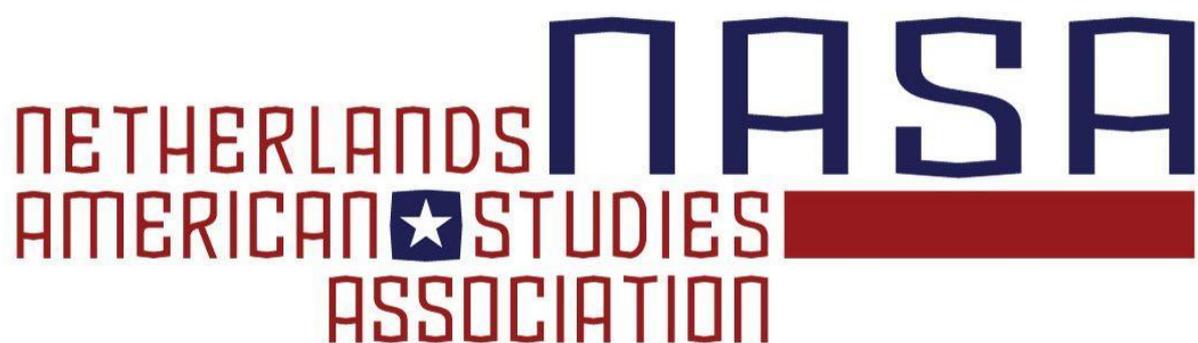


Netherlands American Studies Review

Fall 2022





Welcome

to the sixth edition of the Netherlands American Studies Review, the bi-annual student journal of the Netherlands American Studies Association (NASA). Our aim is to showcase excellent student work related to North American history, politics, literature, and society written at Dutch universities.

In this Fall 2022 issue, you will find eight carefully selected pieces that reflect the topical diversity and interdisciplinary nature of our field in the Netherlands. Our contributors cover a variety of issues, ranging from the memorialization of lynching to the Raging Grannies political movement and from President Donald Trumps' use of 'mocking politics' to the Americanization of ghostly encounters. These papers were written by students in different stages of their higher education, ranging from the early stages of their bachelor's to the final stages of their master's.

We are thankful for all the students who sent us their work, for the editors who worked tirelessly to select and fine-tune these papers, and, of course, for the NASA Board, which has supported us throughout the process. We are proud of the final product and hope it will inspire you as much as it did us.

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Embracing Vulnerability: A Case Study on “The Raging Grannies”

Maria Menzel | Universiteit van Amsterdam

This paper was written for the course of the Ravenstein Winter School “Literature, (Neo)liberalism, and Public Culture” for the RMA in Literary Studies

The first “gaggle” of Raging Grannies was formed in Victoria, Canada, shortly after the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl in 1987. Their first self-written, satirical protest song was performed for Patrick Crofton, then-Chairman of the Canadian Defence Committee, to encourage him to take action on nuclear issues.¹ Since then, around 100 local chapters of the organization have emerged worldwide, in particular in the US and Canada.² The Grannies describe the goal of their organization as “promoting peace, justice, social and economic equality through song and humour.”³ Broadly speaking, they protest for social justice, human rights, and environmental protection.⁴ Men are not allowed to become members of the movement. However, partners or relatives of Grannies sometimes contribute or help out. One does not have to be a biological grandmother to join a local chapter.⁵

This essay will examine how the Raging Grannies utilize vulnerability in their protests. I propose that the Grannies simultaneously embrace their vulnerability as elderly women and use it to the advantage of their protests, while also making their audience reflect on ageist and sexist stereotypes that cast older women as passive and apolitical. To examine this hypothesis, I will be doing a close reading of the lyrics of several protest songs that Grannies have written about themselves, as well as consulting videos and interviews of Grannies protesting. My analysis is heavily informed by field research done by social studies scholars, such as interviews with members of the movement or participatory observations gathered by attending meetings and protests of the Raging Grannies. To limit the scope of this paper, I focus primarily on the activities of the US Raging Grannies.

I argue that the Raging Grannies political movement offers insight into forms of resistance in the current moment, in which not just the economic order but private spheres are shaped by neoliberal modes of governmentality. Lauren Berlant has argued that the affective atmosphere in neoliberal economies is shaped by an increasing sense of precarity.⁶ Causes of the experiences of precarity include the rise of austerity measures, the loss of social welfare and the casualization of labor, but also a general sense of precarity caused by climate change or the dangers of global terrorism.⁷ Because of how far-reaching these experiences of precarity are, neoliberalism is not just defined in this essay as an economic model but also as a cultural product or mode of governance which “produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behaviour, and a new organization of the social.”⁸ In her essay “Bouncing Back: Vulnerability and Resistance in Times of Resilience”, sociologist Sarah Bracke builds on these theorizations of neoliberalism as shaping subjectivities. She argues that one way this is done is by presenting resilience as a coping strategy for dealing with experiences of precarity.⁹ She traces cultural narratives which uphold the resilience of the subject as a way of becoming more self-sufficient and easily overcoming and recovering from disasters.¹⁰ Within these narratives, the neoliberal,

resilient subject is built on denying and overcoming vulnerability.¹¹ Bracke argues that the focus on overcoming limits the possibilities of collective and individual resistance since it prevents the imagining of alternatives outside the relationality of neoliberalism.¹² Using Bracke's criticism of the concept of resilience, I argue that the Grannies offer an alternative to the relationality of neoliberalism and that their approach to activism could be influential in creating more sustainable social justice movements which embrace the vulnerability of the individual.

Through their active membership in a political organization, the Grannies subvert ageist and sexist stereotypes, which would cast older women as passive and no longer actively engaging in the political (or indeed public) sphere.¹³ Traditionally, grandmas are seen as sweet, old ladies, making the name of the Raging Grannies movement seem oxymoronic.¹⁴ However, the Grannies instrumentalize their perceived vulnerability and frailty to their own advantage and to the advantage of others in their protests. For example, some gaggles have formed human chains around other protestors, protecting them from police interference.¹⁵ Grannies report that the police is sometimes reluctant to take action against them, since manhandling "sweet, old ladies" would be seen as unfavorable in the media.¹⁶ They have also used their non-traditional protestor identity to crash meetings or enter venues, where they then perform their self-written protest songs.¹⁷ Therefore, I conclude that the Grannies do not see resistance and vulnerability as opposed, but rather embrace the vulnerability that comes with their corporeality. Their use of their perceived vulnerability as part of their protests is by no means unique in the world; protest groups like the "Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo" in Argentina or individual protestors like Alexandra Wong -nicknamed Grandma Wong - during the anti-government protests in Hong Kong in 2019, have gained international media attention, in part due to their unique protestor identity.¹⁸

Their self-written protest songs feature many references to health issues some members may be dealing with or that come with old age. For example, the song "Raging Grannies are Conspiring," describes the Grannies as having "Metal in their hips / Metal in their knees."¹⁹ In "Criminal Grans" the singers refer to themselves as "a geriatric menace."²⁰ These lyrics have a twofold effect. Firstly, they illustrate that the Grannies are constantly aware of their own physical limitations, which impact their capacity to participate in protests. In an interview, Vicki Ryder of the Rochester, New York gaggle describes what this awareness can entail: "We have to always be mindful that there's a bathroom nearby, because we're not able to hold it as well as we used to."²¹ Secondly, their audience is reminded of the challenges the Grannies have taken on to perform for them, or indeed to be at the protest at all. Philosopher Judith Butler has argued that all protests are embodied enactments of vulnerability since the protestors are deliberately exposing themselves to power.²² This enactment of vulnerability is essential to non-violent protest.²³ The Grannies emphasis on their own vulnerability in their protest songs adds urgency to the criticism they are voicing through their songs.

Sociologists' research on the movement has found that the Grannies celebrate aging through their songs and performances.²⁴ For example, in her research in the field of aging studies, Dana Sawchuk describes how the gaggles "flaunt their status as older women" not just

through their protest songs, but for example by staging knit-ins, or incorporating rocking chairs and wheelchairs into performances.²⁵ Their collective celebration of their “grandmother-status” is further highlighted by the bright and colorful costumes they usually wear. The costumes satirize pop cultural conceptions of traditional grandmothers’ outfits, consisting of long skirts, shawls, and hats, sometimes covered in buttons with political messages. These costumes make them recognizable to other protestors and their audience. Grannies have reported that this feeling of collectivity gives them strength. As Raging Grannies, they feel less pressured to conform to social conventions, seeing this fearlessness coming from their many life experiences, but also the comfort offered by being part of a group.²⁶ This attitude is illustrated in the song “Oh Dear What Can The Matter Be?” in which the protestors sing “Well, these gray mares, we ain’t what we used to be./ We’ve given up on respectability./ Don’t give a fig for acceptability./ We’re far too AWESOME to care.”²⁷ The protest songs celebrate the collectivity of the group.²⁸ In jointly embracing their status as older women and freely sharing their own vulnerabilities through their songs, the Grannies have created a movement in which they feel comfortable expressing their political opinions. The Raging Grannies use their songs and costumes to make themselves seen and heard as a political force. Grannies report that their unconventional performances help the causes they support gain media attention.²⁹ In forming groups, the older women are also able to voice their political agency, making themselves visible in the public space.³⁰ In short, the Grannies have converted their vulnerabilities into an effective means to protest injustices.

The Grannies songs illustrate that they do not take themselves too seriously. In examining the use of humor in their protest songs and their movement, I argue that the Grannies rely on incongruity humor in their performances and use it to convince their audiences of their political message. Theories surrounding incongruity humor propose that we laugh at jokes because we are surprised by the sharp contrast between what we see or hear and what is assumed to be “normal”.³¹ This is opposed to superiority humor, in which case jokes are an affirmation of someone else’s perceived weakness.³² The Grannies attack their opponents using their protest songs, expressing their anger openly. This is exemplified in their song, “God Help America,” which members of the Tucson gaggle of Grannies performed in a local army recruitment center on July 13, 2005.³³ The Grannies had entered the building after claiming they wanted to enlist in order for their grandchildren to come home.³⁴ After reading a paper stating their views on the Iraq war, they were asked to leave the building by one of the recruiters. The Grannies declared they still had to sing a song, proceeding with:

“God help America
We need you BAD!
Cause our leaders are cheaters
And they’re making the world really mad.

Climbing Mountains, crossing oceans
And invading foreign soil...
God help America
No blood for oil,

God forgive America
No blood for oil!"³⁵

When they were finished singing, one of the Grannies was heard saying "and God bless your grandchildren." After their protest, five of the Grannies were accused of trespassing, however, the charges were later dropped.³⁶

In their research into the use of everyday actions as means of protest, Johanna Siméant and Christophe Traïni have found that music is useful for social movements when they must "modulate their modes of action," based on their audience. A message in a song will probably not illicit a strong reaction from any opposition. The Grannies use their stereotypical costumes and songs set to the tunes of folk songs to persuade the audience "to let their guard down," encouraging them to sympathize with the song's message.³⁷ While their protest songs often feature scathing lyrics, the Grannies also admit to their own weaknesses and poke fun at themselves in their songs, as established in the previous section. Furthermore, the Grannies expressly state that members do not need to have singing experience to join, so most of their performances are not polished and perfected. By engaging in incongruity humor, the Grannies rely on the absurdity of hearing women disguised as sweet old ladies say rude things to disarm their opposition.³⁸ Not only does this humor encourage the bystanders to think critically about any gendered or ageist assumptions they might have, but it also decreases the risk of alienating their audience.³⁹

Humor scholars have debated whether the humorous delivery of a political message increases or decreases the chance that it will effect political change. Some scholars like Michael Billig have argued that humor in the political sphere often reinforces dominant values and views as political jokes often create stereotypes at the expense of certain groups. Therefore, the use of humor cannot effect real political change.⁴⁰ Other scholars have highlighted the power of humor in educating audiences by encouraging critical reflection, its "potential in facilitating outreach and mobilization" by making political protests more palatable to larger audiences, and its role in maintaining non-violent protests.⁴¹ It is difficult to establish what change the Grannies protest in Tucson effected. The recruiter interviewed after their performance did not express any doubts about his employer or the Iraq war. However, he did not comment negatively on the protestors' message, simply stating that policy changes were made by elected officials and that the Grannies should protest at their offices rather than military recruitment centers.⁴²

While it is difficult to trace the impact of the Grannies' performances on individual's political opinions, the movement was placed under US federal surveillance in 2003 on the basis that their civil disobedience might take more aggressive forms in the future.⁴³ They were also monitored as a terrorist threat by the California National Guard in 2005.⁴⁴ The Grannies refer to this in the song "Raging Grannies are Conspiring": "Raging Grannies are conspiring/ To make their audience laugh./ Satire is so very frightening/ It's clearly a **TERRORIST** path."⁴⁵ At the very least, such surveillance illuminates the impact of the Grannies humorous protests on those who oppose them.

In what ways can other activists learn from the Raging Grannies political movement? I argue that their organization can serve as inspiration for ways to create more emotionally

sustainable and inclusive activist movements, namely by embracing vulnerability and thereby avoiding activist burnout. A growing body of scholarship which examines burnouts caused by activist work has found that those involved in organizing around social justice and human rights issues are especially susceptible to burning out.⁴⁶ Activists suffering from this type of burnout describe their symptoms as deteriorating physical, psychological, and emotional health, as well as feelings of hopelessness.⁴⁷ For this analysis, I will be drawing on interviews Grannies have given about their motivations to join the organization and participatory observations collected at the Seattle Raging Grannies Unconvention in 2016.

In several interviews, Grannies have stated that their personal motivation for participating in a social justice movement is a feeling of responsibility towards others who are in a less privileged position than they are. They see it as their responsibility to speak on behalf of younger generations.⁴⁸ As most of the members of the organization are retired, they have more free time to engage in activism. In the interviews, one younger member of the organization even stated that she was looking forward to her own retirement, since she would have more time to fight for social justice.⁴⁹ Most Grannies no longer have to worry about coordinating activism with childcare and/or a job.⁵⁰ With these burdens off the shoulders of the predominantly white, middle-class members of the Raging Grannies, they have the means and the time to engage in the emotional labor of activism.⁵¹ The Grannies are aware of this (generational) privilege and choose to speak out for causes which predominantly affect younger generations, such as protesting draft offices or environmental issues.

Many Grannies have been activists for most of their lives. Their interviews illustrate an awareness of the added burden activists take on. The emotional labor that goes into activism can deeply affect the consciousness. However, activists who have had a burnout report that because of a culture which encourages selflessness and a certain sense of martyrdom, acts of self-care are often interpreted as a lack of commitment by fellow activists. As a consequence, activists oftentimes neglect their own well-being.⁵² This lack of self-care encourages activist burnout, followed by “people scaling back on or fully disengaging from their [...] activism.”⁵³ Activist burnout therefore not only affects the individuals, but also threatens the sustainability of social justice movements. Scholars like Byung-Chul Han and Pascal Chabot have traced how “neoliberal capitalist political economies, which are centered around values of meritocracy, hyperindividualism, and freemarket competition” are encouraging affective states like burnout.⁵⁴ The trend towards activists ignoring their own well-being is in line with the popularization of the “resilient self” under the neoliberal cultural project.⁵⁵ Protestors feel that admitting to feelings of vulnerability would signal a lack of strength or convictions on their part, therefore they deny their own vulnerability and present themselves as resilient, much to the detriment of their own mental health.

The Grannies, in contrast, offer an alternative to the resilient self which is perpetuated through neoliberalism. As previously illustrated, the Grannies embrace and openly discuss their own physical vulnerabilities in their songs. When organizing protests with young activists, the Grannies are also open to learning from these younger activists, confronting their own shortcomings and showing willingness to listen and (un)learn.⁵⁶ May Chazan and Melissa Baldwin point to the example of their participation in the 2016 Unconvention, where the

Grannies foregrounded younger, racialized activists' contributions to a panel discussion, thus rejecting the idea that as older women they have the most expertise.⁵⁷ This panel discussed and reviewed a protest of the Shell No Action Coalition on June 9th 2015, which the Grannies had participated in. They had chained themselves together, while sitting on rocking chairs blocking the train tracks a controversial Shell oil rig was meant to travel down. They were to serve as a distraction to police while younger environmental activists "carr[ied] on with other organizing".⁵⁸ This action again illustrates how the Grannies use their perceived frailty and the projection of vulnerability to protect younger, racialized protestors, as well as finding ways to protest which are mindful of their own bodily needs (sitting down in the rocking chairs).⁵⁹ This example of the Grannies' partnership with other protest movements can be seen as evidence of their willingness to experience discomfort and uncertainty whilst further educating themselves. As such, I propose that their movement as a whole shows how activists can resist resilience and embrace their own vulnerability. Following the lead of the Raging Grannies could help activists avoid burnouts and lead to more sustainable social justice movements.

The Raging Grannies embrace their own vulnerability in their activism, through their protest songs, and in their work in collaboration with other activists. Essential to their activism is the celebration of collectivity, as well as using humor to disarm their audiences. Together, the Grannies do not just speak out against diverse causes, such as social injustice or environmental issues, but also subvert ageist and sexist stereotypes, which cast older women as apolitical and passive. The way they protest and organize themselves can be seen as resisting resilience as propagated by the broader neoliberal cultural project. In connecting the concept of resilience as developed by Sarah Bracke to the rise of activist burnout, I have illustrated how the Grannies' outlook on activism can be mobilized to create more sustainable social justice movements.

Notes

¹ Roy, "Herstory - Raging Grannies International."

² Manzo, "Grandmas Unite against Injustice: Raging Grannies."

³ "Raging Grannies International."

⁴ Roy, "When Wisdom Speaks Sparks Fly: Raging Grannies Perform Humor as Protest," 151.

⁵ Sawchuk, "The Raging Grannies," 174.

⁶ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 192.

⁷ Butler, Gambetti, and Sabsay, *Vulnerability in Resistance*, 3.

⁸ "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy," 37.

⁹ Bracke, "Bouncing Back," 56-57.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58-63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 59, 70.

¹² *Ibid.*, 63-65.

¹³ Sawchuk, "The Raging Grannies," 176.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁷ Roy, "When Wisdom Speaks Sparks Fly: Raging Grannies Perform Humor as Protest," 156.

¹⁸ Kwan, "Hong Kong Activist 'Grandma Wong' Jailed for Eight Months over pro-Democracy Protests"; Goñi, "40 Years Later, the Mothers of Argentina's 'disappeared' Refuse to Be Silent."

¹⁹ Rostholder, "Raging Grannies Are Conspiring."

²⁰ Marlene, "Criminal Grans."

²¹ *They Named Me Vicki*, 4:13- 4:19.

