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VULCAN HISTORICAL REVIEW

VOLUME 23



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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The creation of the Vulcan Historical Review established an important tradition within the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Department of History, and for the other humanities, that has led to 23 years of historical scholarship. This year's editorial board, comprised of both graduate and undergraduate students, remains nothing but grateful for the opportunity to become part of this tradition and for the chance to uphold everything the journal has come to represent for the department and the Chi Omicron Chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society. This volume comprises a set of unique perspectives and questions that young historians grapple with today. By dedicating our studies to the past, our authors have explored this intersection between past traditions and present injustices to bridge the gap in understanding both how we as a society have created these social conditions, as well as if this understanding requires new evaluation by exploring material with a modern perspective. Examining these questions and sharing this work has allowed us, as editors and authors, to accomplish one of the most important goals of history: presenting scholarly research to question what we believe we know and then present our findings to challenge the understanding of others. Through this bold task, we hope to honor the legacy of those who worked on the Vulcan Historical Review before us.

Our current issue opens with a co-authored piece on the Alabama Bicentennial, establishing periods of harrowing race relations and desperate economic plight as well as the progress and transformation since then. Many of the following papers focus on similar points of transformation by discussing issues such as the lasting legacy of American slavery, stretching into today. By evaluating the methods and social consequences of the slave trade, the author demonstrates how factors such as the stripping of humanity led to an uncompromisingly difficult uphill battle, both economically and socially. Other papers

question the impact of industry on Birmingham communities, especially after the industry's downfall as well as how Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement proved to be a fight for equal economic opportunity as much as for equal rights to the promises of the Declaration of Independence. A commonality found within many of these papers is the question of government and its response to issues, including the role of politics in shaping these government officials, who morph their ideologies to win political power. The journal concludes with film reviews by two of the board's undergraduate editors.

Even with the dedicated work by the Vulcan Historical Review's editorial board, the journal would not be possible without the assistance and support of UAB History Department's faculty and staff. Their dedication to us as students both in class and out has led to this successful volume. We are forever grateful to our faculty advisor, Dr. Andrew Baer, for his quick response and support to resolve challenging situations, our new Department Chair, Dr. Jonathan Wiesen for taking time to cheer us on while coming into his new position, and Dr. Harriet E. Amos Doss for lending her expert editing advice. We also want to thank our graphic designer, Tierra Andrews, for returning for a second year to put a polishing and artistic touch on our work. A special thanks also to our department secretary, Melanie Daily, for taking care of the administrative needs of the journal and our previous head editor, Lance Ledbetter, for all we learned from his leadership. Finally, without our generous donors, the Vulcan Historical Review would be impossible to publish. We thank the Department of History for its continued support as well as Dr. Robert Palazzo (Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences) and The Linney Family Endowment for its continued support. We hope this collection of scholarship lives up to the legacy and will continue to be a point of pride for both UAB and the Department of History.

THE BICENTENNIAL AND BEYOND: LIFE AND LEGACY IN THE YELLOWHAMMER STATE

by Kendra Bell and Steve Filoromo

The year 2019 marks a significant milestone in the history of Alabama. Two hundred years ago, Alabama was founded and placed into the framework of American history. This foundation would lead to many advancements in culture, economy, and several industries on a national and international scale. However, in the celebration of Alabama's bicentennial by reviewing its history, there are dark times that transpired. In order to serve justice to those affected by these moments in time and to fully construct the historical perspective without ignoring the shortcomings and emphasizing just periods of growth, many of both moments of prosperity and those of shame will be presented. Of these include the prelude to Alabama, a survey of the Native Americans that blueprinted North American residency, the removal of Native Americans and the Creek Wars and how they adversely established official statehood, the establishment of Jim Crow and the spurn of the classical Civil Rights Movement, and the major developments of the space travel industry. By highlighting major cities within Alabama and their major events or contributions, the story of how Alabama came to be comes to light. Whether these moments prove to be positive or negative, they have molded the first 200 years of the yellowhammer state and laid the groundwork for years to come.

Before the advent of statehood, Alabama found itself caught in the crossroads of many historical developments. Rather than point out the colonial ancestors as the state's starting point, consideration of the Indigenous cultural innovations that take place throughout the land's vast history create a more complete history. During the school years of many Alabamians, they are introduced to the enigmatic mounds at Moundville, and while those provide a retrospective to the Mississippian period communities, Indigenous heritage can be traced back even further to some of the state's famous tourism sites like



Photo of mounds facing south-southeast, courtesy of Steve Filoromo. Moundville is located south of Tuscaloosa, in Moundville, Alabama.

Cathedral Caverns, which has evidence showing site use for thousands of years.¹ Like most additional contemporary states though, Alabamians have a robust archaeology of lifeways of those who lived on the land before them. Recently researchers went through old Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Works Progress Administration (WPA), and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) records and artifacts, only finding a pipe excavated before the dam built near Flint River that holds the earliest evidence for tobacco smoking in North America.² Often times, when people visit many of these public sites, they fail to understand the vast temporal span and diverse nature of Indigenous life. The state holds some of

the richest biodiversity in the U.S. because of the variety of environments available. Between the base of the Piedmont, the Appalachia, and many of our waterways resources exist that have the ability to sustain drastically different lifestyles throughout history.

It remains no mystery why the state once found itself caught in the momentum of the colonial frontiers. In places like Childersburg, history very much plays a role in how communities are perceived. As people throughout the state visit Desoto Caverns, they get to learn about the infamous conquistador that led an expedition through the Southeastern states. De Soto was only one of few who managed to make it through the land. Tristan de Luna too, once came through Alabama, as supplies for his Pensacola colony became scarce. But the earliest major developments bringing more and more colonists to the state began with Mobile. French colonists attempted an expansion into the Gulf in order to establish a strong fortified line against the British encroachment in the Atlantic colonies.

Once referred to as the “French Jamestown,” Mobile played a key role in assisting French trade and monitoring the British.³ Mobile, the first venture within the vicinity by any European nation, became a sustainable colony in present-day Alabama. The development of Mobile endured despite persistent environmental issues, since the colony kept building in low-lying areas that quickly became inundated by rain-swollen bayous.⁴ As frontier building continued, British encroachment expanded downwards and tensions arose with the Creek nation. The French constructed Fort Tombecbe, ostensibly protecting their trading partnership with the Choctaw nation because of tensions with the Chickasaw.⁵ The French allied themselves with the Choctaw, but it seems they initially only aimed at securing trade in response to their European rivalries, for they wanted an eye on Spanish settlement to the east and were wary of the British exploring Alabama’s numerous rivers.⁶

When examining history, it proves vital that key

components not be overlooked. It is inaccurate and a disservice to those cast as the subject of these stories to gloss over the events that transpired, especially if it does not feed into the most patriotic memorial of national pride and morals. There are many things in American and Alabamian history that can never be erased, therefore they must be discussed and actively understood to ensure they do not happen again. One of these dark moments in history, President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act of 1830, a legal implication that changed the lives of millions forever and resulted in racial disparities and the displacement of long-standing histories. But this drastic call to action was not a random manifestation of dramatism, but rather a string of events tethered to perceptions of manifest destiny that cultivated a culture in which such a radical policy could be implemented. The involvement of white settlers with Native Americans inhabiting Southeastern North America exponentially increased during the sixteenth century, though most of the relationships established between the two cultures were not positively enforced. The powerful Creek nation began to show their dissatisfaction with colonialism after George Washington’s installment of policies concerning Native Americans. Forced assimilation and its pushback, as well as a visit from Tecumseh to unite Natives against whites, resulted in the separation of the Creek nation into smaller sectors dependent upon the transparencies with whites; those who upheld traditionalism and those that encouraged cross-cultural engagement.⁷ During the War of 1812, the Upper and Lower Creek tribes acted against one another. The Upper Creeks or the “Red Sticks” were more opposed to bonding with white settlers and were supported by the Spanish and English during the war.⁸ The Lower tribes that remained more open to mixing with whites, the Choctaw-Muscogee, Chickasaw, and Cherokee, Seminoles, also known as the “civilized tribes” supported the American army and fought under Andrew Jackson. The nickname stemmed from the extent to which the tribes intertwined with the whites nearby.

Today, there are increasing inclusionary efforts for previously marginalized stories. Rather than just being a story of the Alabama's 200 years, a reframing of this land's legacy highlights that it has been home to indigenous nations for thousands of years. Educational efforts like the Moundville Native American Festival are gathering wide audiences. Another example of this is the Oakville Indian Mounds in Lawrence county, which maintains a goal of providing historical and cultural education to Indigenous children.⁹

During the eighteenth century, intermarriage maintained wide-scale practice, not just between Native Americans and British Europeans, but also Spanish and French as well. A school teacher at the school established in Fort Stoddart, modern Mobile County, in 1799 describes the students as, "...Strangely mixed in blood, and their color was of every hue."¹⁰ The end of the Creek war in 1814 resulted in the Creeks forced signature of the Treaty of Fort Jackson, which ultimately surrendered Native American territory to the Americans, this, of course, included the land of the "civilized tribes."¹¹ As one can presume, many Native Americans were not happy with the situation. There remained, just as before, resistance to giving away sacred lands to white settlers which angered many, particularly Andrew Jackson. Once elected in 1828, Jackson implemented a federal law requiring Native removal from their lands and relocation elsewhere, states quickly followed the trend and ensured the sacred lands of Native ancestors were acquired by whatever means necessary.¹² The Native Americans were forced to relocate west of the Mississippi via the Trail of Tears. Subject to dangerous conditions, starvation, exposure, disease, approximately 10-50 percent of those placed into this system lost their lives before reaching the destination. These records only reflect the Cherokee tribe, however, the last in the series of relocation.¹³ From 1831 to 1838, the tribes moved in intervals from the Southeastern United States towards territory in modern Oklahoma, though, some evaded capture

and escaped such a fate. Particularly, some Creek remained in Alabama and established the Poarch Creek Indian Reservation near the Tensaw River.

Soon after, another tragic period in American history began a new wave of inhumanity. In fact, those alive to witness the tragic uprooting of an ancient past were subjected yet again to watch another drastically divisive racial implementation by the government. The American Civil War publicized the moral issues surrounding the means of colonization in the New World, especially the use of slaves. Many believe the Emancipation Proclamation indicated change in attitudes of the country, however, the Proclamation proved to be a complex executive order that knowingly would not free slaves immediately, but instead allowed for the purpose and projection to transform. In reality, the Proclamation did not solve the issues of slavery. It faced the challenges of a trying impose executive order on states already rebelling, which did not grant freedom to these slaves immediately. Essentially, President Lincoln could not enforce the order, but it changed the scope of the war into one for liberation rather than reconciliation.

The installment of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865 changed the course of American history in ways still visible today. After the assassination of Lincoln, newly inaugurated Andrew Johnson pushed for the passing of the amendment and encouraged the involvement of Southern states in its passage primarily as a means to end the conflict, but he did not support passage of rights to freed slaves.¹⁴ Johnson's attitude towards freedmen mirrored others of the time. The initiation of Black Codes by individual states ensured division and oppression of blacks as well as the ability to continue exploitation of the black labor force. Alabama's relationship to these codifications, however, proves unique as the state never formally implemented Black Codes. It is believed that shortly after the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, Alabama was growing more and more aware of the lack of engagement of African Americans with the much-

needed labor force and had the Christmas holiday not interrupted the state of affairs and resulted in an increase of African American employees following the holiday, Alabama, too, would have devised its own black codes.¹⁵ The enacted policies are a direct window into the perceptions held by lawmakers in the state during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of the focus of these policies aimed to secure a steady economy and accessible workforce, however, the underlying tone and shapeliness of these policies reflect much more about the racial prejudices possessed by the wealthy southern whites that occupied administrative offices. To illustrate, the story of Glenn Helms illuminates the intentional injustice woven into law in Alabama:

He had been working at Calcis in Shelby County and was going home with Esau Williams and Dave Johnson. They reached Goodwater and Mr. Dunbar, a policeman, arrested them and locked them up in the calaboose. They were charged with vagrancy. They were tried before Mr. White, the Mayor of Goodwater, who fined them \$5 and costs each and four and a half months at hard labor. Mr. Dunbar took them up to the store and tied them with ropes. Then he took them to the depot and then to Dadeville. He met Mr. Turner who asked him what he was going to do with them. A colored fellow told them they had better go with Mr. Turner. Mr. Dunbar told Mr. Turner he had brought them down there for him. Mr. Turner asked them if they wanted to go with him. Mr. Pace was there too and a Dadeville negro told them they had better go with Mr. Turner...¹⁶

To summarize, an African American man, Glenn Helms, and two friends were arrested for nothing more than merely existing. From there, an under-the-table exchange allowed those holding Glenn and friends in custody to profit as well as legally sell them into slavery without labelling it as such. The men faced

vigorous work, without pay, and beatings until the end of their “sentences.”¹⁷ The blatant exploitation of blacks has transcended over generations. Jim Crow in the South has incubated racial discrepancies that ultimately conjured racial violence to mark Alabama as a key component of its history. Alabama’s constitution was changed in 1865 under the guise of progressive civil policies, yet underneath remains distinct pushback to real change. Article 2, Section 1 states, “No man, and no set of men, are entitled to exclusive separate public emoluments or privileges, but in consideration of public services.”¹⁸ This seems an active step towards desegregation, but deeper in the amendment several sections prove that it is indeed a facade.¹⁹

Some of the most damaging additions include the sections stating that only white men can run or hold representative or senatorial offices, only white men could vote, and finally, that interracial marriages were illegal and those participating were subjected to lawful punishment.²⁰ Congress attempted to counteract the growing tensions by instituting the Civil Rights Act of 1866. This act not only defined the realm of citizenship but declared that all U.S. citizens were granted federal protection for “civil rights and immunities” equally.²¹ Of course, Jim Crow laws were developed to side-step any federal provisions to prolong racial discrimination, which is noticeable when one observes acts of racial violence in Alabama from reconstruction to today. Congress continued to enact laws to perpetuate civility such as the Civil Rights Acts of 1871, 1875, 1957, and 1960. Between the 1950s and 1990s, America saw a particularly ugly reality of racism and violence within the nation, particularly in the 1960s.²² This is a struggle resulted from the culmination of decades of repression.

