedy of the scene serves to portray Calhoun as a Zip Coon character in which he is acting as an incapable and unprepared lawyer, rather than acting as a legitimate force in the courtroom. This depiction discredits the African American lawyer two-fold; representing Calhoun as a minstrelsy character showcases his obliviousness and discounts his presence in the courtroom and instead treats it as humor and it serves to bolster the thoughts of black communities in that African American lawyers are undependable and undeserving when it comes to lawyering.

The reality that African American lawyers were mistrusted within the black community and essentially bypassed in favor of the more experienced white lawyers was disheartening, but not altogether shocking for these lawyers. They had seen it happen time and time again and the continuance of these occurrences was something that was expected and accepted at this juncture. However, the jarring confrontation provided by the likes of Charles Hamilton Houston and Algernon B. Jackson, served as a wake-up call to many lawyers in the form of a demand for action to serve the communities from which they hailed.

In the middle of the 1930s it seems as though many African American lawyers were ostensibly becoming comfortable with their lot in lawyering, however some people were not satisfied with these lawyers. Algernon B. Jackson wrote a seething condemnation of the African American lawyer, which he aptly titled *A Criticism of the Negro Professional* that detailed the shortcomings of physicians and lawyers alike,



Generally speaking, the opinion of the public regarding the members of the legal professions is that they thrive on cleverly cut corners, strained statements, double dealing and other choice bits of unprofessional conduct. By no means has the Negro lawyer been able to live down the unsavory reputation made by his white forerunners long before such intellectual colored monstrosities were even dreamed of.<sup>17</sup>

In this criticism, Jackson outlines the inadequacies of the African American lawyer and essentially informs them as to why they are viewed as untrustworthy. Jackson notes interviews from fellow professionals as well as people who live in the places where these lawyers have their practices. Within this article Jackson makes sure to outline this idea as to why many of these African American professionals are viewed as lacking in comparison to their more acclaimed white counterparts, which ultimately hurts their progress within their practices. He describes, "Thus it takes a great bulk of business and long tedious hours in order to make a profession pay among Negroes. Naturally, therefore, even though motivated by the urge of fine training and the best intentions our professional men often find themselves forced to sacrifice ideals for the more practical things in life."<sup>18</sup>

Jackson states that he understands some of the reasoning as to why these African American professionals are not able to perform their vocations to an acceptable degree, but he makes sure to remind them that these reasons should serve as cause to persevere. The most interesting element of this article is this idea of an unsettled social and economic configuration being part of the reason as to why the African American people in general are unable to succeed, "Negroes have erected a lop-sided top-heavy economic and social structure upon which professional classes stand out as dominating yet usefully ornate factors whose weight too severely taxes the strength of the foundation."<sup>19</sup> In this quote Jackson elaborates on this idea that the African American lawyer is qualified, but due to the social and economic culture of the black community both groups of citizens are not permitted to flourish, thus both seem to be stuck in an endless circle of ineffectuality. In conversation with this criticism comes a call to action from one of the most prominent African American lawyers of the time, Charles Hamilton Houston.

Houston is most well known for his tenure at Howard University, where he essentially recreated the law school agenda for the African American student and legitimized a university that could be placed in competition with the likes of Harvard and Columbia. Houston was born in 1895 to an upper middle class family in booming Washington D.C. His mother owned a hairstyling business and his father practiced law full time, both became part of the blossoming epicenter of black America.<sup>20</sup> Houston attended an all-black high school, the only one of its kind in Washington D.C., where he learned various languages and ended up graduating first in his class at the age of fifteen. Houston attended Amherst College and was the only African American in his class and it seemed as though his legacy as one of the most prominent African American lawyers was further solidified. In his piece, "The Need For Negro Lawyers", Houston discusses the statistical need for more African American lawyers in the Southern states.

The lines are drawn however, and neither the law schools nor the lawyer can retreat. The great work of the Negro lawyer in the next generation must be in the South and the law schools must send their graduates there and stand squarely behind them as they wage their fight for the equality before the law.<sup>21</sup>

The fight for equality will happen in the South and the people who will ultimately wage and win that fight, are the African American lawyers, Houston explained. At this point in time it is clear that many African American lawyers were working in the northern states for a multitude of reasons. The first being that there were clientele with the monetary prowess to help those lawyers climb the professional ladder and more recognition from the society as a whole. In Houston's plea to African American lawyers to head to the southern states he levels a statistic that is dismal at best,

It would follow that in those communities where sentiment and tradition are the strongest against the Negro taking part in governmental activity, one would expect to find the greatest scarcity of Negro lawyers. Such are the facts. Contrast the 4 Negro lawyers to the 944,834 Negro population in Alabama, with the 38 Negro lawyers to the 52,365 Negroes in Massachusetts; or the 187 Negro lawyers to the 328,972 Negroes in Illinois.<sup>22</sup>

With this knowledge it seems as though the African American lawyer was making strides in terms of graduates who were working, but these lawyers were still unable to break through in the southern states where they were arguably the most needed. With inequality thriving in the south; unlawful loss of property due to lack of legal advisement and the unjust lynching of black citizens, it was essential to the success of the African American lawyer to enter these states and fight for the rights of the people; proving one's lawful competency in southern courtrooms could translate into the triumph of the African American lawyer overall.