- ²² Butler, Gambetti, and Sabsay, *Vulnerability in Resistance*, 22.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ²⁴ Sawchuk, “The Raging Grannies,” 180.
- ²⁵ Sawchuk, 179; Kaplan, “Meet the 92-Year-Old ‘Raging Granny’ Who Just Got Arrested for Protesting Arctic Oil Drilling.”
- ²⁶ Sawchuk, “The Raging Grannies,” 177.
- ²⁷ Edmonton Grannies, “Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?”
- ²⁸ Siméant and Traïni, *Bodies in Protest*, 114.
- ²⁹ Sawchuk, “The Raging Grannies,” 172.
- ³⁰ Roy, “When Wisdom Speaks Sparks Fly: Raging Grannies Perform Humor as Protest,” 153–54.
- ³¹ Voelz and Freischläger, “Toward an Aesthetics of Populism, Part II: The Aesthetics of Polarization : Toward an Aesthetics of Populism, Part II: The Aesthetics of Polarization,” 279.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 278.
- ³³ Associated Press, “Tucson Drops Charges Against Five ‘Granny’ War Protesters.”
- ³⁴ *WILPF’s Raging Grannies Occupy a Recruitment Center...and Appear on the Today Show!*, 01:14 –01:18.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 01:29 –04:55
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 04:59 ; Associated Press, “Tucson Drops Charges Against Five ‘Granny’ War Protesters.”
- ³⁷ Siméant and Traïni, *Bodies in Protest*, 113; Kutz-Flamenbaum, “Humor and Social Movements,” 298.
- ³⁸ Voelz and Freischläger, “Toward an Aesthetics of Populism, Part II: The Aesthetics of Polarization : Toward an Aesthetics of Populism, Part II: The Aesthetics of Polarization,” 278; Kutz-Flamenbaum, “Humor and Social Movements,” 295.
- ³⁹ Rachel V. Kutz-Flamenbaum, “Code Pink, Raging Grannies, and the Missile Dick Chicks: Feminist Performance Activism in the Contemporary Anti-War Movement,” 96; Kutz-Flamenbaum, “Humor and Social Movements,” 298.
- ⁴⁰ Tsakona and Popa, *Studies in Political Humour*, 2–9.
- ⁴¹ Branagan, “The Last Laugh: Humour in Community Activism,” 472–76; Sørensen, “Humor as a Serious Strategy of Nonviolent Resistance to Oppression,” 185.
- ⁴² *WILPF’s Raging Grannies Occupy a Recruitment Center...and Appear on the Today Show!*, 10:56 – 11:03.
- ⁴³ Sanders, “A Federal Eye on the Raging Grannies.”
- ⁴⁴ Roy, “When Wisdom Speaks Sparks Fly: Raging Grannies Perform Humor as Protest,” 158.
- ⁴⁵ Rostholder, “Raging Grannies Are Conspiring.”
- ⁴⁶ Chen and Gorski, “Burnout in Social Justice and Human Rights Activists,” 366.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 375.
- ⁴⁸ Sawchuk, “The Raging Grannies,” 180.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.
- ⁵⁰ *They Named Me Vicki*, 03:35– 03:43.
- ⁵¹ Sawchuk, “The Raging Grannies,” 174; Chen and Gorski, “Burnout in Social Justice and Human Rights Activists,” 368.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 368.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 366.
- ⁵⁴ Han and Butler, *The Burnout Society*; Chabot and Krefetz, *Global Burnout*; De Mul, “Beyond Burnout Culture?,” 62.
- ⁵⁵ Bracke, “Bouncing Back,” 53.
- ⁵⁶ Chazan and Baldwin, “Granny Solidarity,” 254–55.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 251.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 251–52.

Controversy Sells: Donald Trump's use of 'mocking politics' during the presidential campaign of 2015.

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This paper was written for the course Democracy and Distrust: An American Case Study for the MA program in North American Studies

“Good publicity is preferable to bad, but from a bottom-line perspective, bad publicity is sometimes better than no publicity at all. Controversy, in short, sells.”¹ - Donald J. Trump

Former reality television celebrity and business tycoon Donald J. Trump garnered international media attention for his seemingly unprecedented use of ‘mocking politics’ during his presidential campaign in 2015. A year later, the controversial Republican nominee was elected President of the United States. From the start of this campaign, mocking politics were integral to the Trump brand: Trump said it as it was and had no time for the political correctness that his contemporaries clung to. An example is Trump’s use of inflammatory hate speech against Mexicans during his announcement speech, saying that “[t]hey’re bringing in crime. They’re rapists.”² Another instance was his appearance at the Family Leadership Summit in Iowa, during which Trump attacked Senator John McCain, stating “[h]e’s not a war hero because he got captured.”³ Trump’s popularity soared following this verbal attack, not even deterring his pro-military supporters.⁴ While name-calling was firmly a part of the Trump strategy, personal attacks from his political rivals were unpopular and criticized by the public.⁵

How could this political newcomer, whose unfavorable ratings and unfiltered attacks led to denunciations from other Republicans, win both the Republican nomination *and* the presidency?⁶ Approaching this question requires us to analyze the use of mocking politics in American political history. This article opposes the common notion that Trump was a ‘one-of-a-kind’ political outlier, instead placing him in an established pattern of American populist rhetoric. It explores Trump’s use of insults as a manipulatory tool used to shut down the political debate while securing public support. In doing so, this article also extends its analysis to the role of global, mainstream, and conservative press in acting as an enabling device for spreading distrust, disinformation, and polarization for profit during this time and throughout the presidency. The financial gain of covering the candidate was so beneficial to news outlets that Trump became the most heavily covered political candidate of the presidential campaign.⁷

Trump gained support during a turbulent political climate in America. The 2008 financial crisis, the first Black president of the United States, and the ongoing War on Terror provided a fertile environment for right-wing populism. Trump’s use of Twitter to spread controversial political statements and engage directly with the American public strengthened the notion of being ‘for the people’ while simultaneously reinforcing himself to be ‘against

the establishment.’ Coverage of Trump’s controversies equated to such media revenue that his brand was promoted globally. This article argues that the turbulent political climate and uncertain economic conditions acted as an enabling device for Trump to increasingly (ab)use the online sphere and mainstream media outlets in the run-up to his candidacy announcement to successfully ignite distrust *in* and *for* the branches of the American government.

In many ways, Trump reflects the long tradition of right-wing populism in American politics. Historian Richard Hofstadter pointed to Senator Joseph McCarthy’s (R-Wis.) speech in 1951, which posed the question “[h]ow can we account for our present situation unless we believe that men high in this government are concerting to deliver us to disaster?”⁸ Hofstadter answered McCarthy’s question by referring to an 1895 manifesto from the Populist party that argued, “conspirators have kept the people quarreling over less important matters while they have pursued with unrelenting zeal their one central purpose.”⁹ A populist government stays relevant in a democratic society when its leader can successfully convince voters that their primary policy goals are to secure state interests. They call on the current political establishment to account for policy choices, without necessarily providing a better option. In doing so, populists are often more successful than centrists at dividing the public and changing voting patterns.¹⁰ Historian Michael Kazin defines populism as “a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bounded narrowly by class, view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic, and seek to mobilize the former against the latter.”¹¹ Considering this in the context of Trump, he placed his political opponents as the causal factor for issues in America such as federal political trust, the economic recession, and foreign policy.

Creating distrust in government – and by default, the current democratic system – creates a society of two hostile groups: the public versus corrupt leadership, or the ‘swamp,’ a dominant group that controls the nation using elitist structures. While the idea of ‘draining the swamp’ was notable under Trump, it can again be traced back through American political history. It was first used politically in 1903 by Socialist Democratic Party organizer Winfield R. Gaylord to describe the socialist ambition of ending capitalism.¹² By creating space between himself and the ‘swamp,’ including many established Republicans, Trump convinced many voters that his political ambition was moral.¹³ With no political or military experience, Trump vowed to stand up to the ‘swamp’ and to ‘drain’ it, securing support from many blue-collar workers despite being a billionaire himself. This hostility and polarization were legitimated by his presidential success, which consequently secured Trump the highest platform in the world to discredit the American political establishment. From this position, he was ultimately able to build momentum against the democratic process, which eventually peaked at the January 6 attack on the Capitol.

Trump has been associated with the American populist tradition for his decision-making, which aligns with established right-wing populist tendencies. From the lens of Erich Fromm, a social psychologist and psychoanalyst associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory and author of *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), we can see how Trump’s mocking politics points to authoritarianism, establishing himself as “a person

with an intense desire to control, hurt, humiliate, another person.”¹⁴ Trump gained support by igniting a backlash against cultural change.¹⁵ Using the American notion of protectionism, Trump took a harsh stance on import tariffs from China, immigration from Mexico, and multilateral organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the World Trade Organization. Seeking to lead a new economic nationalist movement, while opposing international agreements on environmental protection, immigration, and gender equality, Trump modeled much of his campaign around the protectionist tendencies of nineteenth-century populist President Andrew Jackson.¹⁶ Both sought to disrupt the political status quo, running their campaigns against corruption. Trump’s candidacy was therefore not unique, but instead, a globally resurging movement that encompassed the Brexit referendum (2016) as well as the advancement of authoritarian-populist parties in countries such as Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and Switzerland.¹⁷

Trump’s brand of right-wing populism can be traced back to other moments in modern American history. His ‘swamp’ rhetoric aligns closest to that of the 1940s anti-New Dealers. The election of Franklin Roosevelt paved the way for globalist America as we know it today; yet, anti-New Dealers did not see this as a revival of the America they envisioned, but as a radical reinvention.¹⁸ They considered Democrats as the party of organized labor, whereas Republicans focused on large businesses and wealth.¹⁹ Fighting the establishment enabled right-wing populists to distance themselves from the political status quo, allowing them to expose the ‘corrupt’ system. While Trump’s language resonates with that of the 1940s, his supporter base is analogous to that of Richard Nixon’s and specifically those who remained loyal to him throughout the Watergate scandal.²⁰ Gallup polls show that thirty-one percent of American adults remained supportive of Nixon even when it became clear that he would be impeached by the Senate and despite the criminal charges against him.²¹ Similarly, despite the negative press throughout Trump’s first impeachment hearing by the Senate, he kept his approval rating among voters on the higher end of his thirty-five percent to forty-six percent range, with it reaching forty-five during the hearing.²²

Considering the context in which Trump gained his support is vital to understanding his appeal. The initial rise of populism coincided with the 2008 financial crisis, which shattered the faith of several Americans in the liberal economic order that had dominated the global economic system since the end of the Cold War. The collapse of global trade shot a wave of distrust through the American population. Therefore, Trump’s pledge to ‘drain the swamp’ of the corrupt American leadership appealed to many who felt let down by President Barack Obama.²³ Trump’s campaign targeted communities where well-paid jobs for less-educated citizens were rare. Gaining strong support in states with older voters reflected the distrust that Americans had in the post-recession climate.²⁴ In this particular political climate, right-wing populism erupted into American politics. Pushing back against tax increases and government spending, populism held the government accountable and called for reduced government interference, debt reduction, no tax increases, and no new spending. Trump’s language has drawn in Americans from communities left behind by the global economy’s rapid modernization, such as unskilled workers, single-parent households, small businesses and faith-based groups.²⁵ As theologian Douglas Kellner observed, “Trump

masquerades as a ‘voice of the forgotten man,’ as he advances a political agenda that largely benefits the rich and the military, and is a clear and present danger to US democracy and global peace, constituting an American nightmare for the world.”²⁶ Trump’s voting base was successfully convinced that they had been replaced by the favored minorities in society instead. His support was so strong that it secured him the Republican nomination, after which many other Republican voters fell in line for the general election.

Responding to the aforementioned events, Trump emerged alongside the Tea Party movement in 2009 as a rare – though not unique – phenomenon in American politics. The Tea Party was an outburst of fiscally conservative grass-roots activism that was funded by corporate wealth, supported by the right-wing media establishment, and welcomed by the Republican party.²⁷ The movement supports libertarian conservatism, advocating for optimum economic liberty and minimal government regulation. Passionately opposing Obama’s government expansion, they were instrumental to the election of a Republican majority in the House of Representatives in 2011. Tea Party rallies were aired on the Fox News network, right-wing talk radio programs, and podcasts.²⁸ They featured Fox News personalities and demonstrators who carried signs that called Obama a Muslim and yelled insulting slurs at members of Congress who helped to pass the Affordable Care Act.²⁹ Trump’s successful run for office should therefore be viewed as part of a tradition of right-wing populism and a triumph for the Tea Party movement.

Trump’s election victory confirmed that his authoritarian manner gave him the mandate to bypass the ‘corrupt’ establishment: the judiciary branch, opposition parties, politicians, career intelligence officials, bureaucrats, and journalists.³⁰ He did this by making contradictory – and often confusing – statements that left the reader to determine what they wanted to hear from these statements. This can be seen in his pledges to cooperate with governors and then encouraging citizens to liberate themselves. Equally, Trump’s personal attacks on members of his own party created a sense of in-fighting and uncertainty that encouraged many to vote for Trump as opposed to voting Republican or Democrat. His disdain democratic norms such as the democratic voting process in America and freedom of the press has only led to increased or even hyper-loyalty to Trump. At the same time, his admiration for authoritarian rulers such as Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong Un and Xi Jinping (among others) implied that only he was able to forge alliances with many of America’s adversaries. By implying that anyone he did not personally endorse was corrupt, Trump’s left-wing critics have seen an all-round loss of faith in the government system because Trump could act in a confusing, inconsistent, and undisputed manner.

Personal attacks and critiques are not unique to Trump’s political campaign. It is a common tool used within American political campaigning that has a long history. Using norm-breaking language is a political strategy. During the campaign of 1800, Thomas Jefferson referred to John Adams as a “Blind, Bald, Crippled, Toothless Man.”³¹ Obama has fought off accusations of political opponents of being a secret Muslim and lying about his ancestry for over a decade. Even Trump’s slogan: ‘Make America Great Again’ was first used ahead of the 1940 presidential election by Senator Alexander Wiley, and thereafter has been used as Ronald Reagan’s campaign slogan.³² Where Trump departs from ‘attack’ politics to

‘mocking’ politics is his distinctive campaign rhetoric. Twitter formed an integral part of Trump’s political communication, as he used the platform to express hostility towards his opposition and the establishment.³³ It enabled Trump to directly speak out against the government, inciting distrust of national policies and elected statesmen. Trump tweeted over 8,000 times during his campaign, often posting controversial or false statements.³⁴ He created a new style of communication between the president and the public that directly bypassed the White House Press Secretary, stating this method to be “not Presidential – it’s MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL.”³⁵ This form of communication was the most important political tool of his presidential campaign. Choosing instead to announce policy moves or staff replacements himself, Trump rebelled against the status quo, confirming that he was a force to be reckoned with for the establishment.

Fake news, a concept popularized by Trump to cast doubt upon legitimate news sources and opposing political views, perpetuated false facts for political gain. In a dataset of 171 million tweets in the five months prior to the election, thirty million tweets that contained a link to a news item from 2.2 million users found that twenty-five percent contained incorrect or extremely biased news. This study determined that Trump supporters were more likely to engage with any type of news, whereas Clinton supporters were more likely to interact with news from the center and left, ignoring articles from the right.³⁶ Trump also retweeted messages from unverified accounts, often lacking information about the user’s identity. Trump has retweeted several racist and antisemitic memes and messages.³⁷ These actions have been widely condemned by American and international politicians, news outlets, religious leaders, and civil rights organizations.³⁸ In the summer of 2016, the non-partisan website PolitiFact rated seventy-eight percent of Trump’s campaign claims as false.³⁹ For example, an image retweeted by Trump in 2015 claimed that eighty-one percent of white murder victims were killed by Black people.⁴⁰ It is also important to note the spike in anti-Muslim hate crimes throughout the presidential election in 2016, which can be attributed in part to the use of social media.⁴¹ Trump’s use of Twitter received praise in far-right circles, increasing racist content on social media with his ability to share false statistics with over seventy-six million followers.

One of Trump’s most effective tactics has been the nicknames of political opponents. A *New York Times* report categorized Trump’s tweets from June 2015 to January 2016 and found that most of his insults were directed at American politicians, both Republicans and Democrats, with one in eight tweets being a personal insult.⁴² “Crooked Hillary” and “Sleepy Joe” reduced and satirized political authority. Clinton’s nicknames encouraged a wave of hatred from Trump’s supporters, who famously chanted “Lock her up! Lock her up! Lock her up!” in 2016.⁴³ There is a clear interplay of self-promotion and power strategy in this online discourse.⁴⁴ Trump’s targets are singled out, and he discredits their political standing.⁴⁵ Trump made the campaign a competition of personalities instead of policy issues. For example, the racially-charged “Pocahontas” nickname for Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren – whose Native American ancestry he disputed – revived a dispute over her motivation to abuse her ancestry to advance her career.⁴⁶ In the same way, the term “crooked” reminds us of Hillary Clinton. This is an important aspect of the tactic that is all too often

overlooked: Trump associated these candidates with traits that suggested they were unworthy leaders, reinforcing the concept that only he was good enough. By linking words such as ‘lying’ and ‘crooked’ to other candidates, Trump forged a separation between winners and losers, categories that were not present before.⁴⁷ As author John K. Wilson observed in *Careless Trump*, “Trump turns his offensive statements into a heroic act of resistance against the forces of political correctness,” enabling him to justify every comment while gaining support for himself.⁴⁸ In an era of scripted political statements and focus-grouped phrases, Trump stood out.

Perhaps the most important aspect of his mocking politics was the media’s underestimation of Trump as a serious candidate for the presidency. A tabloid circus is a natural arena for someone with a background in reality television. Steering away from the traditional forms of presidential communication, Trump operated primarily through full-media coverage press conferences which were live-streamed across his social media networks. Social networks and news media are entrenched within the Republican Party network. As scholar Arlie Hochschild noted, “Fox News stands next to industry, state government, church, and the regular media as an extra pillar of political culture all its own.”⁴⁹ Political scientists have embraced the theory that parties are not confined to political organizations but rather are made up of different groups and outside organizations that share the same goals and ideals.⁵⁰ In light of this, it would make sense to consider whether the conservative media, mainly Fox News, actively functions *for* or *within* this institutional capacity. For example, Reagan’s presidency has been memorialized by conservative media as a standard to aspire to.⁵¹ While the conservative media has been dubbed an ‘echo chamber,’ it quickly became the pinnacle of reporting for Trump during his campaign, passing off the mainstream media as ‘fake,’ thereby inferring factually incorrect news. Consequently, much of the mainstream press became hyper-vigilant about reporting Trump’s misstatements: *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, and other news outlets took it upon themselves to become Trump’s fact-checkers, thereby playing directly into the notion that ‘any press is good press.’