Among the most famous Alabama events includes the Montgomery Bus Boycott from 1955 to 1956. Many know the name Rosa Parks for her daring act of defiance that sparked a national movement, but the sequence of events taught popularly in schools only includes part of the story. Though Parks did refuse to

move from her seat on a bus in Montgomery, 1955, this act of protest came after careful planning by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).²³ There were others, however, before Rosa. One group, the Women's Political Council (WPC), began plans for active protests to Jim Crow in Montgomery in the 1940s.²⁴ Being an African American in the United States at any moment in time places the weight of a long history of struggle for freedom, that is yet to be entirely achieved, on the shoulders of those that did not ask to be violated. To be a young, black woman in Alabama in the 1950s presented unique trials and tribulations that when challenged, affected the course of history.

On March 2, 1955, 15-year-old Claudette Colvin was riding the bus home from Booker T. Washington High School where she learned the stories of those that came before her.²⁵ Strong, black women, such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, who paved the way. Her class also discussed the ways of the world in which they were living. Under the boot of established and heavily enforced Jim Crow laws, African Americans faced unimaginable challenges in simply living their daily lives. Colvin, who was pregnant at the time, was also a member of the NAACP Youth Council and actively displayed her engagement and support of the black freedom struggle. African Americans frequently used Montgomery's bus system in as it remained more accessible to the lower classes of the area. On those busses, separate sections were designated specifically for black riders. When the bus reached near capacity, leaving a white woman standing, the bus driver asked Colvin and a few other women to get up from their seats making space for the white woman. The others moved, but in their place, another pregnant woman sat down.

Ruth Hamilton insisted that she reserved the right to sit as she paid her fare, which in turn encouraged the young and expecting Colvin to do the same. After another refusal by Colvin, the police forcibly removed her from the Capitol Hill bus and escorted her to jail. The city charged Colvin with disturbing the peace,

violating segregation laws, and assault, though no assault occurred. Colvin's story remains lesser known, as activist leadership did not rally the movement around her. Her darker complexion, age, marital status, and public appeal all contributed to this decision. People described Parks as more relatable as an appealing middle-class African American woman, whereas Colvin, an unwed teenage mother-to-be by a married man, could potentially damage the reputation of the NAACP.²⁶ However, Colvin remained one of five individuals who resisted Montgomery transportation segregation in the Supreme Court case of *Browder v. Gayle* which ended the Montgomery bus boycott as the court ruled the discrimination of the transportation system unconstitutional.²⁷

**"WITH THESE STRIDES TOWARDS
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The Birmingham Campaign in the spring of 1963 became another key moment in the history of the black freedom struggle in Alabama history. The city's local civil rights organization, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR), led by Bethel Baptist's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, pursued desegregation, voting rights, and economic justice from its founding in 1956. After inviting Martin Luther King Jr.'s nationally-recognized Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to Birmingham in 1963, the non-violent, direct-action campaign led by both organizations culminated these efforts. While the Birmingham Campaign directly influenced the ratification of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the movement did not solve all of the city's racial problems.²⁸ The September 15, 1963, bombing of the

16th Street Baptist Church which killed four young black girls illustrates this.²⁹ The deaths of Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Denise McNair, and Carole Robertson, saddened Birmingham's black community, and strengthened the resolve of the continued movement.³⁰ With these strides towards improvement, Birmingham, and Alabama as a whole, has moved forward, but this does not diminish the need for continued progress. Today, the state and the country still battle white supremacy in different forms, both through coded laws and through individual acts of hate. People of color, women, and other disadvantaged groups, face discrimination from hate-groups and policymakers alike. Only from identifying these issues can a hope for change exist.

Much of what we know about Alabama's early history and prehistory stems from The WPA era. States throughout the country faced dramatic economic struggles; the South, however, and particularly Alabama experienced some of the worst consequences. The WPA aimed to put people back to work. These WPA projects employed people throughout the state to work in various jobs that included cultural resource surveys which undertook full-scale archaeological investigations. Jefferson County shortly became the home of the central archaeological repository, where artifacts were studied, processed, and stored for safekeeping.³¹ Many important contributions stemming from this era changed the field of archaeology, from scientists like Florence Hawley and her use of dendrochronology to Madeline Kneberg's standardization of field techniques.³²

The WPA era contributed to multiple industries and sectors within Alabama, these 'alphabet agencies' from the New Deal era proved incredibly important to cities within Alabama because of millions of dollars worth of investments into welfare infrastructure, education, parks, and more.³³ Communities thrived off the industrial era and were dramatically shaped by programs enacted by the WPA, CCC, and other government agencies from the New Deal.



Photo of Saturn V rocket, courtesy of Steve Filoromo. This is the Saturn V test vehicle on display in the US Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

Specifically, the WPA allocated \$40.6 million dollars in Jefferson County between 1935-1941, all of which was utilized for street repairs, county roads, welfare, administrative building, healthcare, and infrastructure improvements.³⁴ The legacy of public projects stemming from the 'alphabet agencies' are apparent still, as they paved and improvements sewers, drains, and created many of the state's parks. Additionally, the Public Works of Art Project put many artists to work creating stunning visuals found in theatres, public administration buildings, and even the state fair. Works produced from this time, such as the Historical Panorama of Alabama Agriculture, captures landscapes ubiquitous to rural life while also boasting the benefits of our states agricultural industry.³⁵ During this period of change and progress, advancements also began in the field of science, particularly with space programs.

Scientist Wernher Von Braun, a former Nazi, and his

team acquired property in Madison County that soon became the Redstone Arsenal.³⁶ The achievements of these scientists laid the groundwork for the future of the space program, for his legacy within NASA cannot be overstated.³⁷ His rocket technologies, which stemmed from a ballistic missile defense system he used for Germany during World War II, pioneered space exploration. The legacy of these developments, while known worldwide because of rockets like the Saturn V, is important locally to the city of Huntsville where several buildings display his name.

**"WHILE THE BICENTENNIAL
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Alabama contains a vast array of cultures and histories that have shaped the state for the past 200

years. The state's reputation has wavered in periods of social crisis and injustice, but the positives of progress show the promise for great things on the horizon, and much what is to come results from the steps already taken. While the Bicentennial focuses on celebrating the first 200 years of Alabama history and culture, the state's legacy is one that includes much more than just two centuries. Alabamians have come together to create a wide tapestry of culture, from those who fight for a just future both on our streets and in the capitol, to those who work in the fields, build the state's cities, and teach the state's children. Alabama still has a long way to go to address racial injustice, deficient healthcare, and impoverishment, we can take this moment to celebrate the positive achievements of its past.

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THE FORGOTTEN LIBERAL YEARS: GEORGE WALLACE'S TIME AS AN ALABAMA STATE REPRESENTATIVE

by William Winner



George C. Wallace

Through the skillful and painstaking work at the Alabama Archives and the multitude of archivists across the state, George Wallace's life is exquisitely documented. His years as Alabama's Governor, First Gentleman, and his multitude of campaigns for the presidency of the United States of America created a wealth of primary documentation. Historians, political scientists, and journalists have used these resources to investigate and report on Wallace's prolific political career; much of this work focuses on Wallace after his failed 1958 campaign for the Alabama Governorship. While his political views following this defeat are wildly interesting, the ideology that Wallace abandoned for his new political rhetoric is largely unreported and represents the impetus for much of his short tenure in the Alabama House of Representatives.

The Oxford Dictionary defines a demagogue as “a political leader who seeks support by appealing to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people rather than by using rational argument.”¹ George Wallace ultimately became a demagogue; he raised rational questions but as his desire for power and his political career grew, he rarely devised rational, well thought out solutions for the issues he highlighted. Additionally, he grew more into this definition as he chased increasingly higher levels of power with less suggestions for policy and more divisive rhetoric. His political career did not begin as a power grab, but as he reached his political zenith, he would do just about anything to garner the support of the public, even when it meant laying his personal beliefs aside. George Wallace's progressive ideology could not withstand the oppressive forces that his ambition applied to his moral compass. After his first electoral defeat, Wallace's desire for power overwhelmed his moral political compass, his crusade for ever increasing power corrupted George Wallace's political philosophy, negating the ambitious and positive legislation he advocated for as a young politician in the Alabama House of Representatives.

By examining George Wallace's life, a greater understanding of his shift in political views becomes more apparent. Born August 25, 1919, George C. Wallace Jr., entered a world of racial segregation and economic destitution in rural Barbour County, Alabama.² His humble beginning shaped much of Wallace's liberal ideology that aided his ascension through his early life until the Governor's race of 1958. Wallace's Grandfather, Dr. George Wallace, took young George C. with him on house calls as a local physician throughout Barbour County.³ This exposure to the county highlighted the indigent conditions, to which Wallace cleaved a progressive political philosophy that government needed to assist the poor and provide a path out of poverty. Additionally, Dr. Wallace and

George Wallace Sr. introduced the youngest George to politics, each of the older Wallace men were elected to a local political office or judgeship.⁴ While not a rich family, the Wallace family existed in a financially advantaged position above much of Barbour County, this allowed Wallace to attend the University of Alabama School of Law in Tuscaloosa.⁵ While in law school, the cagey fighter used the skills he acquired as a Golden Glove boxer to excel in Tuscaloosa to receive a Bachelor of Law in 1942.⁶ Shortly after graduation, Wallace joined the United States Army Air Corp for a short stint as a B-29 bomber.⁷ The most important aspect of his military years is his refusal of a commission to become an officer, instead choosing to join the enlisted ranks. Wallace “had it all figured out,” as one acquaintance stated, “there would be a heap more enlisted men voting than officers.”⁸

"GEORGE WALLACE'S PROGRESSIVE IDEOLOGY COULD NOT WITHSTAND THE OPPRESSIVE FORCES THAT HIS AMBITION APPLIED TO HIS MORAL COMPASS."

Following his medical discharge from the Army in 1945, Wallace returned to Alabama where he received an appointment as an assistant Attorney General for the state.⁹ Wallace quickly requested a leave of absence from his job to begin his 1946 campaign for the Barbour County State House of Representatives seat.¹⁰ Wallace's time in the State House is the focus of this paper, thus, further exploration is unnecessary at this point to add context. Wallace spent six years in the legislature before announcing his candidacy for Alabama's Third Judicial Circuit Court judgeship, a seat he won in 1953 and held until 1958.¹¹ As a District judge, Wallace is credited by J. L. Chestnut as “the most liberal judge that he had ever practiced law in front of.”¹² Furthermore, Judge Wallace insisted

that African American attorneys be referred to as “Mister;” Chestnut says Judge Wallace as “the first judge in Alabama to call me ‘Mister’ in a courtroom.”¹³ Wallace's liberal racial views persisted through his run for the Alabama Governor's Mansion in 1958. During the campaign Wallace refused to succumb to the political race-baiting of his opponent John Patterson in the governor's race; furthermore, to emphasize his liberal views on race, the Wallace campaign received an endorsement from the NAACP.¹⁴ While extremely competitive in the 1958 gubernatorial election, Wallace eventually lost to Patterson. Following the election, he returned to the Third Circuit bench and contemplated his defeat. Surmising the impact the racial issue had on his defeat Wallace vowed that, “NO son-of-a-bitch will ever out-nigger me again.”¹⁵ George Wallace's world soon faced change.



Attempting to block integration at the University of Alabama, Governor George Wallace stands defiantly at the door while being confronted by Deputy U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach.

After losing the governor's mansion due to his liberal racial beliefs and his choice to not exploit Alabama's racist views, Wallace vowed to never let the issue of race interfere with his political aspirations.¹⁶ In 1959, Wallace devised a plan to publicly defy the Federal Government's Civil Rights Movement and the Federal Courts; ultimately prompting the United States Civil Rights Commission to get involved. Wallace refused to

obey a subpoena for the voting records from Barbour County and Bullock County as ordered by Federal District Judge Frank Johnson.¹⁷ His grandstanding would amount to nothing more than political posturing because when faced with extensive jail time, Wallace relented and turned over the records. Specifically, Judge Johnson promised to “pop [Wallace] hard,” essentially putting him in jail as long as possible, instead of the martyr creating “ten to fifteen days” that the lower court judge had requested.¹⁸ The consummate campaigner, Wallace publicly touted his defiance of the court order to the state’s population. This false narrative expanded his notoriety in the state.