In October of 1933 Walter White, the chief executive of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, contacted the dean of Howard University School of law. The reason for such a call was that an African American man by the name of George Crawford had been accused of slaying two women in Loudoun County, Virginia. After a chaotic beginning to the case, which consisted of the selection of an all white jury and the denial of the Supreme Court to hear the case, White had to locate a lawyer who had enough clout and confidence to represent Crawford; and win. By this point, Charles Hamilton Houston had earned quite the reputation. He had successfully gotten Howard University accredited and was well on his way to crafting a wildly successful law program. When contacted by White, Houston reflexively declined, but noted that having an all black counsel to fight the case would be "...a turning point in the legal history of the Negro in this country."<sup>23</sup> After some convincing and the promise of an all black legal team, White was able to persuade Houston to sign on to the murder trial. With the support of the NAACP, Houston effectively became the face of the fight for inequality for African Americans in the courtroom, which in of itself was a massive triumph. According to Rawn James Jr., "Houston had defended his client as best as facts allowed, and now George Crawford was sitting in prison instead of on death row. It was, admittedly, wearying solace for the man who was suddenly the most famous black lawyer in American history."<sup>24</sup> The outcome of the case is truly irrelevant, the importance lies in the fact that Houston was able to procure an all-black counsel, fight a case in a deeply segregated Virginia and prove that an African American lawyer could in fact fight on behalf of the people. Houston gained widespread notoriety with his encouragement of African American lawyers throughout his tenure at Howard and with the support he acquired from the NAACP. Houston became the embodiment of what it meant to be a successful lawyer as well as championed the endeavors of other African American lawyers alike. He was a supporter of the cause from the very beginning. "He did not demand from his students and faculty all that they could give; he exacted from them

all that he deemed necessary to prepare them for what lay ahead. The tall and proud man knew what lay ahead because he had experienced the virulence of what had been.”<sup>25</sup> Some saw his practices as elitist, while others saw him as a visionary working to redefine what it meant to be a black lawyer in the 1920s and 1930s. Houston’s accomplishments are important to the dialogue of the progression of the African American lawyer because Houston was a pioneer in the field of lawyering. A man who singlehandedly took it upon himself to restructure a university law program, fight a case on behalf of inequality in the south and aptly prepare his students for the tribulations that undoubtedly waited in their futures.

With the implementation of the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund, many cases would be fought regarding the rights of African American people. The first charge of this organization was to desegregate schools and add more validity to the Civil Rights Movement, as well as drive social change in the highest court in the land. With the ultimate success of the *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision, the notion that the African American lawyer could be a force of social change and champion for civil rights became a reality. In addition to this actuality, the watershed decision provided a heightened sense of confidence in the lawyer as representative of the African American community’s best interest. The case was originally filed in 1951 against the Board of Education of the city of Topeka, Kansas by thirteen sets of parents on behalf of their twenty children. The city of Topeka had been operating under the precedent that had been set forth by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, by which states had the power to enforce de jure segregation, resulting in the implementation of separate elementary school facilities based upon race.<sup>26</sup> The case was placed in the capable and experienced hands of Thurgood Marshall, along with James Nabrit and George Hayes. With the full support of the NAACP this team of African American lawyers took to the Supreme Court and launched a full-fledged battle to ensure the civil rights of the black community. The case was originally argued in December of 1952, reargued in December of 1953 and eventually decided on May 17, 1954. Chief Justice Warren delivered the opinion of the court:

We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and other similarly situated for whom these actions have been brought are, by reason of segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment...<sup>27</sup>

The *Brown* decision worked to debunk the ‘separate but equal’ clause that was originally established in the *Plessy* decision in 1896, as well as declaring that de jure segregation was in direct violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The great success in this watershed case was not lost on anyone in the black community, including the lawyers who fought it. Thurgood Marshall most notably carried the torch for the African American community and was able to secure a success in the Supreme Court, which up until this point had not been a part of the African American lawyer’s achievements (figure 1). Marshall worked tirelessly to carry on the charges of many of his predecessors, including Charles Hamilton Houston; “Thurgood Marshall remained compass-true to the legal notions of justice he learned years ago as a student, then colleague and friend of Charles Hamilton Houston.”<sup>28</sup> Marshall, much like Houston, had a desire to exceed all expectations that had historically been consigned to the African American lawyer. In tandem with

the *Brown* decision, Marshall was able to rise above supposed predispositions and act as a champion of civil rights as well as recreate the image of the African American lawyer for generations to come.