The media spread Trump’s rhetoric across the globe in a way that no other presidential candidate had been covered by the news before. Trump got the majority of media time during candidacy debates in 2015 and 2016, and cable news hyped up events with crawlers on TV screens stating, “waiting for Trump,” before these began. As Les Moonves, chairman of CBS, later acknowledged about Trump’s candidacy, it “may not be good for America, but it’s damn good for CBS.”⁵² The president of CNN, Jeff Zucker, admitted that he knew Trump would be a rating machine, calling him a media “phenomenon.”⁵³ The round-the-clock media coverage was a win-win situation for both left- and right-wing media: free publicity for Trump, increased political engagement, and revenue for news outlets.

While Trump’s Twitter is a culturally and historically significant phenomenon, writer Frank Rich from the *New York Intelligencer* argued that Trump’s tweets are news in their own right.⁵⁴ They indicated the heightened instability of the administration and are specifically put out there to target his supporters.⁵⁵ Although it remains essential to check the statements that come from American leadership, it is clear that the mainstream media did not report

on Trump to keep people updated. As Rich suggests, over-reportage transformed Trump's offensive statements into a principled act of resistance to the establishment. It fed into the narrative that he was the rebel within the political chaos, and therefore the only one able to offend and remove those in power. There is a paradox to this 'Trumpism': his supporters will continue to place their unconditional trust in a candidate who conversely calls on them to trust no one. The personal loyalties to Trump's character over his policies, in conjunction with the declined influence of advisory bodies and opposition to Congress, have set the framework for an imperial presidency – at least in rhetoric.

Trump's rise to political power was a triumphant moment in the long tradition of right-wing populism. His popularity should therefore be understood in the context of this tradition, fueled by the conservative and liberal media, establishment, and, at times, overtly racial appeals.⁵⁶ Traditional understandings of the media's role within political nominations are that they engage in direct communications with candidates as well as voters. The media's impact on the 2016 presidential race changed this role; not only did it impact the volume of coverage, but it also played an active role in the polarization of Americans. The media has become integrated within the candidacy and no longer provides content in the capacity of objective news outlets. Since announcing his presidential run, Trump has made front-page news nearly every day. It is not difficult to detect his enormous media presence. *The New York Times* reported that Trump earned two billion dollars' worth of free press in the first six months of his candidacy, and this undoubtedly impacted the support he accumulated. Trump has a pessimistic view of the world, which he encapsulated in the political vision that he conveys to his supporters through his immense online presence. Victory was the only purpose worth pursuing; a highly attractive quality for an American leader to have, but also a dangerous one. This latter quality played out on January 6, 2021. Five people died and over 138 police officers were injured following an attack on the US Capitol Building by Trump supporters, who sought to prevent the formalization of a newly elected president. This attack demonstrated the heavy blurring of political, online, and social boundaries, and is itself a reflection of the various forces that are eating away at the foundations of American democracy.

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Hearing the Lion's Story: The Politics of Remembering and Making Lynching History Visible in the Public Sphere in the 21st Century

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“The lion's story will never be told if the hunter is the one to tell it” - African Proverb

While the United States has a rich history, it has often been distorted at the expense of the experience and history of African Americans. When it comes to portraying a more accurate history of lynching in the United States, this old African proverb is today more powerful than ever. According to sociologist Christina Simko, “memories of lynching have long been absent from, and obscured by, dominant national narratives.”¹ In addition to the historical portrayal of lynching, the exclusion of other important African American historical events such as the Red Summer in 1919 and the Tulsa Race Massacre (1921) from the United States’ collective memory illustrates how anti-Black violence remains undervalued. Nevertheless, an active movement, which aims to rewrite historic wrongs, is growing, and debates about historical representation in terms of monuments are central to this development.² Under the leadership of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) the movement to recontextualize racist episodes from American history through memorialization has intensified.³

The increased visibility of contested memorial sites and practices is especially visible in America’s southern states, which are dotted with monuments that commemorate Confederate war efforts. This produces an uneven memorial landscape that pushes Black history further to the margins of American collective memory.⁴ Opponents of these monuments, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, argue that they honor a history of racism in the United States. Contrary to their beliefs, followers of the Lost Cause ideology, including former president Trump, argue that tearing down the monuments is erasing history and that these monuments were not built out of hatred but in honor of the soldiers who had died.⁵ Most of the Confederate monuments that exist, however, were not immediately constructed after the war but in the early 20th century at the rise of Jim Crow. A second wave of memorials was built in the 1950s and 1960s as White southerners felt their ‘way of life’ under increased pressure from the civil rights movement. This shows these memorials were not only erected to commemorate the Confederate past, but also to reaffirm White supremacy and intimidate African Americans.⁶ This shows that the debate over Confederate statues is really a flip side of the debate over African American monuments and says as much about the racial present as the debate over African American history because neither is taking place in a vacuum. It makes debates about a shared memory and historical representation through monuments extremely relevant today.

The efforts to remember the practice of lynching represent one of the most recent campaigns to battle historic amnesia of African American history. The National Memorial

for Peace and Justice (NMPJ), the first national lynching memorial, and the accompanied Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration (2018), both situated in Montgomery, Alabama, are at the forefront of this battle. The memorial, which has received broad international acclaim, remembers the 4,400 African Americans who were lynched in the United States between 1877-1950 and functions as a powerful medium for shedding light on the lasting legacies of slavery. According to African American civil rights lawyer and activist Bryan Stevenson, who founded the EJI and is the leading organization behind the creation of both memorial sites, addressing the root causes of racial injustice in America is fundamental in dismantling the racial status quo. He observes that racism remains deeply embedded in the political, economic, and social structure in American society. In order to analyze the potential role of monuments in the fight for social justice, this paper illuminates why, how, and what kinds of memory politics the EJI has utilized within the NMPJ to advance the continuous struggle for racial equality and justice today, as well as the ideological challenges that might have complicated their mission. By taking an interdisciplinary approach and drawing from history and memory studies, this paper discusses the representation of lynching and the context in which these representations within the NMPJ were created and how they reflect political, social, and cultural influences.⁷

Public efforts to remember lynching have coincided with renewed scholarly work on lynching.⁸ Since the beginning of the 21st century, historians have increasingly studied the relationship between lynching, remembrance, and memory.⁹ Studying lynching in relation to memory offers scholars and activists new opportunities to contest the dominant temporal boundaries of racial lynchings, which allows them to reveal the systemic nature of racial violence and the intergenerational traumas that caused it. The memory turn within lynching historiography can be traced back to the 1990s, when memory studies started to mushroom. One of the main contributions within memory studies has been the work of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who created the concept of “collective memory,” a shared memory of a certain group. According to Halbwachs, memories are inherently fragmented and selected versions of history which can be easily influenced by discourses of power.¹⁰ While scholars use varying terms for the concept of collective memory, they all agree that dominant narratives about the past shape the present.¹¹ According to Johnathan Markovitz, “the construction and deployment of collective memories is thus a thoroughly political process, validating some versions of the past while marginalizing others.”¹² What is written or remembered, and what is not about the past events, is dictated by whomever is in power. In addition to their academic publications, historians translate their research to a wide audience by bringing their academic insights to institutions, organizations, museums, and other important social or cultural places.

Collective memory has provided a framework for scholars who have argued that collective memories of America’s racial past emerge as a result of and are shaped through struggles between competing actors.¹³ These scholars take a critical look at the politics of American historical memory, in which the elevation of some historical narratives rest upon the suppression and marginalization of others. This challenges people to consider how racism and racial identity still fragment and fracture how Americans remember historical

phenomena. In this specific context, memory can also be defined as the distinctive voice of marginalized or historically disadvantaged groups. From this point of view, memory embodies the minoritized voice, whereas history represents a dominant view of the past, used to justify repressive historical narratives and legitimize one's position of power.¹⁴ Additionally, scholars who analyzed Black history memorials have argued that it is not only important to examine what exactly is being remembered, but also where it is being remembered.¹⁵

Memorials constitute crucial symbols of collective memory, as they are visible symbols of what a society chooses to remember and forget. Therefore, it is important to understand how the NMPJ shapes the collective memory of lynching. This paper focuses on several factors that helped "shape the ideological and symbolic power" of the memorial.¹⁶ First, it looks at the situational context of Montgomery as a city, defined by a history of slavery and civil rights protests. Second, it will look at the memorial's political framing of lynching as a systemic form of racial terror. The NMPJ will serve as a case study for an analysis of the ways in which collective memory of lynching takes shape on the American landscape and how it is influenced by the contemporary racial climate. It shows that the creation of the memorial and the memory produced by it are a constant reflection of the racial tensions that characterize America's past and present.

The United States has been shaped by difficult periods, during which people of color were oppressed, abused, exploited, and enslaved. In Montgomery, Alabama, a city with an African American majority, this history comes into sharp focus. Montgomery has a long history dealing with racial issues, which deeply shaped the city and its inhabitants from the early beginnings of slavery, through Jim Crow segregation, up to the current era of police violence and mass incarceration. The state of Alabama currently has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country and the highest number of capital punishments, which disproportionately affects people of color.¹⁷ Montgomery, meanwhile, was the site of extreme struggles around race and racism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Perhaps no era has dominated the city's history more than the era of racial segregation and the subsequent efforts of civil rights activist to disrupt it (1955-1965). Montgomery is therefore known as the birthplace of the modern civil rights movement, whilst also being the first capital of the Confederacy, something which has become visible in its memorial landscape.¹⁸ On the one hand, the city displays an obsession with memory and reflects the disputed and conflicting memory politics that "circulate, structure, and struggle to claim dominance" within a city.¹⁹ The city has many confederate monuments which romanticize the Confederacy through the Lost Cause ideology. During Reconstruction (1865-1877), an active movement to reshape the narratives around the Civil War proliferated through the myth of the Lost Cause, which wrote slavery out of the war's narrative and centered on the heroism of Confederate soldiers through the erection of hundreds of Confederate war monuments.²⁰ On the other hand, Montgomery is also the site of several important civil rights museums and memorials. Although Southern governmental administrations, including officials in Montgomery, have embraced commemorations of the civil rights era, they have been slow to come to grips with their legacies of White supremacy and other ways in which non-White citizens have

been historically marred by institutional racism. When the EJI put forward a proposal several years ago to erect markers that uncovered the role of the city in facilitating the institution of slavery, the Alabama Historical Association responded that it would be “too controversial.”²¹ It became evident that attempts to redress historical narratives of slavery were still met with fierce resistance. According to the memorial’s advocates, this is one of the reasons why a lynching memorial is urgently needed, which does not only commemorate lynchings, but also links episodes of racial terror, such as, slavery, lynching, and segregation to more contemporary forms of racism. The city is what cultural geographer Karen Till calls “a wounded city, defined by and in need of addressing the legacies of trauma, inequality, and displacement.”²²

The lynching memorial has emerged from, and speaks directly to, the complexity of Montgomery’s racial politics. Monument advocates and builders have had to navigate between varying interpretations of African American history, whilst also having to deal with the continued presence of White supremacist attitudes and monuments. While many people welcomed the NMPJ, several White locals responded to the opening by saying “they should let sleeping dogs lie,” “it’s a waste of money and a waste of space,” or “that it’s bringing up bullshit.”²³ Such bitter reactions of people who do not think it is necessary to dredge up the past show that the history of lynching remains incredibly fraught.

Within this polarized landscape, the EJI has utilized and shaped the collective memory of lynching in the NMPJ in their mission to represent a more accurate history. The memorial honors almost 4,400 African American men, women, and children who were lynched by White mobs from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 to 1950. It additionally calls attention to the millions of Black Americans who were terrorized by the violence. When entering the memorial, visitors walk across five large panels which provide historical context. These panels contextualize the memorial’s form and function by framing lynching as a systemic campaign of racial terror. According to the EJI, “racial terror lynchings were directly tied to the history of enslavement and the re-establishment of White supremacy after the Civil War.”²⁴ After the passage of constitutional amendments recognizing citizenship rights for Black Americans after the abolition of slavery, lynchings “were intended to terrorize Black Americans and enforce racial hierarchy.”²⁵ African Americans were assaulted, tortured, and killed, in many cases just because - according to their accusers - they had not complied with the discriminatory code of conduct imposed on them. White perpetrators were seldom persecuted for their brutality, even when violence was committed openly on courthouse lawns. Mutilated bodies were left out on display to terrorize others in the Black communities, and at times Black people were even forced to witness the gruesome events. White perpetrators often posed proudly and shamelessly in front of Black corpses. They captured these horrific moments in photographs and postcards, which were sent across the country to family members and friends.²⁶

The memorial itself includes multiple components, but the center of the site is the memorial square, a walkway with 800 six-foot Corten steel columns. The main memorial, an open-air construction with four roofed corridors, guides visitors through a classical building like the Parthenon.²⁷ The White classical architecture evokes the myth of a grand, Western,

and White civilization. Once visitors are inside, however, they are confronted by the dark history and realize this society was a source of barbarism rather than civilization. Visitors walk through the scattered columns not able to see the other side of the construction. As visitors turn the corner, the ground slowly drops below them, and their perspective of the columns starts to shift above eye-level making them look upwards. As they continue, the columns rise higher still, and visitors start to realize that these columns evoke hundreds of lynched bodies hanging from trees. Each column represents one of the 800 counties in the United States where lynchings have taken place, engraved with the names of each person - although many individuals remain listed as 'unknown' - and the date of their murder.

The memorial debunks the pervasive myth that these killings were isolated incidents rather than part of a legacy of systematic violence towards African Americans. Visitors have commented that they experienced the sheer number of columns as shocking, as they slowly start to realize the magnitude of the murders when walking through the memorial.²⁸ The 800 columns, American intellectual Susan Sontag acknowledged, were indeed meant to represent "the aggregate of anonymous victims, in which the power of numbers acts as empirical persuasion to help visitors understand the scope and extent of violence and oppression inflicted upon a population."²⁹

Dozens of stories of the people who were lynched for minor social transgressions line the walls of the memorial.³⁰ It is this way that visitors learn, often to their dismay, about the arbitrary and unreasonable nature of these lynchings. One of the panels, for example, reads: "Jim Eastman was lynched in Brunswick, Tennessee, in 1887 for not allowing a white man to beat him in a fight." Another panel reads: "Henry Patterson was lynched in Labelle, Florida, in 1926 for asking a white woman for a drink of water."³¹ These stories help to deconstruct the myth of lynching as a defensive practice to protect White women from African American men who were often falsely accused of rape. By including and recovering the names and stories of lynching victims, the memorial challenges the invisibility of lynching victims' lives.³²

Additionally, these columns show that killings occurred beyond Alabama, or the South, as the memorial underscores with the inclusion of states from California and Delaware. After a personal visit to the memorial, Ryan Dalton, an online writer for the Medium, wrote how he overheard White people from former Northern states visiting the memorial saying: "We didn't do this type of stuff up north. We fought to end slavery."³³ By consciously denying one's ancestors' involvement in the practice of slavery, these visitors attempted to abdicate themselves from the racial terror that occurred in the South, while in fact racial terror was not solely confined to the South. These claims to innocence by White Americans, however, function as a tool to maintain a racial status quo that enables the systemic oppression of African Americans.³⁴ Those reactions underscore the memorial's importance and the message it tries to convey as well as the tenacity of common White narratives about race that maintain the status quo.

The memorial also addresses the misconception of lynching as a form of gender-based violence, solely directed at African Americans males. By including the female experience, the memorial steps away from a more traditional approach of teaching the history

of Jim Crow and lynching that often centers its narratives around males. It subsequently shows that anyone within the African American community could fall victim to lynching, highlighting the indiscriminate nature of racial terrorism.³⁵ For example, it includes information on the lynching of Elizabeth Lawrence and Mary Turner. Black women are not just represented as bystanders as their spouses were murdered, but their names and narratives are included and subscribed on the rusty stelae. By expanding the historical narrative of lynching and including women, the memorial challenges a common misconception of lynching, which ties into broader memorial's objective to amplify new voices and perspectives.³⁶

The memorial uses the act of bearing witness to create what memory scholar Alison Landsberg calls prosthetic memory, “a personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which the visitor did not live.”³⁷ In the memorial's representation of lynching, the visitor is forced into the role of witness. “Rather than intellectualizing the terror of lynching as has been done in other mediums, the memorial physicalizes it. I literally feel like a witness to the thousands of lynchings,” one visitor said.³⁸ Instead of focusing on the violence that characterized lynchings, Stevenson wanted to emphasize the members of the communities themselves where lynching occurred. At times lynchings could attract a crowd up to 10,000 people who witnessed and celebrated the gruesome events. The EJI wanted to create a narrative that said, “it was not the Klan, it was the teachers, lawyers, and the journalists, and law enforcement officers cheering as a man was brutalized.” This statement advances the memorial's message that the entire community was complicit and that lynching was systemic.³⁹

In this way the memorial intends to evoke a strong emotional response. Many visitors have a deeply emotional experience when visiting the memorial.⁴⁰ When the columns are exposed to rain, this experience is heightened. As it starts to rain the weathering steel will begin to oxidize and rain washes down the russet-toned columns darkening the wooden floor, it almost seems like blood is dripping from the “bodies” thereby “enforcing the staining legacy of lynching” in the United States.⁴¹ Stevenson said that the rusted steel columns in certain light look like different shades of brown - representing all people of color - and, in the shadow, they resemble dried blood. ElZinc, the company which produced the steel columns, stated that they were intentionally created “to awaken the senses of the visitors and bring alive feelings of anguish, despair and oppression that these people experienced.”⁴²

In addition to the main memorial, the site also features the work of multiple Black artists, activists, and historical figures. These sculptures figuratively link lynching to slavery, segregation, and mass incarceration, a narrative that becomes more central in the accompanied Legacy Museum. The memorial rearticulates racialized violence and injustice as a “shared, unbroken” experience.⁴³ Because African Americans are historically marginalized in public sculptures, each sculpture featured in the memorial square depicts people of African descent and are solely made by Black artists.⁴⁴

When visitors enter the memorial square, they are confronted with Ghanaian artist Akoto-Bamfo's memorial on slavery. The memorial depicts five barely clothed, shackled Africans who are taken into slavery. By placing this sculpture at the beginning of the memorial it reinforces the idea that the violence against the Black body started with the trans-Atlantic

slave trade. “One woman cries out as she clutches her baby in one arm while reaching to grasp a man with the other. But he turns away in shame,” Akoto-Bamfo explains.⁴⁵ According to Stevenson, the sculpture is supposed to capture “the pain and agony, the suffering and humiliation, the complete denial of humanity that slavery created.”⁴⁶ While there are few slavery memorials in the United States, most of these statues are more uplifting or reconciliatory. This memorial, on the other hand, shows the excruciating pain of being kidnapped into bondage and offers a more truthful image of the horrors of slavery.⁴⁷

Another bronze sculpture in the memorial square, *Guided by Justice* (2018), created by Dana King, portrays three life-sized African American women who planned and sustained the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1954-1955). These anonymous women represent the hundreds of women who participated in the boycott, showing that the civil rights movement was a daily protest often driven by African American women.⁴⁸ The journey ends with the sculpture *Raise Up* (2014) featuring Black men with their arms raised up by Hank Willis Thomas, which refers to more contemporary issues of police violence and racial bias in the U.S criminal justice system. The sculpture mirrors Ernest Cole's famous photograph of thirteen South African miners who were subjected to a humiliating medical examination.⁴⁹ The original photograph shows the horror of apartheid in South Africa and speaks to the transnational nature of racial violence.⁵⁰ Altogether these separate monuments combine into one cohesive narrative that traces the history of racial terror back to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, offering a powerful view on an often-distorted part of American history. It portrays lynching not as a particular moment in time, but as a part of a greater historical struggle. Lynching is but one aspect of the legacies of slavery, next to police violence and mass incarceration.