Shortly after the voting records incident, Wallace left the Third Circuit bench to begin his campaign for the 1962 Governor’s race, a campaign containing an increasing number of conservative-extremists like Asa Carter. A member of the Ku Klux Klan and a pro-segregationist, Asa Carter, as Wallace’s speechwriter, radicalized both Wallace and his message. Wallace won the 1962 election with an increasingly inflammatory and divisive rhetoric that exacerbated racial tensions in the state, but he suppressed public acknowledgment that Carter was a member of his staff. Most notably, Carter penned the new governor’s 1963 inauguration address, where Wallace bellowed, “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever,” a phrase that detailed the abandonment of his liberal political ideology.¹⁹ Following through with one of his campaign promises, Wallace defied a federal mandate to integrate the University of Alabama, the infamous “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door,” during his first term as governor in 1963.²⁰ But Wallace wanted more; he wanted to be President of the United States. So, in 1964 he began his first of four failed campaigns for the highest office in the country. Wallace’s campaign message shifted in the middle of the 1964 primary season, divorcing his message from that of a racial segregationist and championing the common man’s fight against liberals, communism, and the oppressive federal government. After his 1964 campaign stop in Madison, Wisconsin,

Wallace stopped advocating for segregation, choosing instead to create an aura that he was a victim of the liberal-elites just like the common man in the nation. This choice to shift away from overt racially-divisive rhetoric to other forms of populist fear-mongering tactics further separated his political discourse from his years of progressive policies aimed at social-improvement. After losing the 1964 election and his first term as governor headed into its final years, the 1966 Alabama Governor’s election was fast approaching. However, the Alabama Constitution prevented successive terms as Governor, therefore Wallace needed a plan. He formulated a workaround – have his wife Lurleen run as his segregate – thus prolonging his reign of power as Governor. Vowing the continuance of much of George’s programs and policies, Lurleen succeeded and became the first female Governor of Alabama and George assumed the role of First Gentleman in 1967. The newly unemployed Wallace refreshed his presidential aspiration in 1967 with campaign number two of four. With a wave of popularity, Wallace doubled-down on the divisive rhetoric, agitating the already fragile racial divide in the nation. Unfortunately, in 1968 during her first term, Governor Lurleen Wallace passed away with George in the midst of a presidential campaign. Wallace futilely returned to the campaign, only to have his hope of winning the election dashed by his running-mate’s political missteps.²¹ His unsuccessful presidential campaign of 1968 quickly transitioned into an election to reclaim the governor’s mansion in 1970. Wallace reignited his passion of populist tropes, his speeches demonized all of the usual topics: the liberal media, social elites, fear-mongering, and empty calls to resist the oppressive federal government.²² In a close run-off race, George Wallace returned to his time tested tactic and overtly pulled the race card with his campaign’s warning that “blacks will take control” which riled the state’s racism to a fervor.²³ By a margin of fifty-one percent, Wallace won his second term as governor, and almost immediately decided to give the presidency another go, the third of four campaigns.²⁴ Wallace achieved remarkable success

in the 1972 Democratic primary, securing victories in several state primaries, but Arthur Bremer ruined his aspirations to win in the White House in 1972. On a campaign stop in Laurel, Maryland, Bremer shot and paralyzed Wallace in May of 1972.²⁵ The campaign continued but eventually fizzled-out and Wallace returned to work at the governor's mansion, after a lengthy hospital stay.²⁶ Due to a 1968 amendment to the Alabama Constitutional, Wallace could run for re-election while holding the position of Governor.²⁷ He easily won the election for governor in 1974.²⁸ After securing his third term as Alabama Governor, Wallace took up his long-running quest to become the President of the United States. The 1976 campaign would be Wallace's final attempt for the office and ended like the previous three attempts, in defeat. Wallace decided not to run in the 1978 gubernatorial race. He removed himself from politics. His short-lived hiatus from public office ended with the election of 1982. Wallace won the governor's race and entered what would be his final stint as an elected official.²⁹ Wallace's fourth term as Alabama Governor resulted in some of the most socially-liberal programs of his career such as prison and mental health reform, and appointing African Americans to advisory positions.³⁰ After leaving office in 1986, Wallace entered his final campaign, seeking redemption for the hate filled rhetoric that fanned the flames of the nation's racist underbelly.³¹ After receiving forgiveness from some of the people he had wronged during his political career, his broken body failed and George Wallace died on September 13, 1998.³²

The rise into the world of politics by Wallace did not happen by accident. Wallace cultivated his political aspirations throughout his early life, including his military career. Alabama Magazine wrote an exposé on Wallace including a story from a Barbour County farmer who remembered that during World War II the residents of the county received "Christmas cards from all kinda places: Denver, Guam, and others, with the same greeting, 'Merry Christmas, George C. Wallace.'"³³ The farmer considered the gesture by

the "young fella" to be "thoughtful," but he "wasn't quite sure [he] knew this George C. Wallace."³⁴ During the political campaign season of 1946, as soon as he saw a "young fella comin' across [his] plowed field... steppin' real smart and lively... grinnin and his had already stretched out" the farmer instantly knew the reason for the unsolicited Christmas cards.³⁵ In that Democratic primary, Wallace won by collecting more votes than all the other candidates combined in the election for Barbour County's House Representative and Wallace quickly asserted himself into the political machine of Alabama.³⁶ His overwhelming victory in the Democratic Primary prevented a run-off and he went unopposed in the general election avoided any campaign discussions about Wallace's stance on race or segregation.³⁷ There was work to do in the State's Capitol, and Wallace knew himself to be the man to do

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it.

"Possessed" by an "extravagant" political yearning as soon as he arrived in Montgomery, Wallace asked to be appointed Speaker of the House.³⁸ Wallace quickly amassed a reputation as "The Number-One Do-Gooder in the legislature."³⁹ Subsequently, as Judy Carlson says in her book, *George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness*, he was viewed as "the leading liberal in the legislature, ... [and] a dangerous left-winger" by his fellow legislators.⁴⁰ His lofty political aspirations only added a fervor to Wallace,

inciting him to strive for the much-needed change that he desired to achieve in Montgomery. Wallace regularly “introduced more bills than his peers” throughout his time in the State House.⁴¹ He once told a reporter “that he had about fifty [bills] in mind” that he intended to introduce on the House floor.⁴² Not only did the furious volume and speed that Wallace wrote, campaigned for, and introduced legislation shock the established members of the capitol building, but the lack of co-sponsors and breath of their content truly jolted his fellow lawmakers.⁴³ Wallace wrote legislative bills so fast, fifty in his first legislative year, that he created a “loner” persona about him and his work.⁴⁴ Also, introducing bills “with only his name on it, and no others,” and the fact that Wallace did not co-sponsor other people’s bills, both uncommon occurrences, expanded his loner persona.⁴⁵ A capitol veteran described Wallace’s desk as “stuffed with benevolent legislation.”⁴⁶ These bills contained “scholarships to college and trade school for families of disabled or deceased servicemen, additional social-security benefits for city and county employees,” and other planned improvements for the state’s poor-working class.⁴⁷ Due to his political prowess, the capital press corps twice voted Wallace as “one of the outstanding members of the legislature” in his tenure in the State’s House of Representatives.⁴⁸ As Wallace’s legislations grew in numbers, so did his notoriety.

Following the election in 1950, the new governor Gordon Person amassed a secret file on Wallace describing him as “energetic, ambitious, liberal, [and] smart” with interests in legislation for “Veterans, TB Hospitals, Welfare, [and] Education.”⁴⁹ While this is an extensive list of Wallace’s passions, it falls short in depicting the topics on which he introduced and secured passage of new legislation which had created new laws in the state. Wallace’s most famous legislative works are the Wallace Act and the Regional Trade School Act of 1947.⁵⁰ Specifically, Wallace was responsible for additional laws such as: the Anti-Lottery bill, the Highway Responsibility Law, his Natural Gas District Act, the Alabama G.I.

and Dependents Scholarship Act, and many others.⁵¹ While Wallace was described in 1995 as “devoid of a coherent set of beliefs... opportunist who adopted populism, progressivism, segregation, or any other political stand as a means to the end of being governor,” much of the legislation he introduced focused on improving the lives of Alabama’s most marginalized citizens, occasionally including its African American population.⁵² Throughout his six years in the state legislature, Wallace consistently introduced and voted for liberal bills in-line with his newfound political allies.

Riding the progressive wave that swept across Alabama, first-time Governor Jim Folsom won the governor’s election the same year Wallace won his first seat in Montgomery, 1947.⁵³ Attracted by Folsom’s progressive agenda, the young Representative quickly “attached himself to the administration” by supporting many of Folsom’s policies.⁵⁴ Wallace noted his desire to “co-operate with the newly-elected governor” in his autobiography, recalling the political “bloc” that formed to “oppose all of [Folsom’s] programs.”⁵⁵ “I felt the governor was entitled to a fair chance. We often did not agree,” Wallace continued, “but he had been elected by a majority of the people and I intended to help him.”⁵⁶ His noble ambition to work with Folsom in the face of staunch criticism continued for many of the governor’s projects. Wallace stumped for “Folsom’s road bond bills, and increased tuberculosis hospital funding,” but maintained his independence and voted accordingly.⁵⁷ Wallace did not want to be perceived as a guaranteed yes vote for the governor, so he followed his conscience and voted against some of Folsom’s more radical requests. Folsom’s knowledge that Wallace occasionally voted against the administration’s programs resulted in the governor using Wallace “but never fully trusting him.”⁵⁸ The aforementioned “secret file” defined Wallace’s affinity to support “most of [Governor] Folsom’s legislation,” an assessment that further established Wallace’s liberal ideology.⁵⁹

While Wallace’s work consisted of progressive humanistic measures “designed to upgrade conditions

within the state,” his stance on racial issues in the state labeled him and his legislation as dangerous and liberal.⁶⁰ In fact, driven by his liberal racial views Wallace requested that Governor Folsom “appoint him to the Tuskegee Institute Board of Trustees,” Folsom obliged the young politician and did as suggested.⁶¹ Considered “very liberal” at the time, the move cemented a connection to the African American community of Alabama that continued throughout Wallace’s political career and life.⁶²

In his early years, Wallace was described by a one of his Folsom era associates as, “anything but racist.” Furthermore, in the mid-1940s, he confided in a Sunday-school teacher that “we just can’t keep colored folks down like we have been... [w]e have to quit. We got to start treatin’ ‘em right.”⁶³ While never openly advocating for segregation before 1959, Wallace favored a restrained and civil approach to segregation.⁶⁴

In 1976, George Wallace Jr. described the Regional Trade School Act of 1947 as “one of [his] proudest accomplishments as a freshman legislator.”⁶⁵ His father, George Wallace Sr., expressed what George Jr. called Senior’s “dream,” the need to improve the education of Alabama’s population with “trade schools all over the state.”⁶⁶ In the same vein, Wallace witnessed a large number of young people leaving their rural Alabama homes “completely lacking [the] skills to... compete in large cities.”⁶⁷ Combining his father’s dream and his desire to develop the state’s industrial potential, Wallace Jr. laboriously began working on a means to both of those ends. Providing educational institutions would serve that purpose, but how the school system would function and receive its funding needed to be determined. Touting the state’s need to attract new industry and provide a well “trained labor pool,” he wrote the Regional Trade School Act with the intentions of correcting the “social problem” of the unskilled youth leaving their homes, which in turn would encourage economic development around the new schools.⁶⁸ He developed the framework to construct four new “state vocational schools and for the state to takeover a fifth school

in Decatur” within the Regional Trade School Act.⁶⁹ The bill required a “two-cent liquor tax” to fund the schools.⁷⁰ On the final night of the legislative session, the Alabama Senate passed the bill, sending it to Governor Folsom to sign.⁷¹ Wallace credits his father, George Sr., with the passage of “the legislation that created the first postsecondary trade school in Gadsden, Alabama, in 1925.”⁷² To honor this, the first trade school would be in George Jr.’s Congressional district at the bequest of Folsom, and be named after the Senior George C. Wallace.⁷³ The twenty-eight year-old Representative Wallace achieved a legislative success with the Trade School Bill, but the educational system still needed some upgrading.

While actively working to ensure the passage of his Regional Trade School Bill, George Wallace, Jr. noticed the abhorrent shortage of trained doctors and nurses. Aiming to shore up the vitally important medical system in the state, Wallace began exchanging letters with Dr. Roy Kracke, the Dean of the Medical College of Alabama, renamed the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1966.

Wallace sent Dr. Kracke a letter on the 11th of July 1947 expressing his desire to establish a nursing school in the state and creating the necessary legislation to provide for its location, building, equipment, organization, [and] operation at the state’s medical school.⁷⁴ In the letter, Wallace requested Dr. Kracke’s assistance in the creation of the bill, to which Kracke agreed.⁷⁵ Three days later on July 14, 1947, Wallace addressed another letter to Kracke with a with a copy of his bill, H.B. 619 1947, that he intended to introduce on the House floor soon.⁷⁶ Wallace implored Dr. Kracke for his input on the bill saying, “I do not want to have a hearing upon H.B. 619 until I have received comment or observation from you regarding” this proposed bill.⁷⁷ Continuing, Wallace addressed the “acute shortage of graduate nurses in Alabama,” and his wish for the bill to alleviate the shortage.⁷⁸ Ultimately, Wallace’s bill failed to pass before the end of the legislative session, but a similar bill passed the following year.

Unphased by his nursing school bill’s failure, Wallace

renewed his correspondence with Dr. Kracke the following year; in 1948 the intent was to create a State Medical Education Board within legislation to “try and alleviate the acute shortage of Doctors in the rural areas of Alabama.”⁷⁹ In a letter dated January 22, 1948, Wallace stated that he “realized that the permanent cure for this acute shortage in these areas is to provide more Hospital facilities” and a scholarship fund for Alabama’s less-fortunate aspiring doctors.⁸⁰ The bill would be introduced “at the next session of legislation, and [Wallace] would be willing to change or amend it in any manner that [Dr. Kracke] recommend.”⁸¹ Wallace promptly received a letter from Dr. Kracke and responded on the 26th of January.⁸² In the reply to the Dean, he requested a “rough draft or outline of what [Dr. Kracke] [felt] should be done, the cost, etc.” Wallace also expressed his pleasure to “begin working it into Legislative (sic) form.”⁸³ Precisely, Wallace wanted to ensure that a “portion or number[of] places [are] made available for Medical Student (sic)” using the proposed “scholarships under a financial assistance Act.”⁸⁴ Wallace described himself as “vitaly interested in seeing the enhancement of the health of [Alabama’s] people.”⁸⁵ to this end he offered to “begin work on any program that [Dr. Kracke felt] would aid in [bringing] about better Health facilities for the people of this state.”⁸⁶ The orator extended his powerful voice to the text of this letter when he praised Dr. Kracke for being “an expert on the matter” of educating the young doctors of Alabama.⁸⁷

Wallace’s ability to recognize the needs of the poor and working class in Alabama facilitated his drive to improve the education opportunities in the state. He understood that a well-educated populace would support a large pool of skilled-workers. But the state needed to attract business, so George Wallace devised a plan – the Wallace Industrial Act.