After the watershed *Brown* decision many aspects of the African American community began to change; their success in a hard fought battle for desegregation, their renewed confidence in the Supreme Court as a vehicle for social change and the rendering of the African American lawyer as purveyor of activism and proponent of the people. The decision in this case illustrated accomplishments that ultimately amended the ideas and depictions of the African American lawyer. It worked to effect many aspects of African American life as well as motivate the NAACP to attack issues they had left untouched, now that it could add Supreme Court victory to its long list of accomplishments. In Peggy Pascoe's *What Comes Naturally* we get a glimpse into how this case influenced other NAACP ventures, "After the *Brown* decision gave the LDF's broad interpretation of equal protection the stamp of legal legitimacy, the NAACP began to expand the range of its demands."<sup>29</sup> The wide-spread reach of the *Brown* decision aided in formulating a progressive future for the Civil Rights Movement, the legitimacy that was associated with the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund and African American lawyers in general, drove the movement in ways that would have been almost futile prior.

The role of the African American lawyer post *Brown* was one that carried more clout than ever before, "Lawyers provided an important morale boost for the movement, showing them that someone was looking out for them. They were part of the process of helping people find 'their own individual and collective power to determine their lives', helping the movement with their technical abilities rather than telling the movement how to proceed."<sup>30</sup> The role that the African American lawyer played post *Brown* was nothing short of miraculous. George Crockett of the National Lawyer's Guild program noted that, "in the war against injustice in Mississippi, lawyers are not the front line of the troops . . . Lawyers were nonetheless a part of the movement. They were activists, as well."<sup>31</sup> These lawyers had gone from untrustworthy and ineffectual to adding legitimacy and influencing a movement that was saddled with ensuring the rights of an entire race of people. To say the African American lawyer had triumphed would be an understatement.



Figure 1: George E. C. Hayes, Thurgood Marshall, and James M. Nabrit, May 17, 1954. Gelatin Silver Print. New York World-Telegram and Sun Collection, Prints, and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

The African American lawyer that we have become accustomed to was deeply influenced and inadvertently shaped by the lawyers of the past. The African American lawyers who grappled with racism in law school and in many cases were the only people of color in their respective classes. The lawyers who could not find work in communities where fellow African Americans became patrons of white lawyers, due to deep seeded wariness regarding the skills of the African American lawyer. The lawyers who struggled to create change in a society that had for so long classified them as second-class citizens and had dispatched them to the peripheries of a profession that had the potential to influence change. These lawyers were forced to take law into their own hands, men like Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall dedicated their life's work to ensuring the success of the African American lawyer. The watershed decision that was handed down in *Brown v. the Board of Education* aided in desegregating school and deflating the "separate but equal" doctrine, but it did something more. The Brown decision rebirthed the African American lawyer. This case served as proof that social change was a reality that could be achieved by a lawyer for and from the black community, further solidifying the African American lawyer as a champion of social justice and of the people.

### Epilogue: Grimké's Ghost

White bed sheets with haphazardly cut out eyes are not the ghosts I am thinking of, rather the lingering specters who have left impressions on the history of one of the nation's most prestigious law institutions. Squinted eyes cannot quite make out their figures, but the imprints that they have left behind still cast an uneasy shadow. In Avery F. Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*, we get a glimpse into how these apparitions can be uncovered:

In order to write about invisibilities and hauntings — a dead woman was not at a conference she was supposed to attend — requires attention to what is not seen, but is nonetheless powerfully real; requires attention to what appears dead, but is nonetheless powerfully alive; requires attention to what appears to be in the past, but is nonetheless powerfully present; requires attention to just who the subject of analysis is.<sup>32</sup>

In order to uncover these traces, I had to first narrow down what it was that I was looking for. I began the process by locating the dates of which George Lewis Ruffin, the first African American person to graduate from Harvard Law School, had in fact attended the university. I was able to research a bit and find out that Ruffin had graduated in 1869. I hit the Harvard alumni roll, which included a list of all the students who attended the university and accompanying class photos. As I began searching for the 1869 class photo however, it became clear to me that this particular photograph did not seem to exist. Consequently, making my job of locating the first photo of an African American Harvard Law School graduate much more difficult.