The memorial's explicit application of the politics of remembering can also invite criticism and controversy, and even undermine its impact and persuasion power as it can be dismissed as subjective. Visitors need to be willing to understand the radicalness of EJI's message which challenges the traditional narrative about America's racialized past. In addition, the memorial solely centers on African Americans, and as such, is also guilty of erasing the experiences of other people of color who suffered under slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration, specifically those of Native Americans (who have one of the highest rates of incarceration), Latinos, and Chinese Americans. The history of lynching of other racial minorities is therefore largely absent.

In March 2022, President Biden signed the Emmett Till Act into law, recognizing lynching as a federal hate crime - a landmark decision that was more than a century in the making. For over a hundred years, people had been painstakingly fighting to criminalize racial violence under federal law. In his speech, Biden explicitly mentioned Bryan Stevenson's prominent role in making the history of lynching visible, and the value of the Memorial for Peace and Justice “as the first site dedicated to understanding the lasting legacies of lynching.”⁵¹ It is precisely because of the potential role of monuments in effecting social change that this paper has looked into the ideological aspects of building the first national lynching memorial in the United States showing why, how, and what kind of memory politics

the EJI have utilized to challenge the racial status quo. This paper has looked at the ways in which the memory of lynching was used in the actual memorial. Through the abstract design of the NMPJ, visitors are forced to confront the history of lynching, slavery, and other forms of racism. The arguments presented at the memorial show the systematic nature of lynching itself and as part of a larger system of racial terror connected to slavery, segregation, and police brutality. Some conservatives consider the message of the memorial too radical or controversial. Nevertheless, the memorial opens up a compelling space for new voices, perspectives, and experiences. According to historian Kirk Savage, “the history of lynching needs to be memorialized in a powerful way and in a place where people can deal with it and where people can integrate it into their vision of history.”⁵² The NMPJ in Montgomery, Alabama, is such a place. The memorial is a testament to the crucial ways of uncovering hidden pasts as an essential part of achieving lasting change in the present, not only serving as a model within the United States, but for any country that seeks to deal with legacies of its colonial or racial history.

Notes

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³ The EJI is a private non-profit organization located in Montgomery, Alabama, that works to end mass incarceration and provides legal representation to prisoners on death row. Part of their mission is to work towards a more truthful representation of America’s racial past through the installment of historical markers within American communities.

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¹² Jonathan Markovitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xxii.

¹³ Theoharis’ *A More Beautiful and Terrible History* fits a larger trend in civil rights historiography on the politics of memory. David Blight *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001) is also a major work within a broader trend of African American memorialization.

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Book Review

Credulity: A Cultural History of US Mesmerism Emily Ogden (University of Chicago Press, 2018)

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This book review was written for the course Occult Trajectories

How do we explain antebellum America's fascination with mesmerism? In *Credulity*, Emily Ogden offers the first monograph on this cultural phenomenon, also known as "animal magnetism," the purported manipulation of an invisible magnetic force inside the body. Despite being refuted by scientists (including Benjamin Franklin) as early as 1784, mesmerism bloomed in the United States between the 1830s and 1860s. In fact, according to Ogden, its refutation led to an implicit alternative explanation for its manipulative powers: the imagination or "credulity" of the audience.

This "credulity" was seized on by a new generation of American mesmerists, and Ogden describes the transformation of the practice from the 1830s onwards. What scientists in 1784 had called a delusion, early 19th-century mesmerists claimed as a means of control and communication. Ogden demonstrates how "the skeptic of this period sought to manage enchantment" as a way of reinforcing modern values like labor efficiency and self-help.¹ In doing so, she shows that mesmerism did not undercut a secular self-image but actually strengthened it, which challenges the tendency in religious studies to steer clear of secularism.² Ogden puts secularism back on the map, though less as a scholarly category and more as an ideal that people in the 19th century aspired to.

One way she does this is by narrating mesmerism's troubled history in America, including its use as a tool for controlling enslaved workers and disobedient wives. But there were also opportunities for self-determination. One of Ogden's most interesting case studies is Loraina Brackett, a blind somnambulist who earned the respect of the seeing world by using her "skill" to help people. Paradoxically, by giving in to her physical suffering, dependence, and "credulity," she convinced her audience of her competence and agency.

In tracing mesmerism's history in America, though, Ogden's emphasis on the scientific refutation in 1784 tends to overshadow the contributions of other mesmerists. Marquis de Puységur (1751–1825), for example, appears only briefly, even though his theory of somnambulism arguably did more for the development of mesmerism than Benjamin Franklin's grievances.

Ogden adequately makes up for this with her literary prowess. *Credulity* is a well-written and stimulating starting point for new research into the history of American esotericism, especially because it doesn't shy away from secularism. Not to mention, at a time when conspiracy theories thrive despite the efforts of debunkers, the history of popular belief is all the more relevant.

Notes

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Coming Together: The adaptive nature of SNCC fighting racial injustice in the early '60s

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This paper is based on a thesis written for the BA program in History

On June 16, 1966, civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael first used the term “Black Power” as a racial and social slogan at a speech in Greenwood Mississippi during the March Against Fear.¹ His expression of Black Power is often considered the beginning of a new era. In the historiography of the civil rights movement, Carmichael’s chairmanship of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is considered a turning point, transforming the civil rights movement into a more radical and violent Black Power movement. An analysis of SNCC’s early history, however, shows that Black Power had been present in the organization for many years prior to this.

In the early historiography of the civil rights movement, historians including Allen Matusow, Hugh Pearson, and Todd Gitlin offer a dichotomous view of the civil rights era, devoting attention to the ‘glory days’ between 1954 to 1965, bookended by the *Brown vs Board of Education* Supreme Court decision and the Voting Rights Act.² In this narrative, the accomplishments of the civil rights era are rightfully remembered as victories that expanded the boundaries of identity, citizenship, and democracy.³ Meanwhile, the Black Power movement is only considered after 1966, and is typically viewed as a self-destructive, short-lived and politically ineffective movement.⁴ This historiography of SNCC and its transition to Black Power suggests a break between the ‘glory days’ of the civil rights movement and the Black Power era around 1966, when Stokely Carmichael assumed his role as chairman of SNCC and popularized the slogan: “Black Power!”

Recent studies by historian Peniel Joseph on the Black Power era have challenged the existing view of the movement’s self-destructive nature and the purely negative image of the Black Power era. According to Joseph, “The Black Power era has been weighted down by a mythology that substitutes memory for history and relies on perception in place of scholarly analysis.”⁵ Joseph has made efforts to look beyond the negative connotations of the Black Power movement, which until recently been had relegated to the margins of history as the civil rights movement’s ‘evil twin.’⁶ His contributions offer a more nuanced perspective of the struggle for civil rights. This article builds upon these studies by investigating early traces of Black Power in of the SNCC during the civil rights era, to nuance the ‘break’ suggested around 1965-1966, when Stokely Carmichael became the organization’s leader.

This essay argues for a more continuous approach through an analysis of the earliest developments of SNCC. To do so, I will investigate how the initial structure of SNCC formed the groundwork for the transition to Black Power in the late ‘60s. As an alternative to the ‘breaking point’ narrative, I argue a more evolutionary development of SNCC’s transition to Black Power by looking at the earlier traces of Black Power philosophy in the organization

and asserting that SNCC was well on its way to becoming a Black Power organization before Stokely Carmichael assumed his leadership role as chairman.

SNCC is well suited to an investigation that aims to bridge the gap between the mostly nonviolent civil rights movement during the fifties and early sixties and the Black Power movement that succeeded it. The organization upheld a nonviolent philosophy in its early years, but later transformed into an organization that was not opposed to the use of violence to achieve their goals. Further analysis of SNCC before 1966 reveals the early roots of a Black Power philosophy present during the early days of the movement.

This article addresses the basic conditions for an eventual rise of a Black Power philosophy that had been created at SNCC's founding. The organization's position regarding nonviolence, its organizational structure, and the debate about direct action and voter registration programs all provide useful entry points into SNCC's early years and the roots of Black Power. This article addresses each of these entry points in separate sections, each of which shows a defining characteristic of SNCC.

First, I will illuminate SNCC's rather distant relationship with existing civil rights organizations. Consisting of many autonomous local student action groups, the activists embraced a group-centered leadership style to prevent a hierarchical structure of authority within the organization. Second, the nonviolent principles of the organization will be dissected. Activists of SNCC pledged nonviolence, but not with the same devotion as Martin Luther King Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference did. This section will create a better understanding of the use of nonviolence as a tactic. As the organization moved away from nonviolence, it also distanced itself from the broader philosophy of other civil rights organizations. SNCC's willingness to adopt strategies as long as they were effective becomes very apparent through this analysis. Third, I will discuss a vital moment for the future of the organization - the Highlander debate of 1961 in Knoxville, Tennessee - which shows the fluid nature of the organization as a source of both its vitality and fragility. Each of these sections will be supported by excerpts from interviews, minutes of meetings and other primary source material which will provide the necessary information for understanding the intended structure and direction of SNCC.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) grew out of sit-ins. Existing civil rights organizations sought to incorporate the new student group into their own organization. Ella Baker and Martin Luther King Jr. called for the Student Leadership Conference at Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina in April 1960 to channel the potential of these activist students.⁷ The students, however, maintained a distant relationship with other civil rights organizations. There were several reasons for this.

First, SNCC was a very diverse organization. It formed a communication network between different local student action groups. The autonomy of these groups had to be preserved, which was why many activists were hesitant to form close alliances with existing civil rights organizations.⁸ Ella Baker's reflection on her May 1960 speech explains the fear of domination shared by the students:

[Students'] desire for supportive cooperation from adult leaders and the adult community was also tempered by apprehension that adults might try to "capture" the student movement. The students showed willingness to be met on the basis of equality, but were intolerant of anything that smacked of manipulation or domination.⁹

The student groups were strongly opposed to a hierarchical structure and wanted to avoid being classified as 'the student wing' of existing civil rights organizations. To accommodate this sentiment, Baker carefully avoided any implication that the Raleigh meeting would subvert the autonomy of local student groups.¹⁰ The fear of being dominated by existing organizations made the student groups oppose any close official relations with other civil rights organizations. Baker played a role in preventing the attachment to existing organizations because "They had the right to direct their own affairs and even make their own mistakes."¹¹ She proposed a group-centered leadership instead of the usual leader-centered group pattern of organization as a refreshing new method of organization for the students.¹²

The second reason the students did not want to be affiliated with existing civil rights organizations is clearly explained by Julian Bond. "It was very heady stuff for young people 17 and 18 years old to be running their own political organization."¹³ The students wanted to chart their own course, independent from other civil rights organizations. Baker was aware of this wish, so the call for the Youth Leadership Meeting at Raleigh explicitly states: "Adult freedom fighters will be present for counsel and guidance, but the meeting will be youth centered."¹⁴

Despite the lack of official ties to existing civil rights organizations, SNCC was fairly close to SCLC. The minutes of the first meeting of the Temporary Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Atlanta state that SNCC would have its office at SCLC headquarters and that SNCC would cooperate with the SCLC in all possible and appropriate ways.¹⁵ This shows SNCC's pragmatic approach. Despite refusing any official ties with existing organizations, it made practical sense to benefit from SCLC's physical infrastructure. Additionally, SNCC would "establish liaison for cooperative work with other organizations which offer their help with specific aspects of the movement."¹⁶ SNCC's opposition to official ties with other organizations did not mean they weren't willing to cooperate. The students mainly wanted to prevent the domination of the SNCC by an existing organization. The result was a loosely structured organization, with Baker's proposed 'group-centered leadership' at its base. SNCC was willing to collaborate with organizations such as CORE and SCLC but would maintain their independence and opposed any *official* ties to existing civil rights groups.

The implication of these decisions was that SNCC was flexible and free to go its own way right from the start. It would not be tied to other organizations' ideologies and dogmas, which made it more open to an organic development in reaction to changing political and social circumstances. The organic and flexible nature of SNCC contributed to its evolutionary development towards Black Power as opposed to a sudden break in 1966.

An important discussion that further distinguished SNCC from SCLC, was on the issue of nonviolence. Both organizations upheld nonviolent practices, but in a different way. According to Martin Luther King Jr., nonviolence was a way of life.¹⁷ The all-encompassing nature of King's approach made many students hesitant to join SCLC. Charles McDew, who was the chairman of SNCC from 1960 until 1963, explained in his 2011 interview that he did not want to join SCLC because of King's demand that membership implied the acceptance of nonviolence as a way of life.¹⁸ McDew and the other students could not commit to this. According to him, SNCC might even have joined SCLC if it hadn't been for King's request to embrace nonviolence as a lifestyle.¹⁹ For McDew, nonviolence was a tactic, not a lifelong commitment.²⁰ Generally, the effectiveness of nonviolence in civil rights protest was rooted in the media attention it drew to the issue of racial segregation. Creating images of injustice by undergoing it and spreading those images across the world directly correlated to political pressure.²¹ McDew was not fully convinced of the effectiveness of nonviolence, because "you cannot make a moral appeal in the midst of an amoral society."²² He recalled his thoughts about nonviolence and how they contrasted with the way King viewed nonviolence in his interview:

I said, 'Yes, I use nonviolence, and we use nonviolence, but [...] for me, it was strictly a tactic. [...] and personally, I didn't believe it would work. [...] Because when Gandhi used, in India, the tactic of having people lay down on railroad tracks to protest, I said, 'and it worked.' I said, 'But if a group of black people lay down on railroad tracks here, in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana, any of these Southern states, a train would run you over and back up to make certain you're dead.'²³

This demonstrates the extent of White on Black violence in the United States, which made SNCC members like McDew question the validity of a Gandhian approach. McDew suggested, moreover, that nonviolence would get activists killed. The notion of temporality in McDew's interview, the idea of the 'short life' of nonviolence that the organization would only use until it was no longer effective, signifies an important characteristic of SNCC. Because of a lack of rigid structure in the organization and the fluidity of leadership, the organization could switch tactics if another method proved to be more effective in the struggle for civil rights.

Similarly, Charles Sherrod, another SNCC member, emphasized in his report on nonviolence that "nonviolence as a way of life is a long way off for most of us."²⁴ Instead, Sherrod saw nonviolence as an "invincible instrument of war."²⁵ He clearly defines nonviolence as an effective *tool* for SNCC to stand up against extreme violence and implicitly acknowledges the violence that lies at the heart of life for Black Americans in the segregated South with his allusion to 'war.' SNCC's instrumentalization of nonviolence fundamentally differs from Martin Luther King Jr.'s idea of nonviolence as a lifelong commitment. The nonviolence of SNCC was adopted as a *method* to achieve a goal. It was not necessarily the best method of protest; it was only embraced because it proved useful and effective at the time.

As befitting among an organization without a clear hierarchical structure, SNCC activists held a variety of opinions about nonviolence. James Lawson for example, held a deep belief in the potential of nonviolent direct action to achieve equality.²⁶ He drafted SNCC's Statement of Purpose based on Gandhian and Christian ideals.²⁷ Lawson remained close to this Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence, but in contrast to Martin Luther King Jr. was more tolerant towards student activists who merely adopted nonviolent practices as a tactic.²⁸

The question of nonviolence was only partly resolved, and its question of effectiveness would remain prevalent throughout SNCC's history.²⁹ For most students, nonviolence would only be employed as a political tool. In the years that followed, SNCC's nonviolent philosophy would meet the violence of the Deep South, which sparked a new debate about the necessity and effectiveness of nonviolence. Guns were a crucial part of Black life in the South, and it was impossible for civil rights activists to challenge the local Black communities' traditions of armed self-defense as they had been using guns in their struggle for many years to defend themselves against White terror.³⁰ The realities on the ground reinforced SNCC's fluidity, as members were willing to adapt to whatever strategy worked to fight racial injustice. SNCC's nonviolence was not set in stone, which enabled activists to drift away from the philosophy over the years. This fluid nature of SNCC allowed for a gradual transition to Black Power over the years, as the organization adapted to the problems they were facing in their fight against racial injustice.

The Highlander Debate of mid-August 1961 can be seen as the first major transformation of SNCC, which showed its fluidity and marked the first concrete step towards independent Black empowerment. Following the debate, the organization turned towards voter registration as a method of penetrating into the Deep South and empowering Black people there. The violence-ridden Freedom Rides of 1961, which had been launched in response to the 1960 *Boynton vs Virginia* Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in interstate travel, had triggered the disapproval of the Kennedy administration, which pushed civil rights organizations to redirect their efforts towards voter registration in exchange for financial resources and protection.³¹ What followed, was an intense three-day long debate at the Highlander Folk School in Knoxville, Tennessee.³²

Much of the tension in the debate about the redirection of efforts towards voter registration programs came from the fear of 'selling out' to the Kennedy Administration, which in the eyes of SNCC activists was trying to silence civil rights organizations.³³ Lonnie King, one of the people who opposed the transition, felt that the Kennedy administration was just trying to protect their reputation. "I felt that what they were trying to do was kill the Movement but kill it by rechanneling its energies."³⁴ Lonnie King saw the pressure from the Kennedy administration as a threat to the existence of the movement and an attempt to blunt the militant edge of the organization. By using the word "kill" twice, Lonnie King emphasized that this issue was an existential one. The decision to accept or reject the Kennedy Administration's offer was a matter of life and death for SNCC.