Publicizing the successful life and career of then Governor Elect George C. Wallace, Asa Carter exclaimed that Wallace had utilized the Wallace Industrial Act as of 1963, to bring “over 100 new industries to Alabama, with many, many more [still]

coming, resulting in multi-millions of dollars” of pay for Alabamians.⁸⁸ The Wallace industrial Act, styled as the Wallace Act of 1951, “allowed cities to construct industrial plants financed by municipal bonds” in an effort to entice businesses to expand or move into Alabama.⁸⁹ The Wallace Act allowed municipalities to “enter into a lease” agreement with an “industrial firm and agree to build a new facility” that would be occupied by the firm and the “municipality would collect rent” to pay off the “bond debt.”⁹⁰ Wallace wrote this bill to work in conjunction with the Regional Trade School Act of 1947. State Representative George Wallace used his progressive political ideology to create a pleather of bills, some enacted into law for the benefit of the state’s poorest citizens regardless of race.

George Wallace’s political ideology began its erosion after his failed governor’s bid in 1958. He craved power. His ambition for power fueled almost every aspect of his political career. Leaving his liberal views behind him he used fear-mongering rhetoric to gain political favor in the racially divided south. His propensity to use government as a tool to improve the life of the poorest in the state vanished under the weight of his increasingly divisive message. This ideological shift is a direct result of Wallace’s lust for power. It was only after his first defeat in an election that Wallace’s desire for power overwhelmed the man with a desk covered in benevolent legislation.⁹¹ The quest for power corrupted George Wallace’s political philosophy, negating the ambitious legislation he advocated for as a young politician in the Alabama House of Representatives. Wallace wanted to assist Alabama’s poorest citizens by improving their education through the Regional Trade School Act, providing quality employment opportunities with the Wallace Industrial Act, and expanding the state’s access to quality health care shown through his communications with Dr. Kracke, regardless of race. Wallace bankrupted his liberal morals in his quest for power. The political arc of George Wallace’s career is a tale of blinding ambition that began with the best intentions.

1 “Demagogue,” Oxford living Dictionaries: English, accessed December 05, 2018.<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/demagogue>.

2 "Alabama Governors," ADAH: Alabama History Timeline (1951-present), accessed December 06, 2018, http://www.archives.alabama.gov/govs_list/g_wallac.html.

3 “George Wallace: Settin’ the Woods on Fire,” Directed by Daniel McCabe and Paul Stekle (PBS, 2000), online (YouTube.com, March 23, 2014). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLkCYOf73iE&t=1740s>

4 Marshall Frady, Wallace (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company, 1968), 54,59.

5 In 1937, a Law Degree from the University of Alabama School of Law was an undergraduate program.

6 “Settin’ the Woods on Fire.”

7 Ibid.

8 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 83.

9 "Alabama Governors."

10 "George C. Wallace (1963-67, 1971-79, 1983-87)," Encyclopedia of Alabama, accessed December 06, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1676>.

11 "Alabama Governors."

12 “Settin’ the Woods on Fire;” J. L. Chestnut was an Alabama attorney that would become an influential Civil Rights leader.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Jeff Frederick, Stand up for Alabama: Governor George Wallace (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 20.

16 “Settin’ the Woods on Fire.”

17 Frank Sikora, William J. Brennan, and Frank M. Johnson, The Judge: The Life & Opinions of Alabama’s Frank M. Johnson, Jr. (Montgomery, AL: New South Books, 2007) 94.

18 Ibid.

19 "Inaugural Address of Governor George Wallace, Which Was Delivered at the Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama." Alabama Textual Materials Collection, accessed December 06, 2018, <http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/ref/collection/voices/id/2952>.

20 “Settin’ the Woods on Fire.” Wallace attempted to

block Vivian Malone and James Hood from enrolling at the University of Alabama. On June 11, 1963, Wallace literally stood in a doorway at the University of Alabama until United States Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach intervened. Under the authority of President Kennedy, Katzenbach federalized the Alabama National Guard and utilized a Tuscaloosa unit to remove Wallace. Under the threat of being arrested, Wallace relented, and the first African American students enrolled into the University. This futile event accomplished nothing other than more political posturing, which thrust Wallace into the national limelight.

21 “Settin’ the wood on fire.”

22 Anne Permaloff and Carl Grafton, Political Power in Alabama: The More Things Change– (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995) 294-295.

23 Political Power in Alabama, 296.

24 Ibid.

25 "Alabama Governors."

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 "Alabama Governors."

30 "George C. Wallace (1963-67, 1971-79, 1983-87)."

31 "Alabama Governors."

32 Ibid.

33 "Young Wallace." Alabama Magazine, August 1986, 8.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 92.

37 Jeff Fredrick, Stand up for Alabama, 14.

38 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 96.

39 Ibid.

40 Political Power in Alabama, 19.

41 Jeff Fredrick, Stand up for Alabama, 15.

42 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 97.

43 Ibid.

44 “Settin’ the Woods on Fire,” Marshall Frady, Wallace, 97.

45 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 97.

46 Ibid., 98.

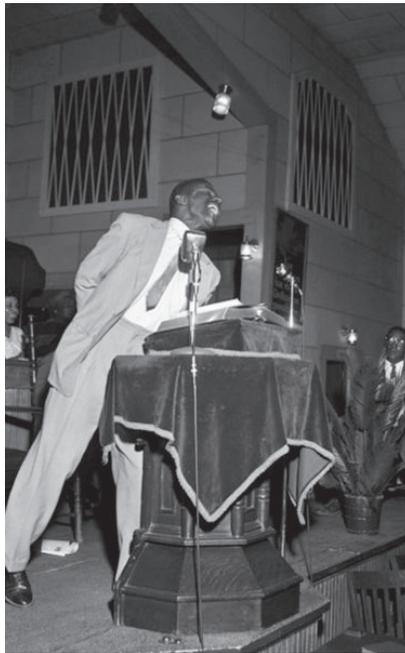
- 47 Ibid., 97.
- 48 Jeff Fredrick, Stand Up for Alabama,15.
- 49 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 98.
- 50 "George C. Wallace (1963-67, 1971-79, 1983-87)."
- 51 Stand up for Alabama: Official Inaugural Program, January 14, 1963, Honoring Governor George C. Wallace, 1963-1967 (1963) 17.
- 52 Political Power in Alabama, 177.
- 53 Jeff Fredrick, Stand up for Alabama,14.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 George Wallace, Stand Up for America, 53.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Jeff Fredrick, Stand Up for Alabama, 14.
- 58 Jeff Fredrick, Stand Up for Alabama, 14.
- 59 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 98.
- 60 Jody Carlson, George C. Wallace and the Politics of Powerlessness (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1981), 19.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 106.
- 63 Ibid, 141.
- 64 Political Power in Alabama, 70.
- 65 George Wallace, Stand Up for America, 54.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 George Wallace, Stand Up for America, 53.
- 68 Ibid., 54.
- 69 Political Power in Alabama, 178.
- 70 Jeff Fredrick, Stand Up for Alabama, 14.
- 71 George Wallace, Stand Up for America, 54.
- 72 Stephen G.Katsinas, "George C. Wallace and the founding of Alabama's public two-year colleges." Journal of Higher Education 65, no. 4 (1994): 447+, accessed December 2, 2018, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A15621095/AONE?u=birm97026&sid=AONE&xid=10453a>
- 73 George Wallace, Stand Up for America, 54.
- 74 George C. Wallace Jr. to Dr. Roy Kracke, July 11, 1947, Lister Hill Library, Birmingham, Alabama.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 George C. Wallace Jr. to Dr. Roy Kracke, January 22, 1948, Lister Hill Library, Birmingham, Alabama.
- 80 Wallace to Kracke, January 22, 1948.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 George C. Wallace Jr. to Dr. Roy Kracke, January 26, 1948, Lister Hill Library, Birmingham, Alabama.
- 83 Wallace to Kracke, January 26, 1948.
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- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Official Inaugural Program, January 14, 1963, 17.
- 89 Political Power in Alabama, 42.
- 90 Jeff Fredrick, Stand Up for Alabama, 45.
- 91 Marshall Frady, Wallace, 97.

WORKING CLASS HEROES: THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE FOR BLACK ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN BIRMINGHAM

by Logan Barrett

Following the landmark civil rights events of the Birmingham Campaign and the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom of 1963 but before the ratification of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. provided an illuminating description of the black freedom struggle when he wrote “Negroes are still at the bottom of the economic ladder. They live within two concentric circles of segregation. One imprisons them on the basis of color, while the other confines them within a separate culture of poverty.”¹ King’s writing highlights the goals of economic and job opportunity within black activism which often are left out of the triumphalist narrative of the Civil Rights Movement thus obscuring the ongoing nature of the struggle in favor of celebrating the accomplishments. Birmingham, a city in which the endeavor of economic justice still continues, remains one such heralded battleground for civil rights in which the partial nature of the victory becomes misunderstood.

Birmingham, with an abundance of raw materials ripe for mining and use in iron production, became the preeminent New South city during the twentieth century. Not coincidentally, the city also became a hotbed for civil rights activism during the 1950s and



Fred Shuttlesworth preaching at Sardis Baptist Church on June 5, 1956.

1960s, culminating with the Birmingham Campaign during the spring of 1963. Birmingham’s industrial and labor history coincides with its history as a pivotal location of the black freedom struggle. From Birmingham’s development as the industrial center of the south, exploitation of black labor and the use of racial tensions by the city’s industrial magnates as a means of thwarting attempts of the organization of labor produced both the violence enacted by those maintaining systemic white supremacy and the conditions necessary for radical black activism. Black activists sought not only desegregation and voting enfranchisement, but also fair employment opportunity. Geographer Bobby M. Wilson writes, “Certainly, race-connected practices in Birmingham’s coal and iron industries distinguished the city from other industrial cities in the United States. Not until the civil rights movement of the 1960s did blacks confront this legacy.”² The city’s history of labor struggles produced both the political awakening and impetus for change for the black workforce. Birmingham’s black working-class served as foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement and, in turn, helped define the goals of the movement.

From its inception in 1871, Birmingham developed the moniker the “Magic City,” which enthusiastically referenced its rapid rate of urbanization and industrialization into Alabama’s largest city. In the postbellum American South, Birmingham became the leading industrial city under the leadership of such magnates as John T. Milner, James W. Sloss, and Henry F. DeBardeleben. Often left out of the celebratory version of the story, however, is the city’s development as a competitor with northern cities such as Pittsburgh through the particularly brutal means of exploiting black labor within a white-supremacist caste system. Milner illuminates this deliberate process in writing “Negro labor can be made exceedingly

profitable in manufacturing iron and in rolling mills, provided there is an overseer: a Southern man who knows how to manage Negroes.”³ Milner further argues for the subjugation of black laborers by writing “They were the lowest and most degraded of all races of man, but the most docile and easily controlled. [...]. The African has produced nothing but the results of his labor in a material way as a slave on the Continent of America under the guidance of the white man.”⁴

The convict leasing system proves one of the most notorious examples of the exploitation of black labor in Birmingham’s early industrial development. The convict leasing system, which operated in Alabama from Reconstruction until the end of the 1920s, became a vital replacement for slavery and provided the economic leadership of Birmingham with a shortcut toward industrial capitalism while also offering the comforts of Old South white supremacy. The industrialists of “the Pittsburgh of the South” lacked the capital necessary for mechanization, so they required a cheap source of labor.⁵ The Magic City magnates readily embraced the convict leasing system, in which southern states and counties leased out convict laborers, overwhelmingly black, for grueling and often inhumane labor, as the answer. Placing convict leasing within this context restores the system into a central role rather than a tragic outlier in the industrial history of Birmingham.

Convict leasing became one lucrative advantage that southern industry, such as seen in Birmingham, maintained over northern industry. Whereas the established northern industry paid wages for not only free, but sometimes organized labor, the South enjoyed the benefits of a “completely artificial” labor force that only cost the leasing fee charged by the state or county.⁶ The demand for labor became so blatantly racist and inhumane that companies put out calls for the rounding up of black men by sheriffs for their convict system. Lawmen, likewise beneficiaries of convict leasing, obliged these requests by arresting black men on charges such as “use of obscene language” and “selling cotton after sunset.”⁷ The

abhorrent working conditions for convict laborers gained infamy across the country, and produced an outcry for change among some groups. One such group, the Statewide Campaign Committee for the Abolishment of the Convict Contract System, published a pamphlet in which they argued, “any arrangement by which private individuals can purchase for their profit the compulsory labor of other human beings is a modified form of slavery and is fundamentally wrong.”⁸

Beyond the human rights violation upon the convicts themselves, the leasing system also disadvantaged the free labor force. The use of convict labor made it difficult for the organization of southern laborers, as the availability of positions for free wage earners became significantly reduced. Prison labor greatly weakened the bargaining power of organized labor in the South. The black labor force proved the most impacted by the “competition” of convict leasing. Historian Martha Myers argues that during economic lows in Birmingham, “urban blacks suffered higher unemployment than whites because they were segregated in unskilled, unorganized, and unprotected jobs, precisely those most vulnerable to economic downturns and to social pressure for displacing blacks in favor of whites seeking work.”⁹ Thus, the limited job options caused by prison labor were then filled by the white workforce. This contributed toward Birmingham’s economic stratification maintained by white supremacy.

Even in the absence of the convict leasing system, black laborers found limited opportunity for upward mobility in Birmingham’s industry. The influx of black workers into the city escaping the collapsing prospects of rural agriculture competed for the most dangerous and demeaning of work considered beneath the status of white men.¹⁰ Historian Robin D. G. Kelley writes that “the mine and mill owners hoped to mold an industrial proletariat in a city founded less than a generation after the abolition of chattel slavery and, peopled with two races afraid of each other.”¹¹ Birmingham’s political and industrial leadership manipulated these

conditions by provoking tensions between the city's working-class white and black populations. The strict enforcement of white supremacy in all social realms proved beneficial for the economic elite, as the cost of labor, for both white and black workers, remained low. In a system in which industry kept the white laborer low but the black laborer even lower, the potential for organization of a powerful biracial labor coalition remained limited.