I began scouring through numerous sources simply looking for a name that stood out when I stumbled upon a letter from the black newspaper *The Hub*, where a man named Archibald Henry Grimké was mentioned as a black lawyer and supporter of equal rights. I began to investigate the name and soon found out that he had attended Harvard Law School somewhere in the 1870s, and then began the task of placing him within one of the featured class photographs. The search began in 1870; I was scanning through all of the names that were included in the alumni roll which were thankfully in alphabetical order. As I reached 1874, it seemed as though I was



searching for a true needle in a haystack, when seemingly out of nowhere I spotted the name Grimké. The description read, “Grimké, Archibald Henry, A.B. Lincoln Univ. (PA) 1870: 1415 Corcoran St., Washington D.C.: admitted Suffolk bar, Oct. 1875.”<sup>33</sup> The entirely lack luster mention in the alumni roll prompted me to dig a little deeper and confirm that this name matched the person that I had been looking for — the needle in the haystack had been found.

My next course of action was to then identify one of the men in the photo as Grimké. I counted the names of all of the men in the class of 1874 and came to the conclusion that there were in fact ninety-four men who were in this class, and that Grimké was one of them. I flipped to the class photograph and began counting those men as well; there were only seventy-two men who were captured within the published photograph. Gordon would classify this moment of detection as, “...the flashing half-signs ordinarily overlooked until that one day when they become animated by *the immense forces of atmosphere concealed in them*. These illuminations can be frightening and threatening; they are profane but nonetheless charged with the spirit that made them.”<sup>34</sup> Grimké’s spirit was etched into my research and somewhere in this photograph.

From this realization my mindset went from which man in the photo could be Grimké, to thinking I had correctly identified Grimké, to ultimately realizing that even searching for Grimké within the class photograph had implications of its own. He may be pictured or he may not be, without a list of the men who are definitively pictured it was impossible to ultimately claim that I had in fact identified the first photograph of an African American lawyer who had graduated from Harvard Law School. This journey of uncovering the traces of his ghost was riddled with angst and frustration, but ultimately with a desire to deliver recognition that may have been previously withheld. Gordon describes this instinctive longing to discover and uncover in terms of achieving closure of sorts, “And so we are left to insist on our need to reckon with haunting as a prerequisite for sensuous knowledge and to ponder the paradox of providing a hospitable memory for ghosts *out of a concern for justice*.”<sup>35</sup> The Harvard Law School photograph was imbued with evidence that an African American lawyer had been present at one time; his figure may not be seen, but his presence is felt.



Figure 2: Harvard Law School class photo  
(1874)

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- <sup>3</sup> Walter J. Leonard, *Black Lawyers: Training and Results, Then and Now*, 119.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.
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- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.
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- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-20.
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- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.
- <sup>23</sup> Rawn James Jr., *Root and Branch: Charles Hamilton Houston, Thurgood Marshall, And The Struggle To End Segregation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 5.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-226.
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- <sup>29</sup> Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law And The Making Of Race In America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 251.
- <sup>30</sup> Thomas Hilbink, "The Profession, the Grassroots and the Elite: Cause Lawyering for Civil Rights and Freedom in the Direct Action Era." *In Cause Lawyers and Social Movements*, edited by: Austin Sarat and Stuart A. Scheingold, 60-83. Stan-



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<sup>32</sup> Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 42.

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*The American Papers*

# Morbid Memento: Private Keepsakes of Public Violence

Bahar Tahamtani

On September 4, 1888, George Eastman was awarded patent US388850 for his camera and roll film under the name Kodak. Advertised as the only camera that could be operated without needing to refer to a manual, the Kodak No. 1 came with film pre-loaded inside the body of the camera, thus removing the darkroom component of photography and making the camera something that could be carried around without the cumbersome equipment required by previous methods of photography. Amateur photographers would no longer have to concern themselves with the development process either, because once they used up all their film they could send the camera to one of Kodak's film processing centers where it would be re-loaded and sent back with a box of prints.

Nancy Martha West, an assistant professor of Victorian and Cultural Studies at the University of Missouri, Columbia, conducts an engaging study of Kodak's nineteenth- and early twentieth-century advertisement campaigns in her book, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*. West argues the Kodak camera's division of the photographic process led to the removal of feelings of "boredom" widely associated with conventional photography and put in its place the element of "fun," and "play."<sup>1</sup> Many of the earliest advertisements place the subject outdoors, typically engaged in some physical activity such as hunting, playing sports (especially tennis), or walking along the shore. The advertisement reminds the viewer that they "better take a Kodak..." with them if they want to preserve their memories.<sup>2</sup>

The concepts of 'adventure' and 'spontaneity' promoted in late nineteenth-century Kodak advertisements pushed the act of taking a photograph as something that should capture life as it was lived in the moment, not planned and posed for but impulsive and care free.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, life was to be documented not indoors inside studios but outdoors in nature. The compact size of the camera and its film holder meant photographs could be taken far away from the home (and the photographer's studio). In one 1899 Kodak advertisement the selling point is clearly the maneuverability of the device, "Half the charm of a photographic outing is lost if one carries along several pounds of glass plates and holders and has every moment filled with anxiety for their safety," and adds, "Kodaks use non-breakable film cartridges which weigh ounces where plates weigh pounds."<sup>4</sup> The advertisement reminds the viewer that wherever they go, they can take their lightweight Kodak and have a tangible memory of the experience. At its core, 'snapshot' photography was rooted in notions of simplicity and fun. By the time the Brownie camera was introduced in 1900, Kodak was instructing Americans to view life through the *lens of nostalgia*, that is, to link the making of memories to the taking of snapshots. This way, West argues, experiences could be arranged so that unpleasant memories could be erased.