Some other students were in favor of the redirection of the organization's activities to voter registration. Amzie Moore, the president of the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), had convinced Bob Moses that voter registration programs were an effective way of fighting injustice in the Deep South. He proposed this strategy of voter registration at the SNCC meeting of July 1961.³⁵ Other members of SNCC such as Tim Jenkins and Charlie Jones also recognized the need for a voter registration program.³⁶ They believed that mobilizing people to vote would show the power of Black people and they saw potential in the financial resources from the government.³⁷

SNCC was divided into two camps on this issue and the drastically differing opinions threatened to tear the organization apart at the Highlander meeting. Some students were so strongly opposed to the voter registration project that they were even prepared to leave SNCC.³⁸ After three days of acrimonious debate, the issue was finally resolved when Ella Baker stepped in and proposed a reorganization of SNCC.³⁹ The solution would be to set up two separate wings. One would continue direct action, while the other would focus on voter registration.

Once again, the leading role of Baker in the early years of SNCC becomes apparent. To her, it was of the utmost importance that the organization remained unified, because unity was at the core of its strength.⁴⁰ A compromise was the only solution. The importance of her leadership has also been confirmed by Charles Jones, who, in an interview in 2000, described Ella's position in the debate as crucial. According to Jones, "Ella would sit back calmly, hear each of us, but would not let us turn each other loose."⁴¹ Once the discussion spiraled out of control and underlying emotions intensified, she intervened with her proposal to keep the more agitated members of SNCC under some degree of control.

The minutes of the October meeting at the SNCC headquarters in Atlanta carefully explain the result of this compromise:

The program is an attempt to (1) Expose the civil rights situation in the Deep South; (2) Involve the Justice Department in suits and thus provide security for registrants; (3) register voters; (4) involve a growing number of people in full time commitment to civil rights in the South. Coordination with other agencies is being maintained - the Justice Department, the Legal Defense Fund, SCLC, and negro civil rights leaders and public figures in New York.⁴²

In these minutes, only two of the goals of the voter registration program are directly related to registering and protecting voters, while the other two correspond with the broader attempt to establish a strong civil rights presence in the Deep South.⁴³ This matches one of the defining characteristics of SNCC: the willingness to adopt different strategies if there was an effective way to reach their goal. Voter registration was a *method* for Black empowerment in the Deep South.⁴⁴ The voter registration program was, like the broader tactic of nonviolence, another means to a broader goal: to end racial segregation and injustice.⁴⁵

In the end, the organization came out of the compromise stronger, but the event also shows a few key aspects of SNCC that influenced the later transition to a Black Power ideology. First, the organization was willing to adopt different strategies and redirect their efforts towards the most effective methods of protest, which can also be seen in their

approach to nonviolence. Second, the Highlander Debate itself showed the vulnerable character of the organization. Because of the lack of a rigid structure in the organization and the loose style of leadership, SNCC had been prone to dividing debates ever since the organization was founded. If Ella Baker had not intervened with her proposal to set up two wings, SNCC could well have split into two parts in the debate which would have destroyed its – already very fragile – structure. SNCC’s fluidity and willingness to adapt were inevitably accompanied by its fragility.

Third and most importantly, voter registration programs marked the beginning of SNCC’s focus on political independence and organizing for Black empowerment in the South. Voter registration was used as an organizing device to encourage political participation and build a strong political base in the South to empower Black people.⁴⁶ In the following years, voter registration helped to expose Black disenfranchisement. Moreover, SNCC expanded its political efforts through the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to challenge the seating of the Mississippi Democratic Party at the National Convention of 1964.⁴⁷ Inspired by the MFDP, John Hulett along with some SNCC organizers and the local Black population of Lowndes County, Alabama, created the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, an independent political party.⁴⁸ Their pamphlet aptly described the new phase of political organizing that had commenced after the adoption of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. “Having the vote without having a say as to who is running is as good as no vote at all.”⁴⁹ SNCC’s electoral engagement was no longer just about acquiring the vote, but about political self-determination.

Each of these three sections clearly show the characteristics of SNCC as an organization. It operated fluidly, with a loose leadership structure and a lack of close affiliations with existing civil rights organizations. There was no hierarchy of authority or any other rigid power structure. SNCC’s pragmatic approach is apparent in the collaboration with other organizations and the use of nonviolence as a tactic. The result was a highly adaptive organization that was willing to adopt methods of protest as long as they were effective achieving their goal to end racial segregation and injustice. This fluidity and adaptability were part of the student movement’s strength, but also made it vulnerable to divisive debates about its direction among the members. The early developments in SNCC laid the groundwork for the eventual adoption of the Black Power ideology in the future. Right from the start, there were debates about the effectiveness of nonviolence in protest, and after the organization directed their organizing efforts towards the Deep South, the adoption of armed self-defense accelerated. The organization’s loose structure, group-centered leadership, adaptive stance on methods of protest and a lack of religious devotion to nonviolence, in addition to the early emphasis on political independence and empowerment are all a precursor for the shifts towards Black Power that happened halfway through the 1960s.

The early origins of Black Power offer new insights into SNCC’s transition and call for a re-evaluation of the narrative of 1966 as a ‘breaking point.’ The organization didn’t transition abruptly, the roots of Black Power were present from the very beginning. This article offers a narrative of a more fluent transition from civil rights movement to Black Power

and invites further scholarly work on this topic. Future research could focus on how these early roots of Black Power in SNCC grew into a more expressive and visible Black Power philosophy. The approach presented in this article nuances Carmichael's role as the 'key turning point' of SNCC in 1966, but he nonetheless played a large role in the movement as he articulated the latent Black Power sentiments into a more concrete and visible philosophy. Black Power had been present in SNCC for a long time and developed in an evolutionary fashion throughout the organization's lifespan. Carmichael only popularized the term "Black Power" through his actions at the Meredith March Against Fear in 1966.

The narrative presented in this article challenges the scholarly approach centered on Carmichael and the year 1966. Through its investigation of the early origins of Black Power, it shows the complexity of the civil rights era by demonstrating that history cannot be categorized into clear and distinct periods. The paper also raises questions of a continuous historical narrative, moving away from a history of 'tipping points' and 'breaking points.' Black Power had largely been shaped by the preceding civil rights era, just like Black Power left its mark on the civil rights movement during those earlier years. Perhaps it is time to move away from a simplified cookie-cutter history separated in distinct time periods towards a narrative that does justice to the complexities of change and development over time.

Notes

¹ James Meredith's March Against Fear called attention to voter discrimination and racism in the South. Meredith was shot, which prompted several civil rights organizations, including SNCC, CORE and SCLC, to continue the march; "James Meredith and the March Against Fear," archives.gov, accessed June 20, 2022.

² Peniel Joseph, "Historians and the Black Power Movement," *OAH Magazine of History* 22, no. 3 (2008): 8.

³ Peniel Joseph, "Foreword: Reinterpreting the Black Power Movement," *OAH Magazine of History* 22, no. 3 (2008): 4.

⁴ Peniel Joseph, "Historians," 8.

Joseph mentions a list of books that perpetuate the historiographical idea of the Black Power Movement as the Civil Rights Movement's evil and destructive twin: Allen Matusow, *The Unravelling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (1985); Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther* (1994); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (1989); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (2000).

⁵ Peniel Joseph, "Foreword," 8.

⁶ Peniel Joseph, "Historians," 8; See also: Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999). Tyson argues that nonviolent civil rights protest and armed resistance grew out of common soil.

⁷ "Call for Youth Leadership meeting," at Shaw University (April 15-17, 1960).

⁸ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Harvard University Press, 1995), 24.

⁹ Ella Baker, "Bigger Than a Hamburger." After SNCC's founding conference, Baker wrote an article that summarized the address she gave at the conference at Shaw University in Raleigh.

¹⁰ Carson, *In Struggle*, 20.

¹¹ Carson, 24.

¹² Ella Baker, "Bigger Than a Hamburger."

¹³ Cleveland Sellers, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of SNCC* (Mississippi University Press, 1990), 37.

¹⁴ "Call for Youth Leadership meeting."

¹⁵ "Minutes of first Temporary SNCC staff meeting detailing the relationship with SCLC and other organizations" (May 13-14, 1960).

¹⁶ "Minutes of first Temporary SNCC staff meeting."

¹⁷ Martin Luther King upheld his nonviolent principles for a long time. For example, in his book he writes: "Occasionally in life one develops a conviction so precious and meaningful that he will stand on it till the end. This is what I have found in nonviolence," in: Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967), 63-64.; King's position regarding nonviolence remains very complex. Peniel Joseph stresses

the civil rights era's combative militancy, even among advocates of nonviolence. In addition to nonviolence as a way of life, he employed it as a political instrument of change.; Peniel E. Joseph, *The Sword and the Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.* (2020), 30, 390.

¹⁸ Charles McDew, interview by Joseph Mosnier, June 4, 2011, transcript p. 16.

¹⁹ Charles E. Cobb Jr., *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get you Killed, How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (Duke University Press, 2016), 158.

²⁰ McDew, interview, transcript p. 16.

²¹ The effectiveness of nonviolence in civil rights protest can be seen in SCLC's 1963 Birmingham Campaign. The violent confrontations between White civic authorities and Black activists were widely publicized, and the televised footage shocked the world, drawing worldwide attention to racial segregation in the South. This nonviolent method, showing injustice by undergoing it, eventually led to change in Birmingham's segregation laws. Creating images directly correlated to exerting political pressure; 'Breakthrough in Birmingham,' *CBS News* (1963).

²² McDew, interview, transcript p. 16.

²³ McDew, interview, 16.

²⁴ Charles Sherrod, "Report on Nonviolence," Sally Belfrage Papers (undated), 2.

²⁵ Sherrod, "Report," 2.

²⁶ "James Lawson," snccdigital.org, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://snccdigital.org/people/james-lawson/>.

²⁷ Akinyele Omowale Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York University Press, 2013), 52.

²⁸ Sellers, *The River*, 39.

²⁹ "Founding of SNCC," snccdigital.org, accessed April 14, 2022, <https://snccdigital.org/events/founding-of-sncc/>.

³⁰ Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff*, 139.

³¹ "SNCC Debates Direct Action & Voter Registration at Highlander," snccdigital.org, accessed April 13, 2022, <https://snccdigital.org/events/sncc-debates-direct-action-voter-registration-at-highlander/>; "Nashville Students and SNCC Pick Up Freedom Rides," snccdigital.org, accessed December 4, 2022, <https://snccdigital.org/events/freedom-rides/>.

³² Carson, *In Struggle*, 41.

³³ "SNCC Debates Direct Action & Voter Registration at Highlander," snccdigital.org.

³⁴ "Voter Education Project Launches," snccdigital.org, accessed March 31, 2022, <https://snccdigital.org/events/voter-education-project-launches/>.

³⁵ "Minutes of SNCC staff meeting detailing Amzie Moore's proposal for voter registration" (July 14-16, 1961).

³⁶ Marion Barry, interview by Howard Zinn, December 18, 1965.

³⁷ Carson, *In Struggle*, 41.

³⁸ Carson, 41.

³⁹ Carson, 42.

⁴⁰ Ella Baker, interview by Eugene Walker, September 4, 1974.

⁴¹ Charles Jones, Tape 8, SNCC 40th Anniversary Tapes (Duke University, April 2000).

⁴² "Minutes of SNCC staff meeting detailing the direct action and voter registration programs and their relationship" (October 8-10, 1961), 3.

⁴³ "Minutes of SNCC staff meeting detailing direct action," 3.

⁴⁴ Joseph A. Sinsheimer, "The Freedom Vote of 1963: New Strategies of Racial Protest in Mississippi," *The Journal of Southern History* 55, no. 2 (1989): 218.

⁴⁵ An important characteristic of the philosophy of Black Power is political self-determination and the creation of independent political parties. SNCC's step towards acquiring the vote through voter registration campaigns marks the beginning of SNCC's steady move towards Black Power politics and a new way of fighting injustice. For a brief mention of SNCC's political organizing developments, see: Stokely Carmichael, "Power and Racism" In: *Stokely Speaks: From Black Power to Pan-Africanism* (1971), 19.

⁴⁶ James Forman, interview by Howard Zinn, November 12, 1965, transcript p. 1.

⁴⁷ "MFDP Challenge at Democratic National Convention," snccdigital.org, accessed November 8, 2022, <https://snccdigital.org/events/mfdp-challenge-at-democratic-national-convention/>; "Lowndes County Freedom Party (LCFO)," snccdigital.org, accessed November 6, 2022, <https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/alliances-relationships/lcfp/>.

⁴⁸ "Lowndes County Freedom Party (LCFO)," snccdigital.org.

⁴⁹ "Support the Lowndes County Freedom Organization," pamphlet (undated).

Haunted America: How ghostly encounters took on a distinctly American form with the rise of a new nation

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To be without ghosts is to be without a history. So, when was the first American haunting? It should come as no surprise that the first reported American haunting came in 1799 – a mere twenty years after the start of the American Revolution. This first ghost was not a soldier from the Revolutionary War, nor a vengeful Native American, but rather the spirit of a young woman.¹ It was a cold winter in 1799 when Abner Blaisdell descended the stairs to his cellar and heard the disembodied voice of a woman. After months of strange rapping on the doors of the cellar, a voice finally identified itself as the origin of the noise. It was the spirit of Nelly Butler. She was not part of a short story or novel; Nelly Butler was, in the minds of those who claimed to see and speak to her, a real ghost. She did not display the same characteristics of the hauntings that are reported today; she did not violently throw objects around, there were no reports of demonic possession, she was not a silent, deformed figure of light descending a gothic staircase only to disappear without a trace. She was a messenger to the living, a recently deceased member of the community who found herself in a neighbor's home and captivated the residents of Sullivan, Maine.² Whether the spirit of Nelly Butler really manifested in the Blaisdell home, or even why this story took off, is not what this paper is concerned with, but rather Nelly's identity. What were her characteristics as a spirit, and what did this mean for a nation without ghosts?

Ghost stories tell us something about national distinctiveness. From Andrew Smith who wrote *The Ghost Story 1840-1920: A Cultural History* to Lara Baker Whelan's *Between Worlds: Class Identity and Suburban Ghost Stories, 1850 to 1880*, many scholars have identified the connection between cultural identity and the portrayal of ghosts in popular folklore throughout history.³ Similarly, scholars like Jacques Derrida and Mark Fisher explore the cultural significance of hauntings. Derrida coined the term 'hauntology' to refer to the return of cultural elements from the past in the form of a ghost.⁴ Fisher used it to refer to an aesthetic in music in which musicians are preoccupied with nostalgic portrayals or the recycling of older aesthetics, and thus are haunted by that nostalgia and desire for its persistence into the present.⁵ It is an attempted revival as the hauntological music was endowed with noises of scratching vinyl and a melancholy melody.⁶

This paper builds on existing scholarship on the connection between cultural identity and the portrayal of ghosts within ghost literature by demonstrating how American authors 'Americanized' European ghosts. Ghostly encounters in the US took on a distinctly American form as the nature of ghostly sightings was influenced by how spirits were depicted in literature, taking on specific traits congruent with newly constructed American culture and history. The characteristics of ghostly encounters in the US coincided with historically

popular ideas of spirits perpetuated by fictional ghost stories, which morphed with the evolution of the modern ghost story. The characteristics of reported hauntings were first similar to the spirits in European ghost literature but took on their own American form over time with the onset of American writers and the development of American culture.

The nature and purpose of ghost stories have also evolved throughout American history. Whereas the tale of Nelly Butler remained largely confined to her town, in recent years, numerous television shows such as *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures* have entered the world of mass media as people consume not only fictional stories, but contrived stories. For instance, in one episode of the popular paranormal show *Ghost Adventures*, television host Zak Bagans visits an old Victorian home or mining town to come face to face with ‘real’ encounters, and formatted like to a documentary.⁷ Similarly, the form and function that ghosts occupy in ghost media has changed drastically from the era of Nelly Butler onwards. Whether Nelly was fact or fiction, the current horror movie genre continues to rapidly grow, with new movies each year such as *Paranormal Activity* or *Poltergeist*, each featuring terrifying and demonic entities very different from Nelly. Even humorous ghost media such as *Casper* or *Ghostbusters* portray spirits as active, forceful entities as opposed to Nelly’s passivity and humanoid composition. The media continues to be captivated by both the fictional portrayal of spirits as well as the seemingly real ghost reality shows.

The main explanation for these developments is the Americanization of ghost stories and how American ghost novels have informed the characteristics of perceived ghostly hauntings. From the late eighteenth century onwards, these ghostly encounters took on their own distinct American flare due to popular changes in ghost literature of the time. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate how popular changes in ghost literature have informed reports of paranormal encounters by drawing parallels between the characteristics of the ghosts of fictitious literature and the mass sightings reported of ‘real’ ghosts. This essay is not meant to prove or disprove the existence of spirits, nor will it assess the validity of these recorded encounters. The analysis comes from the characteristics witnesses have given these hauntings, not the validity of the hauntings itself. To differentiate between the two, I will use the terms “encounters,” “reports,” “paranormal experiences,” or “hauntings” when discussing reported sightings of ghosts and I will refer to the fictitious tales by describing them as stories or literature.