Birmingham's government preserved this racist socioeconomic system in support of the region's economic leadership collective known as the "Big Mules." In fact, Eugene "Bull" Connor, who later became the political face of racial violence against the city's black population in his capacity as the city's Commissioner of Public Safety, began his career directing the steel police at Birmingham's Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company (TCI) where he prevented attempts at unionization.¹² Spending his political life as a staunch and violent segregationist, Bull Connor served as a lackey for the Big Mules. Historian Glenn Eskew writes that "as Connor understood, segregation reinforced the race wage in Birmingham."¹³

In the first half of the twentieth century, black workers in Birmingham found little representation within organized labor. Labor unions in the city either appeared non-existent, segregated, or stratified. In the early history of the Magic City, the majority of union activity appeared among mine workers, with notable strikes occurring in 1903 and 1908. Both strikes ultimately failed and union development remained modest in the city's industry for several decades.

Many of the labor organizations that did emerge within Birmingham strictly enforced segregation and did not allow black membership. Writing in 1948, Herbert R. Northrup observes that, "the Amalgamated [Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers] was quite hostile to the idea of organizing negroes."¹⁴ Most union leaders only attempted the organization of skilled whites within industrial fields.¹⁵

Company officials informed white laborers that they were forfeiting their entitled position within the economic hierarchy if they united with black laborers in a promotion of "social equality."¹⁶ An attorney for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee notes the lack of opportunity for black laborers working for U.S. Pipe being denied access into unions, writing "[they] would be certified journeymen were they not negroes, and that is the controlling factor –they are not skilled or affiliated, because they are negroes."¹⁷ With black workers being rejected from joining white unions, some efforts were made toward establishing black workers unions. Lloyd Harper, an employee at Birmingham's American Cast Iron Pipe Company (ACIPCO), expressed a disillusioned view of attempts at organizing at the company in saying, "a black union at ACIPCO wouldn't have meant nothing. It was all just black. It wouldn't have been anything because they would have run you off."¹⁸

In the few unions that did encourage black and white membership, solidarity across race lines remained absent, as white members enjoyed preferential treatment within the entrenched system of institutional racism in the work place. When black workers helped whites fight for a union presence in Birmingham's industry, they found that their efforts only helped in promoting a continued system of job discrimination in which black members missed out on promotion opportunities because of prearranged negotiations.¹⁹

Three of Birmingham's black laborers implored Phillip Murray, the national president of the United Steelworkers of America, writing, "We know that we are here in the South, but can't something be done to help this black race to let us feel like we are free in our hall or on our daily occupation? We feel like the [local Steelworkers leadership] is not doing its part for the black man."²⁰ Although Murray personally strongly opposed racial discrimination, no one informed him at his office in Pittsburgh that Ku Klux Klan members led many of his unions in the South.²¹ Jimmie Louis Warren, a machine operator at U.S. Pipe

in Birmingham, recounted that he found himself in a union that maintained white supremacy, saying he “filed complaints against the union because when I got involved in it, I went to the union hall and discovered that the union was segregated.”²² He continued, “The president of the union was nothing but a Ku Klux, and he rode around with Ku Klux signs, and after I got there and went to a union meeting, I saw that they had separate rest rooms in the union hall. [...]. Here I’m paying union dues, and I’m not free at the union hall.”²³ Reuben Davis, fired from his job as a Louisville and Nashville Railroad tractor operator for union activity, said “ I became aware of some situations in which union contracts discriminated even within the ranks of the union. The idea of ‘department seniority’ meant that if I was hired as a laborer in a certain department, I couldn’t move out of that department to another. I think it was another way to keep black workers at a minimal level. The union itself devised that method.”²⁴

Without many viable options for the black working

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class, the Alabama Communist Party became an outlet that black laborers turned toward during the 1930s. The Communist Party’s headway into the South’s primary industrial city came through working-class black support, which materialized following the Party’s much-publicized legal defense of the Scottsboro Boys trial in 1932.²⁵ Kelley argues, “Alabama’s black cadre interpreted Communism through the lenses of their own cultural world.”²⁶

The Communist Party then reignited a black radical tradition within the ranks of Birmingham’s labor force which allowed for aspirations toward significant upheaval of the city’s white-supremacist economic structure.²⁷ Kelley further contends that “The Communist Party was such a unique vehicle for black working-class opposition because it encouraged interracial unity without completely compromising racial politics.”²⁸

The Communist Party influenced the organization of black labor in Birmingham at such companies as Stockham Valves and Fittings, where prominent Magic City communist Al Murphy recruited such employees as Hosea Hudson, who himself became noted within the Party.²⁹ The number of Marxist shop units within the city’s industrial center reached nine by 1934, and the Communist Party became the only organization that encouraged racial cooperation among the working class with the aims of forming a unified labor coalition.³⁰ Black activist Nims E. Gay said that “During the 1930s, Birmingham became sort of the southern regional headquarters for the Communist Party. [...The Communists] were obviously good organizers. Mr. Gus Hall, who ran for president on the Communist ticket, stayed at my uncle’s house so many times.” Gay continued, “My uncle worked for Vandiver Furnace, and he claimed not to be involved with the [Communist Party], but I believed he was.”³¹

Kelley writes that “The Communist movement in Alabama resonated with the cultures and traditions of black working people, yet at the same time it offered something fundamentally different. It proposed a new direction, a new kind of politics that required the self-activity of people usually dismissed as inarticulate.”³² Birmingham’s industrial and political leadership identified the threat the radical left posed by encouraging black resistance toward the racist economic caste system. Harvey Lee Henley Jr., of ACIPCO, said that “anything that you did out there at the time was a bold move, because people were afraid.” Henley’s supervisor confronted him about his attendance at a black activist meeting, and

immediately called it a communist meeting. Henley recalled the conversation with his supervisor, saying, “I don’t know the difference between a communist and you. I associate with all kinds of people. Now, whether you think I’m being influenced by somebody, I can think you [are] being influenced by something.”³³

Despite not successfully overhauling the political structure of Birmingham, the Communist Party did leave behind a legacy that influenced black activists in the subsequent years. While one cannot make the foolhardy claim that Fred Shuttlesworth, Martin Luther King, Jr., and future activists of the Birmingham Campaign maintained Communist allegiances, there remains a correlation between the economic aims of the radical left and the black activists. In the context of the Cold War era, resistance toward the economic structure often became hidden within innuendo at the fear of being called a communist and damaging the chances of public support for one’s cause. Davis said that, “I once heard Dr. Ballard, a Birmingham physician, say at a church service, ‘anytime a black man made any move towards progress, they would brand him as a communist.’ In my opinion, the American government was not fearful of communism –they were thinking that communism would advance the cause of black people.”³⁴ Likewise, Fred Shuttlesworth said, “We had to learn that to a segregationist, communism means integration. More than your Russian communists, I don’t think they were afraid about Russia coming over and taking over the country as much they were about blacks being equal with whites.”³⁵

While bitter disappointments litter the labor history of Birmingham, one landmark 1944 Supreme Court decision stands out as a victory for black labor. In 1941, Bester William Steele, a Birmingham-based fireman for the L&N Railroad, filed a lawsuit against the discriminatory practices of both L&N and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers (BLFE).³⁶ Steele, a member of the all-black union International Association of Railway Employees (IARE), argued that he and fellow black

railroad firemen toiled away in the dirtiest and most dangerous conditions while white employees gained promotion through a collective bargaining agreement reached between BLFE and L&N which secured white hegemony. The plaintiff contended that this agreement “has been hostile and disloyal to the Negro firemen, has deliberately discriminated against them, and has sought to deprive them of their seniority rights and to drive them out of employment in their craft, all in order to create a monopoly of employment for Brotherhood members.”³⁷



Sloss Furnaces, Birmingham, Alabama

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Steele v. Louisville N.R. CO* found that during collective bargaining agreements, unions must “represent non-union or minority union members of the craft without hostile discrimination, fairly, impartially, and in good faith.”³⁸ Historian Robert Norrell writes that the decision’s “immediate significance in Birmingham was to show white managers and workers that some blacks would no longer accept job discrimination.”³⁹ Notably, the attorneys representing Steele and IARE were civil rights legal icons Charles H. Houston and Birmingham’s own Arthur Shores.⁴⁰ Historian Max Krochmal argues that the case “further illuminates the

close connections between the shop-floor battles of trade unionists and the mass movement that emerged in the streets of the Magic City in the late 1950s and early 1960s.”⁴¹

Although Birmingham’s black labor movement suffered many setbacks and false starts during the first half of the twentieth century, these provided the black working class with both a political awakening as well as a resolve against the city’s racial economic barriers. Colonel Stone Johnson, organizer of guards for the black rights movement in Birmingham and Shuttlesworth’s personal guard, said that “It was from my activism with the union [at L&N] that I really understood the way racism worked. Then, in the 1950s, when the movement started, I was basically primed for it, because I had already been doing this kind of work.”⁴² Elias Hendrick Sr., an employee at Armour Packing and a member of the United Packinghouse Workers Union, argued that “the civil rights movement would not have been able to do a lot of the things that they were able to do had it not been for the labor movement.”⁴³

“ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY BECAME AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE MOVEMENT THAT EXISTED AS A GOAL FROM THE BEGINNING, AND YET IT FELL BEHIND THE FIGHT AGAINST SEGREGATION AND DISENFRANCHISEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR TOTAL UPHEAVAL OF BIRMINGHAM’S WHITE HEGEMONY.”

When the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) incorporated as a civil rights organization on August 7, 1956, it listed one of the objectives and purposes of the group as being “to

promote the economic, political, civic, and social development of all people.”⁴⁴ ACMHR’s president, the fiery Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth who came from a working-class background in Birmingham and whose uncle had been a local all-black union president, served as pastor of Bethel Baptist Church. James Roberson, a member of ACMHR, said that “the grassroots of the civil rights struggle was not at Sixteenth Street- it was at Bethel Baptist Church in Collegeville. And in reality, [... Sixteenth Street] was the church of bourgeoisie blacks. They were the educators and the doctors, and they had arrived.” Roberson further comments on Sixteenth Street Baptist, “In our finite thinking, they didn’t want any part [of the movement]. They were comfortable. Now, you had some that were there, but it was the poor people who wanted something better and didn’t have anything to lose.” He argued that Shuttlesworth would not have produced such a following if he had been the pastor of Sixteenth Street rather than Bethel Baptist.⁴⁵ Through this perspective, the civil rights movement within Birmingham reveals itself as a fundamentally working class and poor people’s movement.⁴⁶

For many of Birmingham’s black laborers, involvement in civil rights protests developed from the pursuit of equality within the industrial system. Johnson, describing his beginning in the resistance for black equality, said “My involvement in the civil rights movement started early in the railroad shop. When I was hired, March 31, 1942, I saw such a big difference in the treatment of men. [...] Where the segregation came in was on the promotion. You could have a high school education and some college through correspondence courses, and a white man could be brought in right from the farm, [...] and they would hire him.”⁴⁷ Henley Jr., likewise, developed interest in black radical protest through his work experience, saying “I was really concerned about the labor aspect of the Movement. I had gone out to work out at ACIPCO. We had a real problem out there about discrimination. [...]. I encouraged the men to give contributions to the Alabama Christian Movement.”⁴⁸ Krochmal writes

that, “African American economic justice organizing clearly attracted people from throughout the black working class.”⁴⁹

In turn, others felt a new sense of empowerment and political agency by participating in ACMHR and the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s, and they brought this with them in a rejuvenated fight for equal rights at the workplace. Jimmie Luis Warren, a member of ACMHR and an employee at U.S. Pipe, recalled, “A mass meeting was very inspirational to me. It was something to motivate you. It was the type of meeting that would educate you, tell you what rights you had and what the law stood for, you had that right.”⁵⁰

Birmingham’s white population who desired a continuation of the status quo of the socioeconomic structure viewed the black struggle for equal rights as a threat upon their livelihood. Norrell writes that “white workers seemed to understand instinctively that their supremacy at the workplace depended partly on maintaining Jim Crow outside the plant gates.”⁵¹ The black freedom struggle’s pursuit of desegregation, enfranchisement, and economic opportunity all challenged the privileged status of the city’s white citizens. The Big Mules exploited the fears of the white working class by promising them political power over the black working class, thus securing a class-transcending constituency that voted for white supremacist candidates. White laborers regarded black political and social power as a challenge toward their position in the social hierarchy and feared the potential of falling behind and losing this position they enjoyed.

The city’s industrial and political leadership intimidated black activists not just with police violence and arrest, but also the loss of their occupation. Warren said that “I got tied up in the Christian Movement, and the news broke that I was involved, and they knew about it, and they picked around until they fired me.” He further stated “They called me ‘agitator’ and they called me a Black Muslim. [...]”