At the same time Kodak was encouraging consumers to go outdoors and document their lives (and memories), blacks across the nation—particularly the Deep South—were being brutally murdered by white lynch mobs. It is here that I situate my essay, between the emergence of the smile in photography and one of the most violent periods of racial violence in the United States. Specifically, I will examine

the role of the lynching photograph in reaffirming racial scripts through collective memory at the turn of the twentieth century. Photographs are fragments of the past that can be used to influence and inform the public. Who were lynching photographs instructing, and what lessons did they impart upon the viewer?

### Confronting a Legacy of Violence

Between 1882 when the Tuskegee Institute first began recording data on lynching and 1968, when the Civil Rights Act added anti-lynching provisions, 4,743 deaths were recorded as the result of lynching in the United States. Of those, 3,445 were black.<sup>5</sup> White mobs lynched blacks for various reasons including crimes as serious as murder and rape (often on the basis of suspicion or fabrication), as well as for offenses as minor as bumping into whites or looking at them “the wrong way,” wearing military uniform in public, attempting to vote, or addressing white individuals with the wrong title.<sup>6</sup> The crowd of spectators was usually comprised of white men, women, and children of all classes, many coming from miles away to view the lynching. Some people brought lunch; others purchased snacks and beverages from vendors.<sup>7</sup> Likely, an amateur photographer was present, perhaps with their Kodak in hand. White spectators used the camera, a neutral device conceptualized as a way to record special memories, to document violent acts of lynching.<sup>7</sup> The photograph, something that memorialized the life of whites, was also used to celebrate the death of blacks.

The photograph, unlike oral testimony, provides visual proof that something occurred, because somebody was present to bear witness and document it.<sup>9</sup> But what can the photograph tell the viewer about *what* happened in the scene of a photograph? The answer cannot truly be known because it relies on the context under which the question is asked. Over a century ago, a white Southerner may have answered that the photograph signified the most effective form of retribution for crimes of rape and murder against whites. Today the focus would be not on the offenses committed against whites, but the crimes of torture and mutilation committed by whites against blacks. Taken on its own, the photograph offers very little explanation; becoming instead a limitless invitation to what novelist and essayist Susan Sontag describes as “deduction, speculation, and fantasy.”<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the act of gazing at a lynching photograph risks it turning into an object of curiosity, emblematic of a particular time and becoming a spectacle.<sup>11</sup>

In his work, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*, Roger Simon, a Sociology and Equity Studies professor, warns of the dangers of losing a sense of the victim as an individual to be mourned since the appearance of a dead body on its own cannot tell the viewer what it was like to be alive, and thus, cannot be mourned. He reasons that images of suffering in and of themselves can increase suffering. But the alternative, to avoid contact with the photograph risks erasing the victim and the violence from public memory.<sup>12</sup> Photographs that incite a feeling of discomfort, outrage, or unhappiness must be confronted specifically for this reason, to remind the viewer that such acts of violence did occur and that they are connected to violence that is observed today. The lynching of James Byrd in 1998 and, more recently, the display of a noose at Duke University in 2015, both make clear that the past—especially the legacy of lynching—cannot and, more importantly, should not be buried.

### Strange Fruit

In the photograph, the bloodied bodies of two black men hang from a large tree. The ropes around their neck have been swung over a branch and they have been pulled high enough into the air for all in the crowd to see. Their clothes have been tattered and stained with dirt and blood. One of the young men has been stripped of his pants. In its place a white cloth has been wrapped around his waist, perhaps an attempt to prevent offending anybody with the sight of the nude black body. The bloodstains on the cloth, however, could also mean that the man has been castrated, as many regularly were when they were lynched. Some can be seen looking up and contemplating the scene; two men hold cigars as they do so. Others seem to be talking amongst themselves, while a couple holding hands glance towards the photographer. The young woman has something in her hand. It looks like a leaf; maybe from the tree the bodies hang from. She holds onto it like a prize her date won at the fair. Perhaps the young white man holding her hand grabbed it for her as a souvenir to remember the night. The size of the crowd itself cannot be fully grasped by looking at this photograph, because it is limited not only by the scope of the camera lens, but also the range of the camera's flash. Although the bright light from the camera's flash bulb has illuminated the scene enough to reveal that the crowd stretches beyond the two bodies, darkness nevertheless engulfs the remainder of the scene as the crowd becomes lost in the shadows of the night.