Within ghost literature, the ghastly appearance of Shakespeare’s Hamlet’s deceased father, the headless horseman of *Sleepy Hollow*, and the demonic poltergeist from *The Exorcist* do not have the same form or function. Apparitions have evolved from posthumous messengers to the otherworldly demonic entities. Scholar Jennifer Bann distinguishes two types of ghosts in Victorian literature: the limited ghost of the early 19th century and the freer and more active ghost of the latter half of the century.⁸ Limited ghosts find death to be a prison, robbing them of their agency, and therefore they exist in more passive form. This can be observed even before the Victorian era with, for example, the admonishing spirit of Hamlet’s father or the anguished Achilles as he laments his place among the lifeless.⁹ As the Victorian era developed, the chained ghost of Jacob Marley invoked images of a trapped,

limited messenger, though still frightening in its portrayal. Around the same time as the Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* - on the opposite side of the Atlantic - death no longer chained ghosts, but rather empowered them, as ghosts became more active and even violent, such as the spirits in Edgar Allen Poe's stories.¹⁰ This continued to develop into the late Victorian Era, with portrayals of terrifying, active entities at the center of the story from Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* or the haunting mysterious ghost in Charlotte Riddell's *The Open Door*.¹¹

Bann connects this change to cultural movements of the nineteenth century, such as the development and rise of Spiritualism in the US.¹² Spiritualism is a religious movement that is defined by the belief in an active afterlife with intelligent spirits, in which Spiritualists can communicate with those spirits and gain insight from them on God and morality.¹³ Spiritualism began in 1848, in New York when two young girls, Maggie and Kate Fox, claimed they could communicate with a ghost within their home. Bann notes that, when the Fox family toured the country performing seances and communicating with the dead for audiences, it gave rise to the interest in Spiritualism and further pushed its development.¹⁴ Even Abraham Lincoln and his wife held seances in the White House. During the 1850s, the movement made its way to England.¹⁵ Spiritualism was most popular among women, especially among advocates of abolition and women's rights. As the themes of power and agency permeated in the Spiritualist discourse, ghosts began to take on an empowered form.¹⁶ There was a strong connection between the language of Spiritualism and women's fight for political agency, similarly echoed between the freedom of ghosts and freedom of women. This trifecta of culture, literature, and ghostly encounters laid the groundwork for how the apparitions in real-life hauntings became more active as a result of the Americanized fictitious ghost, influenced by the rise of Spiritualism and movement for women's rights in the US

How then, does the first American haunting fit into this narrative? Starting at the beginning of the Americanization arc, Nelly Butler was the first articulation of the American ghost, with later developments deriving from the Spiritualists. Nelly Butler was the former wife of Sullivan local George Butler, who had died in childbirth three years prior, and conveniently found herself in the Blaisdell home. While on Earth, the ghost of Nelly Butler drew an audience. She would communicate with the living, make appearances before their eyes, sing psalms and alleluias, and would stress: "I am from above, and am come on God's message."¹⁷ The entire town of Sullivan would flock to the Blaisdell home to meet with Nelly Butler. Many wrote of their experiences, describing her as "appearing like a person wrapped in a white sheet, appearing and disappearing several times."¹⁸ People came to see for themselves, such as local Paul Simpson Jr., who reported her growing and shrinking before their eyes, and her former husband even exclaimed that he placed his hand on her, only to have it pass through.¹⁹

Nelly Butler took on the form of what Bann would have described as a limited ghost - she was imprisoned in death, and while she interacted with the living, she acted as a messenger of God. For instance, she foresaw her husband would marry Blaisdell's daughter, Lydia, and then accurately predicted that Lydia would die in childbirth.²⁰ Nelly most closely resembled the ghost of English literature. She fits several motifs, most notably the return on

a dead family member and the messenger. She was human-like, Godly, and dressed all in white, unlike later more grotesque apparitions. In this sense, ghosts in early nineteenth-century literature were not used for the sake of terror alone, they were not threatening, active beings. These literary ghosts were passive, human-like, and religious messengers. This translated into the types of ghosts people outside the realm of the novel claimed to come in contact with. Whether an elaborate hoax or not, the witnesses' description of the apparition illuminates a European influence. The English model of the ghost story dominated in the American colony, which did not have a ghostly legacy to draw upon.

While Nelly Butler was the first recorded American haunting, the first American ghost story was written twenty years later, in 1820. The instant classic of Ichabod Crane and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by author Washington Irving mixed elements of old German folklore to create a ghost that was distinctly American. Before the publication of the book, spirits were, to a certain extent, powerless. They were servants to God, passive messengers that could conjure a humanoid figure of light and, at most, knock on the walls. By contrast, Irving's headless horseman - a former Hessian soldier of the Revolutionary war - was a lost, but a violent soul who represented the ghost of an enemy to the Americans. The horseman was described as "the dominant spirit that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander in chief of all powers of the air."²¹ The creature was silent, for when Ichabod asked the "huge, misshapen, black, and towering" figure to identify itself, he "received no reply."²² The horseman was not a godly, white, passive messenger, but a dark, powerful, and haunting figure whose purpose was based in terror.

Irving drew on European folklore for his inspiration of the horseman, yet by connecting the creature to the spirit of a former revolutionary soldier, he Americanized the ghost in *Sleepy Hollow*. He added cultural aspects from the young American nation, such as centering the narrative in Upstate New York. In addition, while the headless horsemen in European folklore were either demonic fairies or humanoid figures without a head more akin to zombies, Irving attributed creature-like characteristics to the ghost, setting it apart from the typical human apparition depiction.²³ Irving's combination of aspects of the headless horsemen in European novels with the characteristics of apparitions in ghost literature created a new type of horrific ghost: one that was silent, violent, and almost demonic. Irving gave America a ghost.

The American ghost story remained part of a new tradition of Gothic literature that developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. European and American ghost stories both contained a mixture of gothic elements, Spiritualism, and more menacing, active spirits.²⁴ However, unlike Irving's *Sleepy Hollow*, American gothic literature took on a European flare as its stories were set in Europe. The development of American Gothic literature coincided with transnational influences. America continued to suckle from the cultural teat of Europe as writers recycled European gothic elements in their stories, such as in Edgar Allen Poe's *The Masque of the Red Death* or Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Rappaccini's Daughter*. These stories were set in different European countries, usually invoking images of castles or nobility.²⁵ Irving started a trend of more demonic and active ghosts, and the gothic novel - at home and abroad - continued that trend in stories by both American and

European authors, like the vengeful spirit of the *The Phantom Rickshaw* by Rudyard Kipling.²⁶ This was the beginning of the ‘Americanization’ of the ghost.

The term ‘Americanization’ is a contested concept. Sociologist Carol Aronovici, for example, defines Americanization as a dynamic definition that has come to mean the US’s presence on the world stage and cultural imperialism. Meanwhile, scholar Richard Kuisel sees this phenomenon as neither “unique nor uniform,” but rather the export of specific items (products and practices) instead of the nature of the transfer of a specific culture.²⁷ For the purposes of this paper, to Americanize then is not to develop outside of a European framework, but to allow this culture to take on new meaning in an American context. For example, American writers such as Edgar Allen Poe and Edith Wharton had menacing ghostly characters in many of their stories. In Poe’s *The Masque of the Red Death*, the characters flee the personification of plague, which takes the form of a ghostly corpse: his “vesture was dabbled in blood—and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.”²⁸ This powerful, grotesque, and terrifying spirit took on the form of a plague victim, and had the power to make all who came near it perish. While Poe continued with the theme of the powerful spirit initiated by Irving, he set his story in a castle-like abbey, filled with knights, nobles, and other medieval allusions. Wharton also wrote of terrifying ghosts, although her stories, such as “Afterward,” were set in English mansions.²⁹ The marriage of gothic literature and American Spiritualism gave birth to the active, scary ghosts visible in the works of Poe, while simultaneously holding onto gothic elements and Victorian stylistic allusions.

The active, horrifying image of the ghost not only captured the imagination of writers, but also influenced the nature and frequency of ghostly sightings across the United States. Reports of terrifying, active ghosts emerged around the country. In Louisiana in 1852, *The Daily Comet* reported on a haunted house. It was a beautiful, large brick house whose recent residents, a group of young women, claimed to have been frightened by a ghost. The ghost did not just knock on walls or appear as Nelly Butler did, but fired a pistol, which created red flashing light as a dark figure stood over the women’s beds.³⁰ The active, menacing, dark ghosts that had come to populate ghost literature permeated into people’s perceptions of a haunting. Even today, the legacy of the Victorian ghost lives on, as people claim most haunted areas to be mansions or even castles such as the Houghton Mansion or Preston Castle.³¹

With terrifying American inspirations like those of Irving and Poe, it is no wonder Oscar Wilde wrote of Americans who were no longer afraid of the English ghost in his work *The Canterville Ghost*.³² With the spread of spiritualism from the United States to the UK from 1850 onwards, authors in the UK increasingly drew inspiration from American authors in their writings, portraying a more active ghost. Irish author Sheridan Le Fanu continued the American legacy of the terrifying, powerful ghost, as well as M.R. James, who is credited as the father of the modern ghost story. M.R. James tended not to use gothic elements in his ghost stories, but described elements of the ghostly tales he wrote about as, “malevolence and terror, the glare of evil faces, ‘the stony grin of unearthly malice’, pursuing forms in darkness, and ‘long-drawn, distant screams’, are all in place, and so is a modicum of blood, shed with deliberation.”³³ The ghost in the writings of James resemble the characteristics of Poe’s spirits,

or even Irving's terrifying horsemen. As such, European ghost writers could not escape the influence of the American active ghost, even though American authors continued to cling to a gothic tradition.³⁴

Nearing the end of the nineteenth century, America's fascination with the Victorian spirit in ghost literature faded. Instead, what captivated the minds of Americans was the reclaiming of the Wild West and former bustling Western cities that were now reduced to ghost towns. The phrase 'ghost town' originated in the US in an article in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in 1894, which described, "the deserted mining towns, like the ghosts of their departed prosperity."³⁵ The article invoked the image of a bygone Old West as a ghost, equating the abandoned towns to spirits, creating the idea of the ghost town. Now ghosts found a home: not in the gothic European castle, but in the American Wild West. The ghosts of the wild west kept their active flair. They were usually deceased miners, victims of western lawlessness, or the western outlaws themselves.³⁶ Moreover, the ghost stories of the Wild West mixed local history and fiction to create a legend that has blurred the line between fictitious spirit, and real apparition.

The Wild West ghost stories were based on either fiction, real events and people, eyewitness accounts of spirits, or a mixture of these elements. Texas even has its own version of the Headless Horsemen by the name of 'El Muerto,' inspired by an outlaw named Vidal who was beheaded by the famous Texas Rangers in 1850. After his death, people continuously reported sightings of a headless rider, roaming across the country.³⁷ The ghost stories of the Wild West took on a more folklore or urban legend legacy that then translated into socially constructed Western spirits that people then claimed to see. As Jesse James and Black Jack Ketchum haunted the West and terrorized locals, the voices of otherworldly miners cried out from the dangerous and deadly Belle Mine of Nevada, which developed urban legends and brought tourists to the desolate areas.³⁸ It was history coming to life as the line between fiction and reality began to blur, and the concept of 'the ghost' became suspended in a realm of ambiguity between what was considered real, tangible, and historical, and what was make-believe.

In the United States, ghostly encounters have been socially and culturally constructed as a result of the development of the Americanized fictitious ghost narrative. The once passive European ghost evolved into a more powerful character from the nineteenth century onwards due to American literary influences. As the ghosts in fiction became more powerful and active, so did the ghosts that people reported seeing in real life hauntings; as the Americanization of the ghost story grew, so did the Americanization of hauntings. The fascination with the paranormal has only continued to grow stronger in the US in our current time, just as the ghosts of literature gained more power within their fictitious realm. Fictional horror has gained popularity, but so has reality horror with multi-season television series such as *Ghost Hunters* or *Ghost Adventures*. Although horror stories in our current time continue to evolve with characters becoming more grotesque and powerful beings, the Victorian and Wild West legacies remain visible in contemporary reports of paranormal activity, with media focusing on the hauntings of Victorian homes or old mining towns.³⁹ Televised shows,

moreover, seem to hold onto this nineteenth-century legacy as it has almost become impossible to discern between reality and fiction in the portrayal of ghosts. The American ghost therefore continues to scare both in the realm of fiction and reality, while simultaneously blurring that boundary. With television shows that document paranormal activity in real time, taking up space in the real world, this brings a frightening question: have we lost the line between fiction and reality?

Notes

¹ Marcus A. LiBrizzi, and Dennis W. Boyd. *The Nelly Butler hauntings: a documentary history*. (Machias, Me: Library of Early Maine Literature.) 2010.

² Ibid.

³ Andrew Smith. *The Ghost Story 1840 -1920: A Cultural History*. (Manchester University Press). 2010.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, and Peggy Kamuf. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994).

⁵ Mark Fisher. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. (Zero Books). 2022.

⁶ Ibid, 28.

⁷ *Ghost Adventures*. 2008. Season 1. Episode 1. "Bobby Mackey's Music World." Zak Bagans and Nick Groff. Aired on October 17, 2008 on Travel Channel.

⁸ Jennifer, Bann. "Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: The Changing Figure of the Nineteenth-Century Specter." *Victorian Studies* 51, no. 4 (2009): 663-85. doi:10.2979/vic.2009.51.4.663.

⁹ Ibid, 663.

¹⁰ Ibid, 664.

¹¹ Henry James. "The Turn of the Screw. Dover Thrift Editions." (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1991).

¹² Ibid, 666.

¹³ Melton, J. Gordon. *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 2001.

¹⁴ Jennifer Bann, 666.

¹⁵ Los Angeles herald. [volume] (Los Angeles [Calif.]), 19 Oct. 1891. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

¹⁶ Jennifer Bann, 682.

¹⁷ Marcus A. LiBrizzi, and Dennis W. Boyd, 931. Testimony from Sarah Simpson.

¹⁸ Ibid, 931. Testimony from Sarah Simpson.

¹⁹ Ibid, 727. Testimony from George Butler and Paul Simpson Jr.

²⁰ Ibid, 829.

²¹ Washington Irving. *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. ([S.l.]: Flame Tree Publishing), 2020, 7.

²² Ibid, 34.

²³ Jessica Traynor. "How Tales of the Headless Horseman Came from Celtic Mythology." *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Times*, 23 Oct. 2019.; Roger Luckhurst. "The Horror of the Headless Horseman." *BBC Culture*, BBC, 17 Nov. 2016.

²⁴ Reference can be made to many active ghosts written during this time such as the ghost of Bob Marley in *A Christmas Carol* - menacing as he terrifies Scrooge, active in his presence, while taking on very ghostly qualities like rattling chains, wailing, and floating about the room. Charles Dickens, 1812-1870. *A Christmas Carol and Other Stories*. New York: Modern Library, 1995.

²⁵ Edgar Allan Poe. *The Masque of the red death and other tales*. (Franklin Center, Pa: Franklin Library), 1981.

²⁶ Rudyard Kipling. *The Phantom' Rickshaw: And Other Stories*. New York: Standard Classics, 1930.

²⁷ Carol Aronovici. "Americanization: Its Meaning and Function." *American Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 6 (1920): 695-730. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2764130>; Richard Kuisel. "COMMENTARY: Americanization for Historians." *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 3 (2000): 509-15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24913840>.

²⁸ Edgar Allan Poe. *The Masque of the red death and other tales*. (Franklin Center, Pa: Franklin Library), 1981.

²⁹ Edith Wharton, and Kelly Link. *The ghost stories of Edith Wharton*, (London: Virago), 2019.

³⁰ The daily comet. [volume] (Baton Rouge, La.), 14 Sept. 1852. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016548/1852-09-14/ed-1/seq-2/>>

³¹ Angela Shiflett. "Real Haunted Places in America - Preston Castle." *Horror. Vocal Media*, 2017.

³² Oscar, Wilde. *The complete works of Oscar Wilde*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page), 1923. *The Canterville Ghost*.

³³ M.R. James, *Some Remarks on Ghost Stories*. The Bookman. pp. 55-56, 1929.

³⁴ This would also be supported from Jennifer Bann's claim that American spiritualism made its way to the UK.

³⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. "Ghost."

³⁶ The morning call. [volume] (San Francisco [Calif.]), 23 Dec. 1894. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

This source provides a story of a local encounter with the ghost of a miner in the mountains of California. Admin. "El Muerto." *Small Town Myths*, February 27, 2019.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Parrish, Michael. *Legends of America*. Accessed December 18, 2019.

³⁹ *Ghost Adventures*. 2017. Season 13. Episode 13. "Eureka Mining Town." Zak Bagans and Nick Groff. Aired on December 9, 2017 on Travel Channel.

Dangerous in the Wrong Hands: Homophobia as Defensive Strategy

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Chapter from bachelor thesis 'How Many Jeopardies Can You Afford?' Homosexuality in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1964.

In 1963, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was invited to appear on a television show, together with author James Baldwin. King declined the invitation and stated that Baldwin was “not informed regarding the movement.”¹ During a conversation between King and his advisor Stanley Levinson, recorded by the FBI, King claimed that while Baldwin could be “considered a spokesperson of the Negro people by the Press,” he was not a civil rights leader.² Civil rights activist Bayard Rustin was also discussed in this conversation. Levinson remarked that Baldwin and Rustin “were better qualified to lead a homo-sexual movement than a civil rights movement.”³ This example shows the outsider position of gay men in the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While Rustin had been a trusted advisor of King for years and was put in charge of the famous March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, his sexual identity was something that set him apart from other activists in the eyes of civil rights leaders like King

Historian Kevin Mumford argues that homophobia “influenced strategic deliberations about the race and direction of the movement.”⁴ According to Mumford, King declined the television appearance with Baldwin because he believed Baldwin’s sexual orientation made him unsuitable as a civil rights leader.⁵ Besides the argument that homophobia influenced the decision making of the movement, homophobia by civil rights leaders can in itself be seen as a strategic decision. Historian Thaddeus Russell argues that many civil rights leaders deployed respectability politics – the adoption of the heteronormative norms of the white American middle class to improve the moral image of African American people in the United States – to improve the position of Black people in the United States.⁶ The adoption of heteronormative standards meant distancing themselves from anything that could be interpreted as gay behavior. Aside from their goal of improving the image of the Black community, I propose another reason civil rights leaders rejected homosexuality. Due to the prevalence of homophobia in American society during the 1960s, homosexuality could easily be used as a weapon to discredit political opponents.⁷ A gay activist was not only vulnerable as an individual but could potentially jeopardize the entire movement. Therefore, this article will argue that homophobic behavior in the civil rights movement can therefore be interpreted as a defensive strategy.⁸

Like other civil rights leaders, King worried about the way he appeared to the world. He had always been very afraid of the press.⁹ Shortly after the March on Washington, he remarked that Rustin’s homosexuality was “something of a reflection” on him as well.¹⁰ King was concerned people would question the respectable image he tried to maintain if they knew of his association with gay people. King’s fear of rumors was not without reason: political opponents utilized the accusation of perversion as a weapon to discredit the movement. This

essay discusses two examples in which the risk of homosexuality to the civil rights movement is shown. Because both of those incidents concern Rustin, I will also consider some interviews he gave in the late 1980s about his experience as a gay man in the civil rights movement. Toward the end, the article takes on a broader view to discuss how besides homosexuality, other sexual activities also could be a source for sexual slander. Specifically, I will discuss how King's extramarital affairs formed an opportunity for the FBI to discredit him, and how this might have influenced his stance on homosexuality.