You see, you were stamped when you got involved in certain things- they would mark you. And so they tried. They did everything. They put the Ku Klux sign on our job trying to discourage us, but they couldn’t.”⁵² Companies promised termination of employment upon discovery of involvement with the black freedom struggle. James Summerville, an employee at ACIPCO, said that the company official sent out memos informing the black employees that if they were found participating in the movement, they would lose their job.⁵³ Henry Goodgame, a fellow employee of Summerville’s, recalled an even more forward tactic by the company, saying “On my job at ACIPCO, all the blacks had been called into the auditorium and told that if you’re ever caught in a demonstration or, if you were ever arrested because you were demonstrating, you’re automatically discharged.”⁵⁴

While Birmingham’s black working class served as the foot soldiers of the movement, supplying the numbers necessary for successful marches and protests, they proved much more vital for the struggle than simply following the directions of the campaign’s leadership. When the Birmingham Campaign of 1963 occurred and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) joined Shuttlesworth’s ACMHR, the charismatic leadership of the city’s black freedom struggle relied on a preexisting and established working-class motivation which shaped the objectives and trajectory of the movement itself. Krochmal writes that “African American laborers brought the struggle for racial equality to work and the fight for economic justice to the larger community. Each arena of struggle reinforced and strengthened the other, and both profited from the exchange of people from work site to community and back again.”⁵⁵

Economic opportunity became an important element of the movement that existed as a goal from the beginning, and yet it fell behind the fight against segregation and disenfranchisement in the struggle for total upheaval of Birmingham’s white hegemony. Davis bemoaned that the economic element of the

fight for black rights became overshadowed, saying “As I look back on the Movement, I think that, and I thought then that economic rights should have been the focus of the Movement, rather than blacks’ social equality.”⁵⁶ Historian Glenn T. Eskew, however, argues that the issue of employment opportunities became a crucial element of the entire goal of ACMHR. The city’s black population recognized the changes in Birmingham’s economy during the middle of the twentieth century. Unskilled positions within the city’s industry significantly diminished with modernization and mechanization, and the black workforce needed a breakthrough into the service sector for occupational advancement. The organizers of the Birmingham Campaign of 1963 sought an end of the glass ceiling that limited the black labor force’s employment opportunities within unskilled positions that secured Alabama’s white-supremacist economic structure. Eskew writes that “ACMHR members desired employment in the better-paying civil service jobs, positions reserved for ‘whites only.’ The new demand for service sector employment reflected the black community’s refusal to be left behind.” King comments on this factor as well, writing “the Negro’s economic problem was compounded by the emergence and growth of automation. Since discrimination and lack of education confined him to unskilled and semi-skilled labor, the Negro was and remains the first to suffer in these days of great technological development.”⁵⁸

Inspired by the preceding successes of the Montgomery bus boycott and the Greensboro lunch counter sit ins, the Birmingham Campaign of 1963 utilized a multi-faceted disruption of Birmingham’s business sector with aims at targeting the entire white-supremacist caste system of the city.⁵⁹ When the joint-operations of ACMHR and SCLC started the Birmingham Campaign, they released a “Birmingham Manifesto,” which read, “Birmingham is part of the United States and we are bona fide citizens. Yet the history of Birmingham reveals that very little of the democratic process touches the life of the Negro

in Birmingham. We have been segregated racially, exploited economically, and dominated politically.”⁶⁰ King recognized the connection between black activism and the labor movement. In a speech before the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), King emphasized that their shared goals and common interests precipitated the reasoning of “why the labor-hater and labor-baiter is virtually always a two-headed creature spewing anti-negro epithets from one mouth and anti-labor propaganda from the other mouth.”⁶¹ King and the leadership of SCLC surely recognized the potential of a resistance movement in the South’s major industrial city which contributed toward their acceptance of Shuttlesworth’s invitation for a campaign in Birmingham. ACMHR had laid the groundwork of grassroots organization, and the number of motivated and empowered black working-class activists proved exceptional.

The Birmingham Campaign, led by both King’s SCLC and Shuttlesworth’s ACMHR, did apply pressure on the city’s white business leaders and allowed for a partial victory, yet Shuttlesworth became dismayed at the moratorium on marches that King accepted in response of federal pressure.⁶² Without securing economic opportunity for black labor, Shuttlesworth viewed the Birmingham Campaign as incomplete and a wasted chance for real progress. One of the four agreed-upon concessions promised by the city’s leadership called for the “immediate up-grading of employment opportunities available for Negroes, and the beginning of a non-discriminatory hiring policy.”⁶³ While seemingly a progressive step, Shuttlesworth rightfully feared that these terms remained too vague, and further protests applying more pressure on the city’s economic leadership carried the potential for more gains.

Although King celebrated the protests in Birmingham as a victory, he acknowledged that the activists had not yet completed the objectives of the campaign. In referencing the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing that infamously killed four

girls, King writes, “My preference would have been to resume demonstrations in the wake of the September bombings.”⁶⁴ While economic justice remained an important objective, the Birmingham Campaign ended without much resolution on that front. Anne Braden, a leader of the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) and an activist ally of Shuttlesworth’s, argued that economic justice always remained a part of the struggle in Birmingham, but in her view fighting Jim Crow took precedence. She said, “my interpretation of that is ‘okay, we need to talk about jobs, labor organizing, farm problems and all that but they got to deal with segregation before they can deal with these.’”⁶⁵

Negotiators included the release of all the jailed protesters on low bail among the concessions made by Birmingham’s white elite. In following a request made by President Kennedy’s administration, the United Auto Workers, the National Maritime Union, the United Steelworkers Union, and the AFL-CIO contributed the funds necessary for this bail cost.⁶⁶ Jerome “Buddy” Cooper, an Alabama native and an attorney for the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), said “I got a phone call at about eleven or twelve at night. It was the general counsel of the Steelworkers union, David Feller. Davy said, “Buddy, President Kennedy has had Bobby contact Walter Reuther (president of the United Autoworkers) and Dave McDonald [president of USWA] to put up the bond to get these kids out of jail in Birmingham.”⁶⁷

In the years following the 1963 Campaign, ACMHR and other local activists continued the pursuit of economic opportunity for Birmingham’s black population. For example, ACMHR planned protests around Birmingham City Hall for August 17, 1965, demanding the hiring of black employees in Birmingham-area companies and the hiring of black police officers.⁶⁸ In a pamphlet published in 1966, ACMHR contended that “The integration that exists is still token, for the great masses of black people jobs are still non-existent or at the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. And the old and dilapidated houses

along the streets of Birmingham’s inner city stand as a reminder that this city has slum ghettos as depressed as any in the South or the nation.”⁶⁹ Illustrating that economic justice proved vital for the goals, ACMHR argued that “our society simply has not found the way to provide great numbers of its citizens with a chance for a decent life.”⁷⁰

ACMHR announced that “the goals ahead will be both economic and political: an end to tokenism, decent jobs, and income for all. It was the civil rights movement of the nation that forced our society to look at hunger, deprivation, among American citizens.”⁷¹ Birmingham’s black activism developed into explicit calls for jobs through the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s. In July 1967, ACMHR protested outside of Birmingham’s Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company over wage injustices against black union members. An FBI report illustrates that not every observer understood that activists pursued economic justice as a matter of the black freedom struggle, reading “Inasmuch as this picketing relates primarily to labor problems, rather than racial matters,” the picketing did not pose a serious threat for law enforcement.⁷² In 1971, a planned visit of Birmingham by President Nixon brought plans for demonstrations by ACMHR and SCLC over welfare conditions in the city.⁷³

Following the 1963 Campaign, King also continued a push for economic opportunity on a national level. He writes that economic promise did not equal progress and “the shape of the world will not permit us the luxury of gradualism and procrastination. [...]. The livelihood of millions has dwindled down to a frightening fraction because the unskilled and semiskilled jobs they filled have disappeared under the magic of automation.”⁷⁴ King identified economic opportunity as the great need for true black progress in their daily lives. He acknowledged that answers for the problems of employment and poverty were complex and demanded radical change in the socioeconomic structure of the United States. Before the ratification of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, King already called for implementation of progressive

programs for the impoverished and reparations for the damages caused by the exploitation of black labor. He writes “The ancient common law has always provided a remedy for the appropriation of the labor of one human being by another. This law should be made available for American Negroes. The payment should be in the form of a massive program by the government of special, compensatory measures which could be regarded as a settlement.”⁷⁵

Before his assassination in April of 1968, King heavily involved himself with the economic blight of the working class. Although he did not live during its eventual fruition and disappointment, King envisioned a Poor People’s March on Washington in which black activists intended a display of the problems of the country’s poor before the federal government.⁷⁶ In combating the economic injustices, King called for a coalition between the labor movement and the black freedom struggle, writing “When labor fought for recognition during the thirties and forties, and thus became the principal civil rights issue of the time, disadvantaged Negroes joined in its bitter struggles and shared every sacrifice. Negroes battling for their own recognition today have a right to expect more from their old allies. Nothing would hold back the forces of progress in American life more effectively than a schism between the Negro and organized labor.”⁷⁷ Too often, non-violence becomes mistakenly equated with non-revolutionary.

Shuttlesworth likewise continued the struggle for employment opportunity. He moved from his hometown of Birmingham to Cincinnati where he established the Greater New Light Baptist Church. In Cincinnati and nationally, Shuttlesworth maintained a leadership role in organizing support for the impoverished class toward job opportunities and housing. His participation in the solidarity rallies provide an example of his prolonged and fervent activism in this matter. Shuttlesworth certainly did not approve of the Reaganomics of the 1980s. He said “You work your lifetime and now your Social Security is going to be cut out. Elected Reagan –

he told before he got in that he was going to cut it out. Rich are getting richer and poor are getting poorer.”⁷⁸ The AFL-CIO sponsored solidarity rallies of union members protesting Reagan’s economic policies deemed detrimental toward the working class. Organized labor became enraged by Reagan’s cuts in social programs and job safety rules.⁷⁹ At one such rally, Shuttlesworth directly addressed the president through his speech, saying “tonight we ordinary Americans from all walks of life meet on this Square, speaking among ourselves, talking with our God, [...], and protesting Reaganomics’ –that unsafe, unsound, improperly thought out economic policy of taking from the poor and needy and giving it to the rich and Military.”⁸⁰ He further said “please quit giving the economy without regulations or guidelines over to the rich, hoping that they will, like good American tycoons, let sufficient crumbs trickle down to better the conditions of the poor.”⁸¹ Although based out of Cincinnati, Fred Shuttlesworth remained connected with Birmingham’s black freedom struggle, and the fight for economic justice, until his death in 2011.

In Birmingham, the struggle for economic equality and job opportunities remains ongoing. Some progress occurred for the city’s black labor force. In 1973, the city’s workers received promotions and back pay settlements of five million dollars by the United Steelworkers of America for discriminatory hiring and promotion practices.⁸² In 1974, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit found ACIPCO likewise guilty of discrimination toward black employees, and the company paid out damages.⁸³ Still, for a majority of Birmingham’s black workforce, conditions did not improve. Eskew writes that “scattered about the city in pockets of poverty that housed generations of families, black people remained the truly disadvantaged in Birmingham. Over the years, little had changed to improve their lives.”⁸⁴ He further argues that “Clearly the victories of the civil rights movement failed to solve the problems experienced by many black people. The movement had gained access for a few while never challenging the structure

of the system.”⁸⁵ In Birmingham, as elsewhere in the country, the battle for economic opportunity remains an ongoing objective for black activism.

Focusing on the prolonged economic and employment goals of the black activists in Birmingham supports a narrative of the black freedom struggle in which the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s and 1960s becomes a segment of a long movement. The Civil Rights Act of 1963 and the Voting Rights Act of 1964 ostensibly solved the injustices of Jim Crow and black disenfranchisement with relatively straight-forward legislative procedure. The fight for economic justice, however, proves a more challenging and complex objective for activists as solutions that reach the root problems of equal employment and economic opportunity are often vague or face much more fervent opposition. Although refuting the triumphalist mythos of the Civil Rights Movement’s legacy, highlighting the ongoing nature of the fight against black labor exploitation does not diminish

the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham and elsewhere, but rather reclaims the radicalism of the activists while illustrating the resistance they faced.

In the end, the story of black labor and activism in Birmingham becomes a story of partial victories and perpetual promise.⁸⁶ While many rightly celebrate the role of Birmingham activism in achieving desegregation and black enfranchisement, the black labor force still awaits equal opportunity. Black activists do not strive for three individual aims but a freedom that proves all-encompassing. Activists during the 1960s commonly said, “what good is it to sit at the lunch counter when you don’t have enough money to buy a hamburger?”⁸⁷ Likewise, voting becomes difficult and unfruitful when blighted by economic dependence.⁸⁸ Desegregation and black enfranchisement, thus, become rendered incomplete without economic justice. The black freedom struggle continues.

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BLOOD ON THE GREAT SEAL OF ALABAMA

by Tammy Blue

On August 14, 1933, three black men faced transport to the Birmingham Jail for the murder of a white woman named Vaudine Maddox.¹ Threats of lynching, a norm in the southern landscape, became imminent after their arrest. It took less than 24 hours before the defendants were lured to a secluded location by Sheriff Shamblin and his deputies, intercepted by a mob, and riddled with bullets.² The local public outcry proved tremendous – but not for the loss of the lives of Dan Pippen (18), A.T. Harden (16) and Elmore Clark (28)³; the public remained only concerned about how they appeared to the rest of the nation. On the surface it seemed that the motivation behind these lynchings was justice, and that the public acted on good faith in dispensing proper punishment with the consensus that the law would not. The public lacked confidence and patience in the law to efficiently execute a black person which the public had already convicted. It may also appear that the calls to end lynchings in the state were an act of a growing moral consciousness when, on the contrary, the preservation of Alabama’s reputation reveals itself as a major incentive.

Following the Tuscaloosa lynching, the editor of The Montgomery Advertiser published an editorial titled, “Blood on the Great Seal of Alabama,”⁴ insisting the entire state shared responsibility for the lynching and should be ashamed. Local Alabamians and authorities scrambled to avoid humiliation in front of the nation for their backwards attempt at handling the law, however, feelings of remorse in reaction to a moral crime did not motivate them. Justification for their actions and the deflection of blame became their only motivation. The goal with this area of discussion is not to suggest that everyone in Alabama shared the same hostility toward African-Americans during this time. Nor is it meant to claim that no genuine moral opposition toward lynchings resided among the public. It is intended to shed light on what happens when



Seal of Alabama

support or objection of lynchings.

The Montgomery Advertiser, a leading newspaper among southern states, provides a perfect reflection of Alabama public opinion. At the time of the Tuscaloosa lynching in 1933, Grover C. Hall served as the paper’s editor who called for Alabama’s shame in allowing this and other lynchings a place within the state’s culture. His editorial, “Blood on the Great Seal of Alabama,” recounts the details surrounding the events of the lynching and admits to the true motivation behind the mobs’ violent attack. The article candidly states that a “group of armed zealots...had become impatient with slow justice... [and that there was] evidence of mob law which none can dispute and for which none can apologize.”⁵ That same impatience and lack of faith in the law led to an official kidnapping and execution of three African-American defendants while in court custody. Tuscaloosa News reported that the escort car following the defendants on their route to the Birmingham Jail, turned around after driving 20 miles away from Tuscaloosa, because there was no sign of trouble. According to historian B. J. Hollars,

hate is used as motivation for murder under the guise of justice. A close examination of this editorial, as well as other articles and letters from various periodicals, will show a distrust Alabamians had for the law, as well as the public’s true motivation behind their

conspirators including the sheriff prearranged the mob attack.⁶ The men were sacrificed to the mercy of the lynch mob.