A man with a mustache stands at the center of the photograph; his cold gaze directly meets the lens of the camera as he points to the background guiding the viewer's eyes to where the bodies hang. The expression on his face is one of sternness, and firmly with his hand outstretched, the man points towards the hanging bodies. He could be directing a white viewer's gaze to the handiwork of the mob, standing proudly and defiantly as an enforcer of order. Or he could be pointing for the black viewer as a reminder that they too could be hanging from the tree. According to James Allen, curator of the project *Without Sanctuary*, the man's name was Bo, though his identity was never known despite the fact that he stood front and center of the photograph with his distinctively tattooed arm and glared straight back at the viewer.<sup>12</sup> This photograph, and many others like it, disproves claims throughout the century that white perpetrators could not be apprehended and prosecuted because they could not be identified.

The pride with which the undisguised white people stand around and mingle gives off a sense of liveliness despite the fact that two dead bodies hover above. Nobody looks remorseful or fearful of the ramifications for what they have done. This is clear by the very nature of their poses in the photograph. They are very casual and relaxed; some people converse with one another while others take in the view before them. Others seem to be walking around looking for a conversation to join in on. The crowd gathered under the hanging bodies is here for a social event.

This photograph of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith's lynched bodies was taken on August 1, 1930 and would inspire Apolonia Meeropol's song, "Strange Fruit." Multiple versions of this photograph exist. One is a cropped picture that begins at the shoulders of the white crowd members, while another remains un-cropped image. A third version of the photograph presents it in its entirety, matted and framed. Likely the lynching photograph sat on a shelf or mantle piece; but the fact that it is framed can also mean that it was once hanging on a wall. Directly below the photograph, somebody has scrawled on the matte board, "Bo points to his niga." Just beneath this line and offset to the right is another inscription, "Klan 4th, Joplin, MO."

33,” Flattened between the glass and the board in the left-hand corner of the frame is a clump of hair belonging to one of the victims. Locks of hair have long been held onto as keepsakes, as memories of somebody dear whether they were alive or deceased. Rather than prompt the remembrance of the life it once belonged to, the tuft of hair preserved in the frame of this photograph celebrates the act of taking away life. Bo poses proudly in front of the hanging bodies just as a hunter would in a photograph with a trophy kill, in some ways mocking Victorian post-mortem photography. Just as keepsakes were used to remember a loved one, post-mortem photographs were also used to honor the deceased. Lynching photographs, however, inverted this ritual by turning a commemoration of life into a celebration of death.

### **Judge, Jury, and Executioner**

A crowd of white men and young boys can be seen in the photograph standing underneath the body of a black man hanging from a tree. His white button shirt remains tucked in his pants, but his shoes have been removed. In the background a figure appears leaning out the window. Below the body the crowd of whites appears to hold themselves with a strong sense of pride. One boy standing in the center of the shot has his sleeves rolled up smiling, while another boy directly behind him holds a cigarette between his lips. To the right of the photograph a boy stands tall with his hands held behind his back, his eyes firm on the camera. Directly behind him, another head peers out from amongst the crowd to show missing teeth as the boy grins at the camera.

The victim, sixteen-year-old Lige Daniels, was accused of murdering a white woman in Center, Texas and on August 3, 1920. A crowd of men battered down the steel doors to his cell, dragged him out to the courthouse yard and lynched him in front of thousands of spectators. The photograph instructs the viewer on the reenactment of white supremacy, reminding others who gaze at it—especially blacks—that the laws are on the side of whites. In fact, whites are the law. This is made clear by the fact that they have lynched a black man in front of a courthouse and remained at the scene undisguised and without any fear of prosecution.

The postcard has a message written on the back, “This was made in the court yard, In Center, Texas...He killed Earl’s grandma. She was Florence’s mother. Give this to Bud. From Aunt Myrtle.” Sending the lynching photograph to distant family members is telling of the way the act of lynching was treated as a spectacle by those who collectively viewed and exchanged photographs, so much so that sending a photograph of the lynching scene to a loved one was as commonplace as sending a postcard with the inscription, “wish you were here.” This exchange illustrates one way in which collective memory forms through the exchange of knowledge and experiences. In his book, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory*, Jonathan Markovitz explains that “the lynchings that were most effective as tools of political education and terrorism were staged as massive public spectacles.<sup>13</sup>” Photographs taken at the scene of a lynching could thus serve as an extension of the life spectacle, especially considering its role as a piece of memory.