Let us turn to the popular Black magazine *Ebony*, which contains a clear articulation of King's public attitude toward homosexuality. Between 1957 and 1958, King wrote a monthly column for the magazine, in which he answered questions from its readers. In January 1958, a young man asked the following question: "My problem is different from the ones most people have. I am a boy, but I feel about boys the way I ought to feel about girls. I don't want my parents to know about me. What can I do? Is there any place where I can go for help?" King answered as follows:

Your problem is not at all an uncommon one. However, it does require careful attention. The type of feeling that you have toward boys is probably not an innate tendency, but something that has been culturally acquired. Your reasons for adopting this habit have now been consciously suppressed and unconsciously repressed. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with this problem by getting back to some of the experiences and circumstances that lead to the habit. In order to do this, I would suggest that you see a good psychiatrist who can assist you in bringing this to the forefront of conscience all of those experiences and circumstances that lead to the habit. You are already on the right road toward a solution, since you honestly recognize the problem and have a desire to solve it.¹¹

By calling the boy's sexuality "a problem," King showed a rejecting attitude toward homosexuality. His rejection and clinical tone fits into the context of the 1950s, when homosexuality was often explained by medical theories. With this, King aligned himself with the mainstream theories of the time. People believed that homosexuality stemmed from certain conditions during childhood: an overly strong relationship with his mother could cause a boy to develop feelings of homosexuality.¹² We can find this scientific attitude in an article in another popular Black magazine called *Jet*. In this article, homosexuality is described as the "the biggest psychosexual problem of modern times."¹³ Positioning himself among mainstream opinions could help King to present himself as a good and reliable leader to Black as well as white Americans.

King's reaction reflected the culture in which he grew up. When King wrote this column in 1958, homosexuality was still seen as a mental illness, and gay sexual activities were illegal. Therefore, King's environment did not encourage him to have a more liberal view on homosexuality. In an interview with George Chauncey – known for his work on the history of gender and sexuality – Rustin points out that "Dr. King came from a very protected background. I don't think he'd ever known a gay person in his life. I think he had no real

understanding.”¹⁴ We can see some of this emotional distance in King’s column: King does not address the boy’s anxieties, but instead uses dominant theories to explain why he feels this way. In that sense, we must see King’s ideas in the larger context of the time and place in which he lived.

The first example that shows the association with homosexuality was viewed as a jeopardy to the movement is the blackmailing in 1960 that led to Rustin’s resignation as King’s advisor. At the time, Rustin and King had been collaborating with other activists to organize marches at Democratic and Republican conventions. Democratic congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr. pressured King to call off the upcoming march at the Democratic convention by threatening to release a rumor of a sexual relationship between King and Rustin to the press.¹⁵ Though not true, the blackmail caused King great distress. When Rustin saw King’s anxiety, he offered to hand in his notice. To his surprise and chagrin, King accepted.¹⁶

In some of the later interviews given in the 1980s, Rustin elaborated on King’s attitude toward his sexuality. Important to note is that Rustin is not just referring to the time of the blackmail, but about a longer period. According to Rustin, King “was largely guided by two facts. One was that already people were whispering about him.”¹⁷ As Rustin in another interview states that King was under “extraordinary pressure about his own sex life” and that someone sent his wife a tape in which he “was supposedly having an affair with another woman,” we can assume that those “whispers” were about King’s extramarital affairs.¹⁸ According to Rustin, the blackmail made King even more anxious for rumors about his own sex life.¹⁹ Such rumors could pose a danger to both his reputation and that of the movement.

Furthermore, Rustin pointed out that King “was surrounded by people who, for their own reasons, wanted to get rid of me.”²⁰ When asked if this was because of his homosexuality, Rustin answered, “definitely not.” The reason that some other activists wanted him gone was because they did not agree on certain topics related to the movement, such as whether King should go to Chicago to lead a demonstration there in 1966, or about the organization of the Poor People’s Campaign in 1968.²¹ In the case of the blackmail, it was Roy Wilkins – secretary and later executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) – who was disturbed by Rustin’s prominent role in the upcoming marches. According to Rustin’s biographer John D’Emilio, Wilkins felt Rustin was invading his territory as Wilkins believed national politics were the domain of the NAACP.²² Wilkins went to Congressman Powell with his complaints, who consequently thought that all activists who wanted anything to do with the Democratic Party should come to him first.

Although Powell had frequently announced his disapproval of homosexuality, this blackmail did not entirely stem from homophobia. Rather, the incident sprang from the discontent of Wilkins and Powell with Rustin and his influence on King. Rustin’s political orientation was notably more leftist compared to other civil right leaders and was in some instances perceived as radical to other members of the movement. For example, during the mid-1960s, Rustin proposed a coalition with the labor movement because he believed that the goals for equality could best be reached through political cooperation, instead of the direct protest that had been more useful in earlier years.²³ D’Emilio describes Rustin’s politics

as a blend of Quaker, Gandhian, and Marxist teachings.²⁴ Therefore, his political ideas were not always in line with those of other civil rights leaders. To diminish his influence on King, Rustin's homosexuality was used as a weapon against him.²⁵ This weapon was not only dangerous to Rustin, but also threatened the position of King. After all, King was the face of the movement: if he was harmed by sexual slander, this would have more consequences for the civil rights movement.

The March on Washington in 1963 marked another moment when Rustin's homosexuality was used against the movement. When Rustin was proposed as the director of the March, the other civil rights leaders had to agree with this. Roy Wilkins told him that he would vote against the proposal.²⁶ According to Rustin, Wilkins was mainly concerned Rustin's appointment would cause a backlash.²⁷ Wilkins said to Rustin, "I don't think you should lead this march because they will try to stop it, and the most important thing they have to stop it with is that the director of it is gay."²⁸ As Wilkins believed opponents of the movement could use Rustin's homosexuality to harm the March, he thus voted against Rustin's appointment. In the end, the civil rights leaders made a compromise in which another candidate, Philip A. Randolph, was appointed director of the March and Rustin as his deputy.²⁹ Unfortunately, Wilkins' worries proved to be legitimate. After the announcement of Rustin's role in the March, Senator Strom Thurmond "stood in the Senate speaking for three-quarters of an hour on the fact that Bayard Rustin was a homosexual, a draft dodger, and a communist."³⁰ Thurmond was not a supporter of the civil rights movement and had even - unsuccessfully - tried to prevent the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.³¹ His speech about Rustin received a lot of attention from the press. In response, director Randolph defended Rustin during a public announcement. He suggested that people who criticized Rustin did not do so out of a dedication to morality, but because they wanted to oppose the movement.³²

In the 1980 interviews, Rustin remarked he had- the full support of King when he was proposed as organizer of the March on Washington, in contrast to the blackmailing case of 1960. He thinks that the reason for this "was, in part, because times were changing, but also because Dr. King felt unhappy with what he had to do earlier."³³ The idea that King felt the freedom to support Rustin in 1963 but not in 1960 indicates the influence of mainstream cultural ideas on King. In 1960, he did not dare to put his head on the line for Rustin, because he was afraid of public backlash. This strengthens the idea that King's actions were not out of personal spite against homosexuality, but as a defense against the destructive weapon that homosexuality proved to be to the civil rights movement.

The homophobia that made homosexuality a jeopardy for the civil rights movement was part of the Cold War era. The Cold War created a fear in the United States for all behavior deemed abnormal or 'un-American,' which included gay people.³⁴ After all, they did not fit within the heteronormative ideals of American society.³⁵ The congressional anti-communist campaign led by Senator Joseph P. McCarthy (R-WI) during the 1940s and 1950s contributed to the association of homosexuality and communism and fueled fears among the public that gay people who worked for the government were mentally unstable.³⁶ This would make it easy for communists to blackmail them and get access to secret

governmental information. This fear resulted in an investigation in 1950 to remove all gay persons from federal service. In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower officially banned gay people from working for the government.³⁷ The so-called ‘Lavender Scare’ brought a wave of homophobia to the United States.

Another concern during the Cold War was law and order. In the 1950s, homosexuality was not only linked to communism, but also to crime. Because homosexuality was illegal in all American states and looked upon with disdain, homosexuals were forced to operate in secrecy. According to historian Timothy Stewart-Winter, “gayness, spying, and concealment were powerfully linked together in popular culture.”³⁸ The connection between crime and homosexuality strengthened the negative image surrounding gay people. The hostility against gay people increasingly led mainstream media to describe them as “a threat to social order.”³⁹ The context of the Cold War helps to understand why civil rights leaders were so afraid for the consequences of being associated with homosexuals. The Lavender Scare and homophobia in American society made it important to civil rights leaders to stay away from gossip. After all, the link with homosexuality, communism, or crime, would have countered their efforts to build a respectable image.

In public, King and other civil rights leaders tried to avoid questions about sexuality. According to Mumford, this was mainly because of King’s extramarital affairs. While King preached to the Black community about uplifting their ‘moral standards,’ he was actually having multiple extramarital affairs.⁴⁰ Knowing about King’s own infidelity, his critique on homosexuality may seem hypocritical. After all, both homosexual behavior and adultery were deemed immoral at the time. However, Rustin believed King did not see a connection between his own affairs and Rustin’s homosexuality. “Oh, the crap that was going on in those motels as the movement moved from place to place was totally acceptable,” Rustin explained but “the homosexual act was not.”⁴¹ It is also possible that King did not want to acknowledge this connection because he was afraid that people would link his sexual activities to his friendship with Rustin. As the latter pointed out, King did not want any added speculation about his own sexuality.⁴² King was afraid for the sexual slander that could damage his own reputation and therefore that of the movement.

King’s fears were not irrational. In the summer of 1963, after the March on Washington, FBI-director Edgar Hoover decided that the civil rights movement posed a real threat to the established order. Hoover did not support the struggle for racial equality.⁴³ As historian Kenneth O’Reilly argues, the success of the civil rights movement would have a negative impact on the workability of the FBI, as most civil rights cases would be against police officers who had often cooperated with the FBI to solve cases.⁴⁴ Therefore, Hoover was motivated to undermine the civil rights movement and its key figures. O’Reilly writes that Hoover “had spent his life destroying communists and their causes, and now he would try to destroy King and his cause.”⁴⁵ One of the ways to do this was by spreading rumors. Civil rights leader Roger Wilkins claimed, “[Hoover] spread garbage about everybody in the civil rights movement.”⁴⁶ According to O’Reilly, the FBI-director had a “obsession with the sexual habits of civil rights activists,” and saw rumors about homosexuality, interracial sex, or extramarital

sex as a great opportunity to discredit his political opponents.⁴⁷ By spreading rumors about sexual deviancy, Hoover hoped to damage the movement and its members.

King's extramarital affairs made him particularly vulnerable to the methods of Hoover. During the last years of his life, the FBI granted King almost no privacy. They tapped his telephone and placed recording devices in his hotel rooms. This resulted in 17,000 page report on King's activities and conversations.⁴⁸ While the FBI initially started looking for possible ties of the civil rights leader with communism, they later found that it was easier to accuse King of immoral behavior.⁴⁹ According to O'Reilly, Hoover once described King in a private memo as "a 'tom cat' with obsessive degenerate sexual urges."⁵⁰ The picture that Hoover drew of King is that of an animalistic and hypersexual man. This fits with the racial stereotype of the excessively sexual Black man that stemmed from slavery.⁵¹ In 1964, the FBI sent an anonymous letter to King, now known as the 'suicide note.' In this note, they advised that King should kill himself. Along with the letter, they sent a tape with a compilation of audio recordings in which his infidelity was audible.⁵² The example demonstrates the extent to which immoral sexual behavior was used as a political weapon during this period. If we think about King's advice to *Ebony* readers on how to live [morally], we can imagine that accusations about his extramarital activities would have done serious damage to his credibility as a leader. Therefore, the pressure on King's own private life will likely have added to his anxiety of sexual slander regarding homosexuality.

As we saw from the examples in this article, sexuality - and in this case especially homosexuality - can be used as a political weapon. Rustin was an easy target because of his communist, pacifist, and homosexual background. Ultimately, every time Rustin gained more prominence, he was cut down. Randolph called this the "tragedy of Bayard."⁵³ To avoid such a fate, civil rights leaders were careful to try not to give their opponents a reason to question their morality or sexuality by distancing themselves from gay people and denouncing homosexuality. This way, we can see how homophobia in the civil rights movement was a form of self-defense caused by a fear for the downfall of the movement and its leaders.

Rustin understood the dangers that his own sexuality posed. During an interview with writer and civil rights activist Joseph Beam in 1986, he was asked how it felt when King did not offer him the directorship of SCLC. Rustin admitted that he was disappointed but added that things were different at that time. He explained, "I think that Dr. King had every right to raise questions as to whether prejudice to gays would affect what he looked upon as a very important movement at the moment."⁵⁴ Rustin believed that King would have faced problems if he had indeed become executive director of SCLC. Because of the strong sense of homophobia in society, the leaders seemed to have little choice than to adopt this stance, even if they did not necessarily agree with it. Rustin stated that "people in the civil rights movement were perfectly willing to accept me so long as I didn't declare that I was gay."⁵⁵ This would indicate that key figures - King possibly included - did not really mind if someone had a same-sex sexual orientation, as long as if it did not harm the movement or themselves. Of course, the homophobia of the era influenced the way people perceived homosexuality. There was certainly a lot of prejudice against gay activists.⁵⁶ Either way, civil

rights leaders like King or Wilkins believed that it was work enough to battle the prejudice of racism and that it was too early—it seemed—for centrist civil rights organizations to tackle discrimination that happened at the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

The homophobia of the civil rights leaders was thus a defensive reaction to the threat of political opponents who used accusations of homosexuality as a weapon to discredit the movement. However, as we saw in the example of Bayard Rustin, this does not mean that it was impossible to be a gay civil rights activist. People like Rustin showed that it was still possible to find a place for themselves in the movement and participate in the fight for equality.

Notes

¹ Kevin Mumford, *Not Straight, Not White: Black Gay Men from the March on Washington to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 26; James Baldwin File, *FBI*, 1225, 104.

² Mumford, *Not Straight, Not White*, 26.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁶ Thaddeus Russell, “The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality,” *American Quarterly* 60:1 (March 2008): 106.

⁷ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare; The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁸ In this article, I use the term ‘homosexuality’ for same-sex sexual orientation. I am aware that this term is sometimes tied with negative stereotypes and therefore I want to emphasize that this is not the case here. My choice for this term is motivated by its clarity, because the word ‘homosexuality’ is known to every reader. However, while I will be using ‘homosexuality’ to describe same-sex sexual orientation, I will use the word ‘gay’ when referring to an individual or a group of people. The word ‘gay’ gives a stronger sense of identity, while ‘homosexual’ can be received as medical or only referring to one’s sexual behavior. Also, when talking about ‘gay people,’ I do not only refer to gay men, but to gay people of all genders. Last, it is good to note that the terms ‘homosexuality’ and ‘homosexual’ were also common in the 1960s. Therefore, these words may appear in the primary sources that are used. For more information on LGBTQ+ terminology, please look at for example: <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/language> about avoiding heterosexual bias in language or <https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms> for an overview of general definitions.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Thaddeus Russell, “The Color of Discipline,” *American Quarterly* 60:1 (March 2008): 117.

¹¹ Martin Luther King Jr., “Advice on Living,” in *The papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. / Vol. IV, Symbol of the movement: January 1957 - December 1958*, eds. Carson Clayborne & Susan Carson (Berkeley: California University Press, 2000), 348.

¹² Mumford, *Not Straight, Not White*, 51.

¹³ “Is there hope for homosexuals?” *Jet* (August 7, 1952), 26-29.

¹⁴ Bayard Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses: An Interview with George Chauncey, Jr.,” (1987) in *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, eds. Donald Weise and Devon Carbado (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 302.

¹⁵ Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. was the first African American to have a seat in Congress, where he represented New York. While Powell supported a more liberal stance toward sexuality, he was fiercely against homosexuality and thought that ‘vigilance and education’ was needed to ‘decrease’ it (Mumford, 43). Therefore, D’Emilio argues that Wilkins was well aware of the consequences for Rustin when he went to Powell for help (D’Emilio, “‘An Employee of Others,’ 1959-1960”).

¹⁶ John D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), “‘An Employee of Others,’ 1959-1960”; Mumford, *Not Straight, Not White*, 31.

¹⁷ Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses,” 302.

¹⁸ Rustin, “Martin Luther King’s View on Gay People,” in *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, eds. Donald Weise and Devon Carbado (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 282-283.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses,” 302.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² D’Emilio, “‘An Employee of Others,’ 1959-1960.”

- ²³ Mark Carnes, *Invisible Giants: Fifty Americans Who Shaped the Nation but Missed the History Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 242.
- ²⁴ John D’Emilio, “Homophobia and the Trajectory of Postwar American Radicalism: The Career of Bayard Rustin,” *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 85.
- ²⁵ Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses,” 302.
- ²⁶ Rustin, “Martin Luther King’s Views on Gay People,” 293.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 293-301.
- ²⁸ Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses,” 301.
- ²⁹ Interview with John Lewis for “America, They Loved You Madly,” *Blackside, Inc, Washington University in St. Louis* (May 14, 1979) last accessed November 12, 2022, <http://repository.wustl.edu/concern/videos/vt1.50m28q>.
- ³⁰ Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses,” 301.
- ³¹ “Strom Thurmond: A Featured Biography,” United States Senate, last accessed 3 December 2022, https://www.senate.gov/senators/FeaturedBios/Featured_Bio_Thurmond.htm.
- ³² Mumford, *Not Straight, Not White*, 32.
- ³³ Rustin, “Brother to Brother: An Interview with Joseph Beam,” in *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, eds. Donald Weise and Devon Carbado (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 279.
- ³⁴ Alan Nadel, Review of *The Lavender Scare* by Josh Howard and film produced by Kevin Jennings, Andrew Tobias and Betsy West, *The Journal of American History* 106:3 (2019): 845-856.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ Douglas M. Charles, “Communist and Homosexual: the FBI, Harry Hay, and the Secret Side of the Lavender Scare, 1943-1961,” *American Communist History* 11:1 (2012): 122-123.
- ³⁷ Timothy Stewart-Winter, *Queer Clout: Chicago and the Rise of Gay Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016): 16.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁴⁰ James Baldwin, “The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King,” in *Collected Essays*, comp. Toni Morrison (New York: The Library of America, 1998) 644; King’s extramarital affairs are well-known by now. In 2019, however, historian David Garrow, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for his biography on King, wrote an article in which he claimed that King was the witness of the rape of a woman. According to Garrow, King had laughed and offered advice to the rapist. For this information, he relied on a large amount of FBI documents that have ‘silently slipped into view’ on the website Archives.org. The reactions of other historians, including Jeanne Theoharis and Barbara Ransby, to his article are critical. They raise questions about Garrow’s use of sources. For instance, he does not use the complete transcript of the recording of the rape, but a handwritten summary of it. On April 20, 2022, I had correspondence with Garrow via email. His article in *Standpoint* does not include footnotes, so I asked if he could direct me to the sources that he used. After looking at some of these files, I decided that his article and the sources were too controversial and unreliable to use in this article. As historian Donna Murch states in *The Guardian*, ‘until [2027] we must evaluate Garrow’s claims with healthy skepticism.’ Even in 2027, when the files on King are fully released, we will have to be careful not to get carried away by sources that were created by people who wanted to destroy King.
- ⁴¹ Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses,” 302.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ Kenneth O’Reilly, “The FBI and the Civil Rights Movement during the Kennedy Years – from the Freedom Rides to Albany,” *The Journal of Southern History* 54:2 (May 1988): 202.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ Kenneth O’Reilly, *“Racial Matters” The FBI’s Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 132-133.
- ⁴⁶ O’Reilly, “*Racial Matters*,” 147-148.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.
- ⁴⁸ “Martin Luther King, Jr. FBI File,” *Truman State University*, last accessed November 12, 2022, https://library.truman.edu/microforms/martin_luther_king.asp#:~:text=The%20FBI%20File%20consists%20of,pages%20include%20blacked%20out%20sections.
- ⁴⁹ O’Reilly, “*Racial Matters*,” 141.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.
- ⁵¹ Farai Chideya, Herbert Samuels and Mireille Miller-Young, “The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery,” *NPR* (May 7, 2007) last accessed November 12, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10057104>.
- ⁵² O’Reilly, “*Racial Matters*,” 132-145.
- ⁵³ D’Emilio, “‘An Employee of Others,’ 1959-1960”; Interview with James Farmer, *Columbia University Oral History Collection* (1979).
- ⁵⁴ Rustin, “Time on Two Crosses,” 279.