“IT HAS BECOME PART OF THE UNWRITTEN BUT FULLY RECOGNIZED LAW, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTH, THAT IF THE STATUTES FAIL TO DEAL OUT JUSTICE TO THE OFFENDER, THE PEOPLE WILL.”

Hall’s editorial that followed the lynching stirred up a lot of emotions in Alabamians – embarrassed that “Alabama hot heads” overpowered police and dispense their own justice.⁷ The Montgomery Advertiser editorial accuses those who committed the act of violence of making all of Alabama look bad. The editorial does not take the position that the mob murders were immoral, but indicates how Alabamians might appear to other areas of the country – particularly the North.⁸ The editor expresses concern with the “lies [that] have been spread abroad about the people of Alabama and their courts, gross lies of injustice, conviction of the innocent, [and] legal murder by the courts.”⁹ Furthermore, a violent, public lynching did little toward saving Alabama’s already tarnished reputation. He further insists that Alabama courts could not function properly with any type of outside interference, whether it be violent mobs, or good-intentioned organizations seeking protection and justice for African-Americans. Instead of advocating the abolition of lynching itself, papers like The Montgomery Advertiser carried the message that the main problem was keeping punishment out of the hands of those who “fear that outside interference would block the course of justice.”¹⁰ The Montgomery Advertiser, as well as other periodicals at the time, missed the crucial importance of looking at what drove that consensus, and failed to identify the motivation

behind that fear. Another article noted that, “it has become part of the unwritten but fully recognized law, especially in the South, that if the statutes fail to deal out justice to the offender, the people will.”¹¹ The Alabama public often claimed justice as the motivation behind the public participation and encouragement of lynchings. Through lynchings, whites exhorted their power and control over blacks, while delivering the message that “if the law fails... then the other law will act, and it will be upheld with public sentiment.”¹² However, that sentiment changed when it cast Alabama in an unfavorable light to other states and abroad. Frustration grew when convictions or executions did not move swiftly, and the community needed a more efficient and politically correct way of murdering blacks – one that did not make the Alabama public look bad.

Sociologist Arthur F. Raper’s meticulously researched analysis, prepared by a commission composed of Southern scholars and investigators, examined over 20 lynchings in detail. He speaks boldly about the tarnished reputation left on a community after a lynching.¹³ In several cases he studied, Raper discovered that mobs seized the accused persons from the sheriff or other peace officers in broad daylight.¹⁴ This is true in relation to the Tuscaloosa lynching as focused on in this essay. Raper continues that in many cases when the officers later testified, they never identified a member of the mob. The public also often failed in providing potentially damning evidence. In the Tuscaloosa lynching, the court did “not consider the evidence sufficient to indict” the accused parties.¹⁵ Raper accurately claims that due to these inevitable outcomes, lynching makes a “mockery of courts and citizenship,” much like it did in the Tuscaloosa case. Whenever a situation exists when the courts mishandle the case or citizens lie in covering up the despicable violence, the “community [shares] in the responsibility for the crime of the mob... the state itself has been lynched.”¹⁶ Alabama failed to keep their trust in the law and courts, therefore no final triumph of justice in regard to the three African-American defendants occurred, further staining

the reputation of Alabama citizens. An editorial in *The Montgomery Advertiser* called the credibility of Alabama into question. The public outcry for stopping lynchings grew – and nothing inspired growth in Alabama more than the view from outside.

The economic damage toward Alabama businesses became one strong motivation for stopping lynchings. Less than 40 years before the Tuscaloosa lynching, Hon. Robert P. Porter issued a “friendly warning” from London to *Chicago Inter Ocean*¹⁷ that lynchings get in the way of economic progress in the south. This candid letter significantly captures the foreign hesitancy to invest in southern states, such as Alabama, who participated in lynching. A portion of this letter reads:

“This feeling is by no means all sentiment. An Englishman...who could send a million sterling to any legitimate Southern enterprise said the other day, ‘I will not invest a farthing in States where these horrors occur. I have no particular sympathy with the anti-lynching committee, but such outrages indicate to my mind that where life is held to be of such little value there is even less assurance that the laws will protect property. As I understand it the States, not the national government, control in such matters, and where those laws are strongest there is the best field for British capital.”¹⁸

This type of open admittance from wealthy foreign investors clearly showed the disapproval and lack of confidence that outside nations felt in dealing with lynching states (such as Alabama). Their hesitancy to involve themselves in the violent chaos leaves little mystery as to why locals desperately needed the retention of an image of control and civility. Opinions from Europe such as Porter’s showed that countries outside the United States remained aware of the struggle, and the failure of states like Alabama to exude respectability with racial relations.

Interestingly, a letter from distinguished Boston Clergyman to *The Baltimore Sun*¹⁹ candidly speaks

of the pride African-Americans who relocated to the North still felt toward their native South. Despite the persecution and constant threat of violence in the south, the preservation of the region’s reputation remained a constant on some level, even for blacks. However, this love of home became somewhat exploited in the north and some used it in downplaying the lynching experience from an outsider’s perspective. Primarily, some northerners claimed the lynchings in the South were “grossly exaggerated; that the provocations that produce these uprisings are unprecedented, and that men in any community [...] would exercise no more self-control than Southern men do under like conditions.”²⁰ It easy to say this if you maintained a view from the outside, but then again this remained the perspective many Alabamians concerned themselves with.

Alabama failed to secure an honorable reputation for law abiding and efficient handling of the mob presence in the state – ultimately portraying themselves as inadequate business partners and a risky investment. In this case, reputation had economic implications attached, and was no doubt one other motivation for at least attempting to pass official legislation or speaking out against the mob violence. However, Alabama was not the only state with lynch mob violence, nor were they the only state to fail at passing anti-lynching laws.

The adoption of anti-lynching laws could curb mob violence, however, *The Atlanta Georgian* argued that, “although most people must despise lynchings, they cannot translate their mental opposition into physical opposition.”²¹ The resentment toward African-Americans stemmed from social, political and economic motivation to stop blacks from becoming “full acting citizens.”²² Essentially, some whites feared encroachment of their superiority. The upholding of white control superseded any moral motivation for opposing lynchings. However, desire for that control remained among the many reasons why anti-lynching laws never passed. Attempted efforts at implementing anti-lynching laws failed due to the

power-play between the public and the state and federal governments; where once again control and appearances dominated. It is also important to note the extreme difficulty in defining such a complex term also contributed to the difficulty in passing anti-lynching legislation.

‘Lynching’ became synonymous in newspapers with murder. Although the history of lynchings is more widely known today, misconceptions remain about what a “lynching” would often entail. By the turn of the 20th century, the NAACP referred to lynching as, “murder sanctioned by the community.” Finally, in 1940 an accepted definition defined lynching as, “an extrajudicial murder carried out by a group.” This still left the false impression that a lynching only represented a murder by the means of hanging.²³ Ironically, the same public that called for the end of lynchings often used its ambiguous term to justify lynchings through statements that lynchings required some form of a mob attack. In addition, public statements made by leading officials in Alabama claimed a lack of necessity for anti-lynching legislation. Congressman Frank W. Boykin, First District of Alabama, asserted, “We certainly do not have any lynching in Alabama.”²⁴ This statement proved inaccurate when compared to the more than a dozen lynchings in Alabama by 1981.

Nonetheless, while the burden to pass anti-lynching laws did not fall solely on the shoulders of Alabama, state officials did their part in blocking formal attempts at legislation, specifically the Dyer Bill.²⁵ There were a lot of reasons the bill and similar provisions, never came close to being passed; the most popular being – it violated the state’s rights. The simple explanation of the bill stipulates that if a lynching occurred, the federal government would prosecute the mob, not the state. Due to defining lynching as a murder, the state argued that nothing prevents the federal government from intervening on other issues declared within state jurisdiction if they gained access to lynching cases, again showing the refusal to relinquish control. The Associated

Press out of Washington, declared the Dyer Bill “unconstitutional and an invasion of the police rights of the states.”²⁶ The Montgomery Advertiser published this outside opinion, pointing to the fact that the state of Alabama and Southern Congressmen held the same thoughts. In a section of the paper titled “Logic,” the social commentary points out the irony that the Federal Government may “annul a man’s right to drink, but not to take a human life.”²⁷ Despite inspirational pleas, such as Rev. J.G. Robinson’s letter to President Wilson, the need for state control and credibility in the eyes of the nation remained paramount, Alabama Congressmen could not afford to appear weak and give up a right.²⁸

Southern Congressmen experienced public shaming because of their “cowardice for shirking their civic duty” and hoped to avoid association with prosecuting lynchings.²⁹ Some public backlash included warnings to “stand up manfully for a doctrine their fathers had fought for, meaning the state right to prosecute murders.”³⁰ This essentially insulted any Southern man for even considering relinquishing control to the federal government. The state of Alabama seemed stuck without an easy solution or scapegoat for this issue. This issue became increasingly complicated, however, when specific provisions of the Dyer Bill reached a vote.

On November 16, 1937, The Montgomery Advertiser published the Dyer Bill provision updates which then appeared for a vote within the House of Representatives and the Senate.³¹ The bold provisions intended to hold the state of Alabama, as well as all states plagued with lynchings, accountable; just as the focal editorial in The Montgomery Advertiser called for in 1933. These provisions did not shift the power to the federal courts, but it made the state liable for next of kin in the event a lynching occurred. The provisions also required police officers to make an “affirmative defense” in the event of a mob attack and “any officer failing to make a diligent effort to prevent a lynching may be fined to a maximum of \$5,000, imprisoned for five years or both.”³²

The surface-level motivation behind the public's efforts for anti-lynching legislation ultimately killed any attempts at these bills passing. The consensus view toward African-Americans still very much placed them under the control of white supremacy, and one could argue that the mainstream public did not want an end for the practice of lynching. Any attempts at passing legislation proved purely social or politically motivated. A 1938 editorial in the Montgomery Advertiser reads, "It is not the Negro's life for which the concern is felt. It is his vote."³³ In a fascinating letter from citizen, Norman Evans to the editor of The Montgomery Advertiser, he talks about the "cheap life" of the African-American in the eyes of whites.³⁴ In this letter he also refers to the failure of passing any anti-lynching laws which could save blacks from "wanton slaughter"³⁵ and the wonderment behind successful passing of restrictions against rioting. Evan's words simply addressed the reality of these empty attempts to redeem the reputation of the state, and illustrate that a majority viewed the African-American life as having no value. His words resonate in The Montgomery Advertiser which published this quote from the Associated Press in Washington: "Lynchings will forever cease in any community when mental disapproval of the same is translated into physical position."³⁶ Essentially, a change in racial sentiment amongst the white public could render anti-lynching laws unnecessary.

Any efforts to pass anti-lynching laws in Alabama, or nationwide, often proved in vain. Congress received drafts of nearly 200 bills between 1882 and 1968, where only three passed in the House. Seven U.S. Presidents urged Congress to pass a bill to federal law, but because of the powerful opposition from the southern branches of the Democratic party, Senate did not vote in favor of a single bill. As evident today, Alabama never enacted an anti-lynching law, and the argument could be made for no one in power wanting it passed.³⁷

Although a few strong advocates maintained support for anti-lynching laws, few other efforts at thwarting

lynchings materialized. The public still had little faith in the Alabama State court system, and repeatedly took matters into their own hands while tarnishing the reputation of all Alabama's citizens. When outside opinion began to intervene with their disapproval, Alabamians viewed it necessary to preserve reputation and advocate for legislation. Unwillingness to surrender control of local government power caused inaction by legislation.

As far back as 1892, activist Ida B. Wells records this pattern repeatedly as examined here in Tuscaloosa:

Thus, acts the mob with the victim of its fury, conscious that it will never be called to an account. Not only is this true, but the moral support of those who are chosen by the people to execute the law, is frequently given to the support of lawlessness and mob violence. The press and even the pulpit, in the main either by silence or open apology, have condoned and encouraged this state of anarchy."³⁸

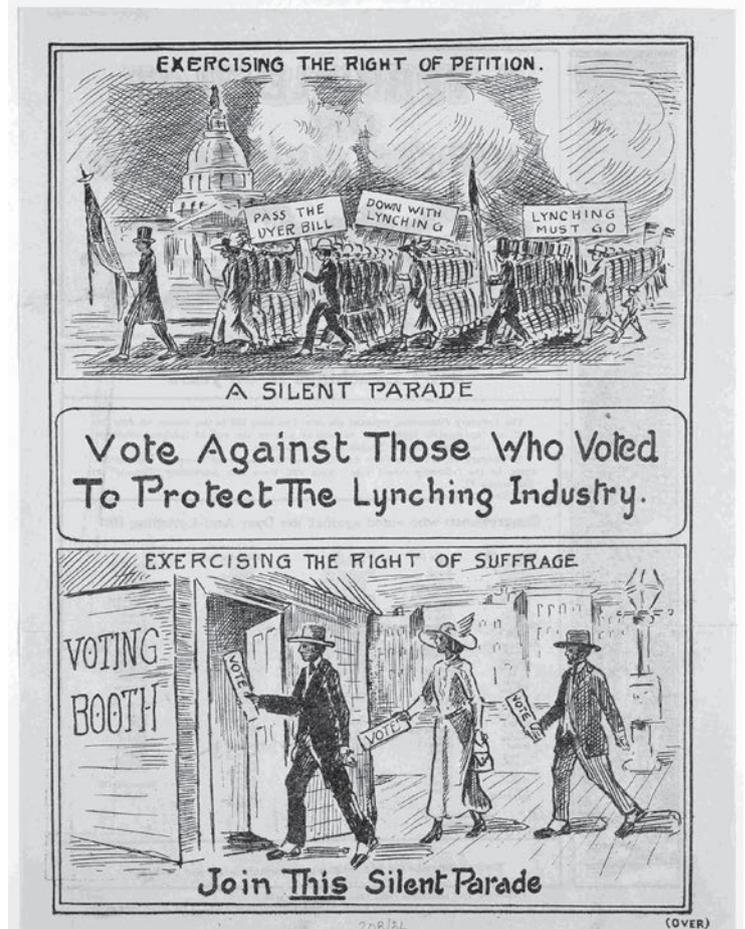
"[THE] COMMUNITY [SHARES] IN THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CRIME OF THE MOB... THE STATE ITSELF HAS BEEN LYNCHED."