### **Teaching Childhood Innocence Through Violence**

A body hangs from a tree in the center of the photograph, a black male with his hands cuffed in front of his body. His neck looks strained from the weight of his body pulling down on the rope. He has on a white collared shirt underneath some worn overalls that appear torn around the legs. In the background stands a line

of white men, women, and children, all brightly and well dressed, perhaps in their “Sunday best.” A man stands to the left in the background of the picture, his arms crossed and head tilted up underneath his boater hat as he observes the scene before him. A young white girl looks up at the body, her short bob clipped back, framing the a disturbing smile stretched across her face as she gazes up at the body. She looks amused. Her arms hang loosely and cross at the wrists, in some ways resembling the handcuffs on the corpse. To the right of her a man to her right stands with his arms crossed, his face is obstructed by the tree the body hangs from, but his posture and slouched shoulders imply that he is relaxed. Peeking out from behind the victim’s hands is a young woman, and next to her there appears to be a black woman facing away. Her clothes suggest that she could be a domestic worker, maybe a nanny to one of the children in the photograph. At the very least, her presence is one that disrupts the white line spanning across the background of the photograph. So little is visible that she almost disappears into the gray tones of the photograph, but once her arm is spotted amongst the crowd, she is impossible to ignore. The fact that this she is in the photograph serves as a reminder that before they were reduced to corpses hanging from trees, lynching victims were living human beings.

To the right of the black woman, a little girl stands in a shaded area; her face is hardly visible but her silhouette is clear enough to see that she is facing the photographer. She could be looking up at the hanging body like many of the other figures in the shot, or gazing directly at the camera in curiosity. She seems to be holding something in her hand, perhaps she is nervous and fidgeting with something, or holding a snack to munch on while viewing the spectacle before her. To the right of her stands a girl with a much clearer expression—one of discomfort—on her face. What has made her uncomfortable is hard to know, it could be a reaction to the brutal act of violence she just witnessed, or it could be directed at the man whom the violence was inflicted upon. With this exception, the rest of the crowd appears to be having a good time. Their gaze upon the hanging body is one of curious amusement, and their overall relaxed demeanor signifies the lack of concern regarding prosecution. There is no shame in what has been committed in this scene, there is no fear of punishment, only pride, wonderment and curiosity.

The man in the photograph, Rubin Stacy, was lynched by a mob on July 19, 1935, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Stacey had been arrested for allegedly threatening a white mother of three inside her house. Before he could be transported to jail to await trial, the car he was traveling in was run off the road by an angry mob of whites. Stacy was apprehended and shot multiple times before being hanged and shot again, within sight of the white mother’s home.<sup>14</sup> Later it was revealed that Stacy, a homeless tenant farmer, had been going door-to-door asking for food in the area. When he approached the woman’s house his presence frightened her and she screamed, alerting neighbors and ultimately leading to Stacy’s arrest. The photograph juxtaposes Stacy’s body and the white crowd as lawless and lawful; guilty and innocent; black and white; dead and alive. The white viewer gazing at the photograph would have been instructed on the need to eliminate the threat—or existence—of the black body. White girls viewing the photograph would be instructed on the dangers of black male sexuality. The presence of the three young girls in the background can be seen as a form of validation for the lynching. What has been protected here, in addition to white womanhood is, in Robin Bernstein’s words, “racial innocence.”<sup>15</sup>

In her book, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*, Bernstein examines the concept and role of “childhood innocence” in



the formation of racial identity from the mid-nineteenth century until well into the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> The notion of 'innocence' became increasingly reserved for white children at the turn of the century, and numerous "scriptive things"<sup>17</sup> such as "Topsy" dolls, "Dinah" pen-wiper and Raggedy Ann dolls, and children's books prompted violence against black dolls. White children beat their black dolls, burned them, pulled their hair, and hanged them. One Raggedy Anne story showed the doll hanging on a clothesline to dry, but doll is suspended by a clothespin clipped at the genitals and emptied of stuffing. Bernstein compares this to the ransacking of "souvenirs" after a lynching, during which black bodies were ravaged, dismembered and often castrated as whites swarmed to take pieces of the body as mementos.<sup>18</sup> The acts of brutality inflicted on black dolls by white children reflect a cultural environment saturated in violence against blacks. Notions of fun and play, intertwined with the extrajudicial violence of lynching, turned the lynching of blacks into spectacles for whites to attend and enjoy while also reaffirming white collectiveness. The violence captured in the photograph of Stacy, then, can be seen as a form of play to the children peering at the body; similar to the kind they could partake in with their own black dolls. The placement of the young white girls alongside the white men in the photograph signifies the protection of white womanhood against black manhood. Not only was the woman who screamed protected and avenged, the children too were kept safe from the black man. Stacy's body reminds the viewer that innocence, in addition to being something reserved strictly for whites, must be fiercely—even violently—protected from blacks. The lesson behind witnessing a lynching or gazing at a photograph depicting one was to ensure that it passed down to the next generation.