⁵⁵ Ibid; Rustin, "Black and Gay in the Civil Rights Movement," in *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, eds. Donald Weise and Devon Carbado (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2003), 284.

⁵⁶ Rustin, "Time on Two Crosses," 299.

The Never-ending and Ever-changing Crusade: Calls to Action by US Presidents from FDR to Trump

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Historically, a *crusade* was a military expedition launched by European Christians in the early medieval era to reclaim the so-called Holy Land from its Muslim residents. By the 1700s, however, the word had changed in its use to encompass any action against perceived public evils, such as when Thomas Jefferson entreated fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence George Wythe to preach “a crusade against ignorance.”¹ Over the next two centuries, presidents and other public officials would announce crusades (or even *not*-crusades) on everything from commerce to labor movements to Mormonism. While the word might have become more secular in its general use, an undercurrent of its religiously pregnant origin was still present, notably among Christian revival groups. *Crusade* suggests that there is another to be dominated, subdued, and destroyed, a cudgel-word against a moral or political enemy. It was only once the United States entered sustained military conflict in the Middle East in the 2000s that the term was again used in its original sense. In the tradition of medieval crusades, I will be focusing on how leaders—US presidents—have used the term throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, and how its connotation has changed depending upon whom the crusade is being waged.

The word is essential to understand how the United States positions itself in relation to the rest of the world. Its usage (sometimes) invokes its decidedly Christian origins to root the country as part of a broad struggle between good and evil, both at home and abroad. Scholars such as Andrew B.R. Elliott have demonstrated innumerable links between crusading rhetoric and what is termed the neo-medievalist ideology of later presidents such as George W. Bush, while political scientists like Graham Maddox have identified the origin of religious uses of the word *crusade* in the contradictions between the liberalism of the US Constitution and the actions of the country abroad.²

A few years after the start of the Great Depression in 1929, Franklin D. Roosevelt took the stage at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) to accept his party’s nomination for president. In his acceptance speech, the future president spoke about a national renewal needed to improve the welfare of common people of the United States. He pointed to the farmers, city-dwellers, and the countless small towns which dotted the country as sites of change. At the end of his speech, he closed with these words:

I pledge you, I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people. Let us all here assembled constitute ourselves prophets of a new order of competence and of courage. This is more than a political campaign. It is a call to arms. Give me your

help, not to win votes along – but to win in this crusade to return America to its own people.³

Roosevelt referred to prophets, arms, and crusades. But the enemy was not Muslim, and the battle site was not Jerusalem. Instead, the call to arms was against those bankers and capitalists who had crashed the economy, and the battleground was America itself. Here, the contradictions of *crusade* are on full display. It is at once a return to old traditions while also a call to create something new, a new order. And, like the crusades, all are called to participate. Roosevelt would repeat this conceit four years later, a few days before the 1936 presidential election. He quoted himself and referenced his 1932 speech, adding only that the American citizens had fulfilled their pledge to continue the “crusade” by voting for the Democratic ticket.⁴

By 1948, politics had changed. There was a Republican-controlled Congress for the first time in decades, World War II had come and gone, and the United States was pumping money into Western Europe to shore up its defenses against the Soviet Union. Harry Truman was running for the first time in his own right to become president. In his acceptance speech to the DNC, he cited Roosevelt’s crusade of 1932 while clarifying who the crusaders and the crusade’s enemies were, saying, “we are now the defenders of the stronghold of democracy and of equal opportunity, the haven of the ordinary people of this land and not of the favored classes or the powerful few.” Truman ended his speech by again calling for action from voters but without Roosevelt’s request for help in the political process of reclaiming the country from those “favored classes or the powerful few.”⁵

Truman’s crusade was more partisan than Roosevelt’s. Gone was the call for the reclamation of society and country. Instead, Truman appeared to be more interested in keeping votes. For Truman, it seemed as though the crusade was paradoxically both finished and still ongoing. It was now a matter of holding on to the gains that the Democrats had made in the previous sixteen years. Taft-Hartley and other pro-business and anti-labor bills had been passed during Truman’s first term, vexing his half-hearted efforts to build a ‘Fair Deal’ for Americans, but all three parts of government remained firmly under Democratic control except for a short two-year period.⁶

In the 1930s and 1940s, presidential calls to crusade were ostensibly serious matters, calling on all people in the country to return power to the working class. However, despite devastating economic crises and worldwide war, the crusade of Roosevelt and Truman was a call for radical shifts in US society without much substance.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan accepted the Republican nomination for president with a speech calling for a “great national crusade to make America great again!” after detailing a litany of sins by the Carter administration and its failings both domestically and abroad.⁷ Reagan then upped the ante at the end of his speech, invoking the Christian God while prompting voters to support him:

Can we doubt that only a Divine Providence placed this land, this island of freedom, here as a refuge for all those people in the world who yearn to

breathe freely: Jews and Christians enduring persecution behind the Iron Curtain, the boat people of Southeast Asia, of Cuba and Haiti, the victims of drought and famine in Africa, the freedom fighters of Afghanistan... I'll confess that I've been a little afraid to suggest what I'm going to suggest—I'm more afraid not to—that we begin our crusade joined together in a moment of silent prayer. God bless America.⁸

There is a dual crusade at work here, both at home against the Democrats and abroad against the Soviet Union. The United States, in Reagan's vision, was at total war with enemies all over the world, but none so much as the communists in the east. Responsibility was thrown onto Reagan's conception of God; the president, like the pope, is only a warrior in service, a vessel for divine will to flow through. The religious imagery, especially the mention of the persecution of Christians, reflects the return of *crusade* back to its roots.⁹ Two years later, in a speech to the British Parliament, Reagan hammered this point even further, explicitly linking the crusade against "Marxism-Leninism" to ideals of freedom and democracy in the Christian West.¹⁰

Meanwhile, back home, the United States was entering an unprecedented drug crisis. Reagan and his wife Nancy took to television, delivering a twenty-minute address to the nation and exhorting Americans to 'just say no.' To Reagan, drugs were "menacing... and undermining our institutions," institutions which were gifted to the country through "Divine Providence."¹¹ To achieve Reagan's dream of making America great again, a battle would need to be waged, but one against the anti-Christian evils of both drug use and communism.

These crusades, however, are no longer a common struggle but rather a war waged by the government on its citizens. Despite Reagan's call to "...have a crusade today and... lead that crusade with your help," no routes are given for collective action—except to 'just say no.'¹² More importantly, however, Reagan took crusade into the domain of foreign policy. While Roosevelt and Truman waged a crusade against a domestic threat, Reagan's crusade also focused on an external enemy: the Soviet Union.

Days after the September 11th attacks, President George W. Bush stepped onto the South Lawn of the White House and delivered the following remarks:

We haven't seen this kind of barbarism in a long period of time... This is a new kind of - a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient.¹³

A spokesperson for the White House later clarified that Bush was not referring to the word *crusade's* medieval meaning, but rather "a broad cause".¹⁴ As a prepared speech, the words Bush spoke were presumably pored over by many pairs of eyes, and it seems unlikely that such a weighted word would be used carelessly. The administration recognized its use as a taboo word, both not allowed in specific contexts and allowed in others. Speaking in the same vein after the American invasion of Iraq, Bush claimed that the "plan of Heaven for humanity" was liberty itself, delivered to Iraq and Afghanistan and other Muslim-majority countries through US

dominance.¹⁵

Scholar Andrew B.R. Elliott argues that the word was used perhaps unconsciously, as a shorthand for the simplistic “good versus evil” fight the administration sought to portray in the buildup towards massive American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Beyond its Islamophobic usage in tying Afghanistan to Medieval crusades, Bush’s speech also framed the wars as a “clash of civilizations,” in which the United States was bringing modern democracy and freedom to the backwards Middle East.¹⁶

Bush went even further than Reagan in tying modern events to a Christian crusade. For Reagan, a *crusade* was simply Christian ideals in action, but for Bush, his crusade against the Middle East was planned, immutable, and divinely guided. The crusade is also one of military power, rather than the citizen-guided movements of Roosevelt and Truman. We have now circled back to the word’s original meaning and all its historical baggage – a holy war, waged against Islam, led by a righteous God-chosen leader. For political scientist Graham Maddox, this speech also marked a turning point in United States policy, in which faith-based morality superseded contradictory liberal values enshrined in the country’s founding documents.¹⁷ In order to make war more palatable, its origin had to have been placed in religious struggle. It mirrored Bush’s own religion, one in which evangelism is paramount and war can be backed by God’s judgment.¹⁸

Barack Obama, when receiving his Nobel Prize, further muddled *crusade*. In his 2009 speech, he said, “these extremists are not the first to kill in the name of God; the cruelties of the Crusades are amply recorded.” These extremists, referring to Islamic groups in Afghanistan, were the ones using violence for religious-political ends, but not the United States. In the context of the speech, the US was now the victim of a new crusade. Obama followed up on this by saying that “if you truly believe that you are carrying out divine will, then there is no need for restraint.”¹⁹ This is exactly what George W. Bush argued, but for the United States’ military invasion and attacks across the Middle East. Despite this, Obama continued the war in Afghanistan and Iraq and added several more countries to the list of places struck by drones and elite commando units.²⁰ Obama paid lip service by recognizing the *bad* crusades of centuries ago, while the *good* crusade, infinitely more barbarous and destructive, continued.

So, two different presidents speaking about the same wars, one calling them a crusade, and the other calling them a not-crusade (and according to Obama, the people his administration was fighting were engaging in the *real* crusade). But the results were the same and war carried on regardless. While Obama eschewed religious overtones when speaking of the goals of the wars in the Middle East and Central Asia, the wars were fought unseen as the country switched to modern forms of warfare which required less in-person fighting.²¹

Speaking in front of the United Nations General Assembly in 2019, President Donald Trump attacked Iran for its aggression and warned: “Iran’s leaders will have turned a proud nation into just another cautionary tale of what happens when a ruling class... embarks on a crusade for personal power and riches.”²² Again, another president changed the origin of the

crusade; not the United States, but rather its enemies abroad—and it must be struggled against by the United States in a counter-crusade.

Here, the crusade was one of evil versus the good of the United States. It also positioned the Iranian people in opposition to their leaders as Trump hoped that there would be a revolution in the country in which the people wrested back control from their leaders.²³ This is a complex crusade and more convoluted than any other covered in this paper: Iran versus the United States, Iran versus its people, and the people of Iran versus Iran. To Trump, the United States was reacting to a threat, responding to an anti-crusade in which the Muslim invaders wish to overthrow the Christian empire. The definition of the word *crusade* now became even more muddled.

The word *crusade* has drifted in its usage by American presidents in both politics and war and has been transmuted through ninety years of complex history. In the examples used throughout this paper, *crusade* has always maintained a meaning of struggle, but whether that means one imbued with holy providence, common morality, or negative meaning depends on the political context of the speech.

So too has the involvement of the American people changed in these so-called crusades. During the 1930s, Roosevelt called on American citizens to participate in taking back the country from bankers and joining public works programs, but by the beginning of the 21st century, the individual could contribute little. It was unclear who, how, or what US-Americans could do to support the crusade in its varying forms, and so the process became divorced from its original meaning. Support the crusaders themselves, or the government, or the military—it remained unclear.

While Presidents Reagan and Bush returned the word to its religious origins, under Obama *crusade* semantically shifted into unrecognizability. The United States was not engaging in a crusade, yet the country continued to take part in the same actions as Bush's crusade with all its religious imagery flavoring. Finally, Trump reclaimed the word while simultaneously turning it upside-down; the United States was now the crusaded-against. Anything and everything can be (or not be) a crusade. United States presidents have been able to utilize *crusade* for a variety of causes, some secular, some quasi-religious, for enemies both foreign and domestic. But despite dancing around the word's long Islamophobic history, its usage ultimately points back to its roots.

Notes

¹ "crusade, n.". OED Online. September 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.proxy.uba.uva.nl/view/Entry/45256?rskey=8ZdnqJ&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed November 01, 2021).

² Andrew B. R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century*, vol. 10, Medievalism 10 (Cambridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2017); Graham Maddox, "The 'Crusade' Against Evil: Bush's Fundamentalism," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 49, no. 3 (2003): 398–411.

³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Acceptance Speech to the 1932 Democratic Convention" (speech, Chicago, IL, July 2, 1932), FDR Library, <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/dnc-curriculum-hub>.

⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Speech at Madison Square Garden" (speech, New York City, NY, October 31, 1936), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/october-31-1936-speech-madison-square-garden>.

⁵ Harry S Truman, "Democratic National Convention" (speech, Philadelphia, PA, July 15, 1948), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-15-1948-democratic-national-convention>.

⁶ William Cunion, "How politics is like horse racing: Harry Truman, Taft-Hartley, and the 1948 presidential campaign." *White House Studies* 6, no. 4 (2006): 359.

⁷ Ronald Reagan, "Republican National Convention" (speech, Detroit, MI, July 17, 1980), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-17-1980-republican-national-convention>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ In the intervening years between Truman and Reagan, there were three other crusades I would like to mention for their religious connection, but not explore: Campus Crusade for Christ (1951), the Birmingham Children's Crusade (1963), and Anita Bryant's Save Our Children (commonly referred to as an anti-gay crusade) (1977).⁹ These are referenced merely to show that the word *crusade* was still being used in a religious sense during the latter half of the 20th century and still targeted enemies of different interpretations of Christianity, whether that meant pot-smoking longhaired hippies, racist police and government officials, or gay men. See Laurie Goodstone, "Campus Crusade for Christ is Renamed," *New York Times*, July 20, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/21/us/21brfs-CAMPUSCRUSAD_BRF.html; Charlayne Hunter Gault, "Fifty Years After the Birmingham Children's Crusade," *The New Yorker*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news-desk/fifty-years-after-the-birmingham-childrens-crusade>; Dennis A. Williams, "Homosexuals: Anita Bryant's Crusade," *Newsweek*, April 11, 1977, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc1787567/>.

¹⁰ Ronald Reagan, "Address to the British Parliament" (speech, London, UK, June 8, 1982), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/june-8-1982-address-british-parliament>.

¹¹ Ronald Reagan, "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse" (speech, Washington, DC, September 14, 1986), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-14-1986-speech-nation-campaign-against-drug-abuse>.

¹² Ronald Reagan, "Debate with Ronald Reagan" (debate transcript, Cleveland, OH, October 28, 1980), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/october-28-1980-debate-ronald-reagan>.

¹³ George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President Upon Arrival" (speech, Washington, DC, September 26, 2001), White House Archives, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>.

¹⁴ Peter Waldman et al., "'Crusade' Reference Reinforces Fears War on Terrorism is Against Muslims," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 21, 2001, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1001020294332922160>.

¹⁵ George W. Bush, "President Bush Discusses Freedom in Iraq and Middle East" (speech, Washington, DC, November 26, 2003), White House Archives, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html>.

¹⁶ Andrew B. R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century*, vol. 10, Medievalism 10 (Cambridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2017), 105.

¹⁷ Graham Maddox, "The 'Crusade' Against Evil: Bush's Fundamentalism," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 49, no. 3 (2003): 398-411. 409.

¹⁸ Ibid, 400-401.

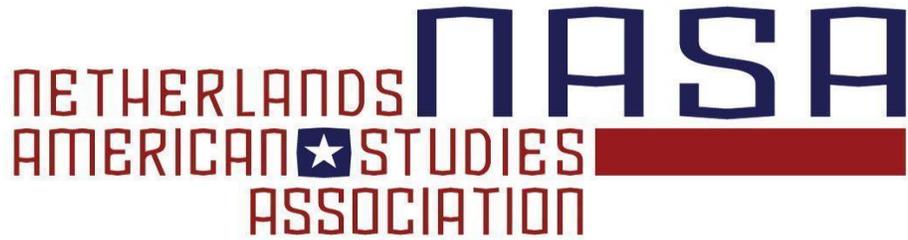
¹⁹ Barack Obama, "Acceptance of Nobel Peace Prize" (speech, Oslo, Norway, December 10, 2009), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-10-2009-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>.

²⁰ Christi Parsons and W.J. Hennigan, "President Obama, who hoped to sow peace, instead led the nation in war," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-na-pol-obama-at-war/>.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Donald Trump, "Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly" (speech, New York City, NY, September 24, 2019), Miller Center, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-24-2019-remarks-united-nations-general-assembly>.

²³ While the stated goal of sanctions is to punish leadership, regular people usually bear the brunt of economic hardship. The cruel arithmetic is that making people poorer will lead to the overthrow of the government. For an example of this, see Mark Dubowitz, "Opinion | Build an Iranian Sanctions Wall," *Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/build-an-iranian-sanctions-wall-11554246565>. For more on the humanitarian aspects of sanctions, see Erica S. Moret, "Humanitarian Impacts of Economic Sanctions on Iran and Syria," *European Security* 24, no. 1 (2015): 120-40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2014.893427>. Trump himself alluded to protests (or more) in 2017 on Twitter. See "Trump: Iranian People Are Finally 'Getting Wise,'" POLITICO, December 31, 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-iran-iranian-people-are-finally-getting-wise/>.



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