In the same way that the camera is limited by the scope of its lens and power of flash, the photograph is limited by the span of its frame, resulting in only a small segment of what occurred and providing no information regarding what took place leading up to or after the moment captured in the photograph. For white children gazing at the photograph, it represented an extinguished threat. They would not have to worry about their safety, because their white fathers, brothers, and uncles would take the law into their own hands to make sure they were protected. The presence of children in lynching photographs creates tension between innocence and guilt, because they are too young to be participants but too involved in the crime to be victims.

### **Memorializing Murder**

The charred, stiffened corpse of a man hangs from a wooden post, his face scorched to the bone, and his arms are raised up towards the sky bending in a flexing motion. Whether this was the result of the body's reaction to the smoldering fire, or the result of white perpetrators posing the corpse remains unknown. Both of his legs are missing and around his waste, in "gentlemen" fashion, a towel has been wrapped to conceal his genitals; incomprehensible given the horrific acts of violence inflicted upon his body. A row of hats lines the bottom of the photograph, most of the faces on the right side of the photograph are difficult to see because of the shadow cast down under their hats. Over all there is a sense of sternness in the expressions that are visible within the mob. Two men stand in the foreground opposite side one another forming pillars around the hanging body. The man on the left wears a news-boy cap tilted slightly forward, his arms crossed over his overalls, his head leaning leisurely against the post that holds the dead body. He looks tired, but pleased with himself. To the right of the photograph stands a man with his hands on his waste, his

porkpie hat is tilted up, revealing a sharp expression on his face. He looks serious, like he has been interrupted in the middle of something. In some ways, however, he also looks proud. He stands defiantly and looks directly into the camera. His hat has been pushed up so that his face could be visible, feeling no need to conceal his face. Along the bottom of the photograph a line of heads have been cropped, but the tops of their hats remain visible, their low height in relation to the rest of the figures suggests they may be children. The back of this postcard reads: "This is the barbeque we had last night. My picture is to the left with a cross over it. Your sone [sic], Joe." The cross above Joe's picture looks like an ink stain now, but he can still be identified at the bottom left hand corner. The brim of his hat covers his eyes, but the rest of his face is visible. His mouth hangs slightly open as he faces the camera.

The picture was taken on May 15, 1916 in Waco, Texas. The victim, Jesse Washington, had been accused of murdering a white woman even though no witnesses saw the crime. It took the jury just four minutes to return a guilty verdict, and probably even less time for the mob to swarm Washington's body and drag him outside. The photograph only reveals a small segment of what was done to Washington. It does not show, for example, Washington trying to climb up the iron chain he was hung from as he was lowered and raised above a fire. Nor does the photograph show the screaming boy's ears being cut off, or the white men cutting off his fingers to prevent him from climbing out of the fire. Finally, the photograph does not show the 15,000 spectators gathered to view the lynching.<sup>20</sup>

Washington's body was dismembered before he died and long after his charred corpse had cooled down. People ripped off pieces of his flesh and clothes while his body was still smoldering. His remains were then tied to the back of a horse and paraded around town.<sup>21</sup> For those who missed the chance to view the lynching or those who would view the photograph later, the image served as an extension of the moment it captured. The photographed reinforced notions of white superiority through its graphic testimony to black inferiority. Washington's contorted and mutilated body is difficult to identify as human, it has been utterly destroyed, and any likeness of a living human being has been removed.

### **Examining Violence through the Lens of Photography**

The terrain of lynching photography is difficult to navigate because it deals with dark, unfathomable acts of violence. But this is precisely why such photographs must be examined, not only because they serve as evidence against claims that blacks have not suffered at the hands of whites, but also because they remind us that even though lynching is no longer supported or ignored by legal institutions, black people—especially men—continue to experience widespread violence at the hands of whites in the name of law. In 2015 alone, police officers fatally shot 965 people.<sup>22</sup> Black men, who make up just 6 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for nearly 40 percent of those killed by law enforcement. Police violence as well as mass incarceration are both practices that are often taken for granted as being a part of the American justice system; much in the same way acts of violence at the hands of lynching mobs were deemed a justifiable and morally sound form of punishment for blacks in the past. The most effective way to begin changing this is to raise awareness by bringing such issues as racial violence to the forefront of national discussion. Anti-lynching campaigns, for example, used lynching photographs to show the consequences of white savagery. Photographs have multiple meanings that change with time. They may have once been viewed with pride and satisfaction, but today they can be reexamined within their historical context to learn how the past informs the present because, unlike lynching, racial violence continues to exist today.

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