Also, in Wells' The Red Record, another lynching which occurred in 1892 Alabama is recorded. In this event, a woman named Emma Fair and three African-American men are killed with shotguns while "caged in their cells, helpless and defenseless."³⁹ In this instance Wells testifies that "public sentiment was not moved to action," that it was only a matter of days before the good Christian people of Alabama went back to swelling the list of murders.⁴⁰ It is interesting to note this example in comparison to the Tuscaloosa

lynching in 1933, since the editorial that followed that event motivated public attempts to regain favorable standing in the eyes of world. During that time, lynchings still occurred, just unbeknownst to the wider public.⁴¹ It appears only logical that responses by the public to these various acts of violence varied so considerably due to their lack of faith in the law, as well as the underlying motivation to retain “social control for white majority in the South.”⁴² It only helped incite mob action that the public knew the unlikelihood of the law’s prosecution of these paralegal killings. Although these high-profile lynchings seemed to fade in 1933, the mob’s need to assert their control continued.

In 1981, Alabama’s lynching heritage made headlines once again when a lynch mob executed nineteen-year old Michael Donald in Mobile. Newspapers published that, “Michael’s body was crumpled from beatings and his neck slashed. The brutally slayed young man was hanging hideously about a mile from Mobile’s City Hall and the Courthouse – where a KKK cross had been burned on the lawn the same night.”⁴³ A desire for the Ku Klux to send a terror-based message to blacks likely motivated this murder. The trial of Josephus Anderson ended at the very same courthouse with a hung jury. He was an African-American man accused of killing a white policeman in self-defense.⁴⁴ Just like Tuscaloosa Alabama in 1933, and hundreds of cases throughout history, the mob dispensed its own “justice.” In this case, an innocent kid, unassociated with the case at all, became the medium for the Klan’s warning. While the Ku Klux Klan is not an accurate depiction of most Alabamians; the actions of the racist mob infects the reputation of the state – very much like Hall mentioned 48 years earlier in the editorial in the aftermath of the Tuscaloosa event. In contrast to previous incidents however, this lynching had an unprecedented outcome.

In the 2018 documentary, *The Lynching that brought Down the Klan in Alabama*, 12-year old Lily Hoyle, (and Mobile resident), spoke to former Alabama



Issued by District of Columbia anti-lynching committee

District Attorney, Chris Galanos who originally tried the case against Donald’s murderers. The sentence that followed resulted in Klan member and perpetrator, Henry Hays, being sentenced to death and executed in 1997 – “It was the only execution of a KKK member during the 20th century for the murder of an African-American.”⁴⁵ James Knowles received a sentence of life in prison and two others also faced prosecution. The crucial twist in the story is that Donald’s mother brought a successful civil suit against the Ku Klux Klan where she sued for millions.⁴⁶ The legal fees and negative press bankrupted the

Klan for a short time and sent a message for civil legal action against other racist hate groups.

Interestingly however, when responding in Hoyle's interview, former D.A. Galanos states, "it was critical that officials of the state of Alabama, not the US government take a proactive role in pursuing this case."⁴⁷ This becomes reminiscent of what happened after the Tuscaloosa lynching when everyone anxiously sought to save face yet hold onto state power; while at the same time having distrust in local law. According to State Senator Michael Figures, "the slaying of Michael Donald was the most volatile situation that has ever come to Mobile."⁴⁸ In this instance, Alabama successfully regained some of her dignity, as well as finally sent a message that deviations from the law will have consequences. Activist Yohuru Williams claims, "this culture of violence has a very discernable impact on the African-American community."⁴⁹ This extends to include every human being everywhere. While the Klan became severely incapacitated and lynchings across America became much less frequent - the underlying motivation of hate simply changed into another version of violence.

Periodicals such as *The Montgomery Advertiser* proved crucial for examining the disposition of the public and how their opinion fluctuates during this time-frame. When the justice system failed or took too long in the eyes of the locals, a select few then decided to take matters into their own hands, while the rest of the public watched, or lamented after the fact. When outside opinion condemned Alabama's behavior, some advocates for anti-lynching attempted to pass laws - but it many in the public still fought against losing their state rights and appearing collectively incapable.

At the very least, *The Montgomery Advertiser* acknowledged this hypocrisy in the 1933 editorial and

later would even concede their own "shameful place in the history of these dastardly, murderous deeds." The board of directors noted, "[This is] our shame, the sins of our past laid bare for all to see."⁵⁰ While the press certainly holds enough influence to push a particular agenda, and did not do enough in the case of preventing lynching, the problem lies at the core of humanity. Ida B. Wells states, "This evil cannot be cured or remedied by silence to its existence."⁵¹ Additionally, lifetime Southern resident, Thelma Dangerfield insightfully elaborates, "You can move as many statues, as many flags as you want...but until the hate goes - until you clean the heart out, it's not going anywhere."⁵²

To heed this advice and truly understand the motivation behind lynchings, historians must examine the public sentiment and the manner in which they allowed them to occur; by their expressed opinion and physical actions. In the few occurrences discussed in this paper, we see this cycle repeat. Alabamians' distrust in the system provided the perfect excuse to justify lynchings. This scholarship reveals the ugly truth that the public was motivated by hate, reactive to shame, and willing to exchange their moral code for reputation alone. Over 300 African-American men and women became victims of lynching in Alabama between 1877 and 1981, as well as over 4,000 nationwide. Today, the public's manner of racial violence has shifted to something even more sophisticated. The unequal and appalling number of incarcerated African-Americans, unchecked white supremacist rallies and racist apologists in high government positions, make it more relevant than ever to study these arguments - because the underlying motivation is exactly the same.

- 1 Hollars, B.J. *Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011, pg. 27.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Clark was shot three times and hid under the bodies of his friends. Believing he was dead, the mob left, and Clark survived only to be picked up again by police. The same prosecutor who tried the Scottsboro case, Thomas Knight prosecuted the case, however Clark was acquitted of all charges. Hollars, B.J. *Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011, 27.
- 4 "Blood on the Great Seal of Alabama," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, Monday Aug 14, 1933, 4.
- 5 "Blood on the Great Seal of Alabama," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, Monday Aug 14, 1933, 4
- 6 Hollars, B.J. *Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011, 56.
- 7 "Blood on the Great Seal of Alabama," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, Monday Aug 14, 1933, 4.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 "The Birmingham Lynching," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, November 28, 1883, 2.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Arthur F. Raper. *The Tragedy of Lynching*. (1933). Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press. Print.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Dissertation "Tuscaloosa, Alabama 1933: A Summer of Violence." Kimberly Sharpe, Northeastern University School of Law. p. 31.
- 16 Arthur F. Raper. *The Tragedy of Lynching*. (1933). Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press. Print. Ibid.
- 17 Ida B. Wells-Barnett. *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*. (1895), EBook #14977 (www.gutenberg.net).
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 *The Baltimore Sun* via *The Montgomery Advertiser*, August 26, 1894, 13.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 "The Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, January 4, 1922, 4.
- 22 Jonathan Holloway. *An Outrage: The History and Legacy of Lynching in the South*, Directed by Hannah Ayers and Lance Warren. Field Studio, 2017, 34 min. <https://uab.kanopy.com/video/outrage-O>.
- 23 Christopher Waldrep. "War of Words: The Controversy over the Definition of Lynching, 1899-1940." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (February 2000), pp. 75-100.
- 24 Frank W. Boykin, M.C., First District, Alabama. "The Alabama Journal," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, February 27, 1949, 13.
- 25 Congressman Leonidas Dyer of Missouri first introduced his Anti-Lynching Bill--known as the Dyer Bill--into Congress in 1918. The NAACP supported the passage of this bill from 1919 onward; they had not done so initially, arguing that the bill was unconstitutional based on the recommendations of Moorfield Storey, a lawyer and the first president of the NAACP. Storey revised his position in 1918 and from 1919 onward the NAACP supported Dyer's anti-lynching legislation. The Dyer Bill was passed by the House of Representatives on the 26th of January 1922 and was given a favorable report by the Senate Committee assigned to report on it in July 1922, but its passage was halted by a filibuster in the Senate. Efforts to pass similar legislation were not taken up again until the 1930s with the Costigan-Wagner Bill. The Dyer Bill influenced the text of anti-lynching legislation promoted by the NAACP into the 1950s, including the Costigan-Wagner Bill. <https://web.archive.org/web/20150516144410/http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history-anti-lynching-bill>.
- 26 "Hot Fight is Expected in House on Anti-Lynching Measure Today," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, December 19, 1921, 1.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 In a letter dated July 28, 1919, Rev. J.G. Robinson wrote to President Wilson, appealing for support on the Dyer Bill, and to put Negroes on

juries where he felt most injustices were committed against the black race. "Writes to Wilson for Anti-Lynching Laws," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, July 28, 1919, 1.

29 "Hot Fight is Expected in House on Anti-Lynching Measure Today," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, December 19, 1921, 1.

30 Ibid.

31 "Anti-Lynching Bill Provisions Listed," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, November 16, 1937, 1.

32 Ibid.

33 "A Common Problem," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, January 19, 1938, 4.

34 Norman Evans of Columbus, GA: Letter to the Editor of *The Montgomery Advertiser*, June 11, 1968, 4.

35 Ibid.

36 "Hot Fight is Expected in House on Anti-Lynching Measure Today," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, December 19, 1921, 1.

37 The U.S. Senate passed the bill titled "The Justice for Victims of Lynching Act of 2018" in December of the same year, but the House did not act in time to send the measure to President Donald Trump's desk. Sponsors of the bill have tallied nearly 200 past failed attempts to approve anti-lynching legislation over the past several decades. "Senate Brings Back Anti-Lynching Bill, Sending It to House" *U.S. News & World Report*, 14 February 2019.

38 Ida B. Wells-Barnett. *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*. (1895), EBook #14977 (www.gutenberg.net).

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 For example, in 1933 at the end of June, an African-American woman named Elizabeth Lawrence was shot to death, and her house burned in response to her scolding white children for throwing rocks at her. This event was not published until the International Labor Defense heard the story from Elizabeth's son, Alexander, who had fled the state to escape the same mob.

42 Yohuru Williams. *An Outrage: The History and*

Legacy of Lynching in the South, Directed by Hannah Ayers and Lance Warren. Field Studio, 2017, 34 min. <https://uab.kanopy.com/video/outrage-O>.

43 Zack Carter. "Questions remain on Jeff Sessions' role in prosecuting Michael Donald's Klan lynching in Mobile in the 1980s." *Greene County Democrat*. Blog. (January 26, 2017). <https://greenecodemocrat.com/tag/mobile-d-a-chris-galanos/>, accessed December 8, 2018.

44 Ibid.

45 Zack Carter. "Questions remain on Jeff Sessions' role in prosecuting Michael Donald's Klan lynching in Mobile in the 1980s." *Greene County Democrat*. Blog. (January 26, 2017). <https://greenecodemocrat.com/tag/mobile-d-a-chris-galanos/>, accessed December 8, 2018.

46 *The Klan is legally referred to as the United Klans of America (UKA)*. Unfortunately, Donald's mother received only \$50k after the sale of the land she acquired in the settlement. Hollars, B.J. *Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011, 56.

47 Chris Galanos. *The Lynching That Brought Down the Klan in Alabama*. Directed by Lily Hoyle. Video. Alabama Humanities Foundation, 2017. Vimeo. Web, <https://vimeo.com/274005061> (accessed October 2018).

48 "Mobile police say racial motive unlikely in slaying," *The Montgomery Advertiser*, March 27, 1981, 13.

49 Yohuru Williams. *An Outrage: The History and Legacy of Lynching in the South*, Directed by Hannah Ayers and Lance Warren. Field Studio, 2017, 34 min. <https://uab.kanopy.com/video/outrage-O>.

50 "Our Shame." *The Montgomery Advertiser*, April 26, 2018.

51 Ida B. Wells-Barnett. *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*. (1895), EBook #14977 (www.gutenberg.net).

52 Thelma Dangerfield. *An Outrage: The History and Legacy of Lynching in the South*, Directed by Hannah Ayers and Lance Warren. Field Studio, 2017, 34 min. <https://uab.kanopy.com/video/outrage-O>.

AVONDALE: A NEIGHBORHOOD IN TRANSITION

by Laura King



Hell's Half Acre

East of Birmingham proper, Avondale sits as a model of a city in perpetual transition. From its early days as an industrial hub with cotton mills, to a seedy period plagued with crime and “hippies” and eventually, the current state of revitalization and growth flourishing around Avondale Park, the prominently located focal point of the neighborhood. These distinct periods did not occur by chance. In the latter case, the eventual success provoked by dedicated citizens and officials with the determination of ridding the park of “undesirables” and returning Avondale Park to its former glory came only from resilience and determination. Avondale followed the trends of the rest of the country, quickly falling into poverty during the Great Depression and facing population declines with the suburbanization movement beginning around the late 1940s. As early as the 1960s, a unique history of industry, hippies, and even a beloved elephant named Miss Fancy instilled a sense of pride in the community for the few taking notice. A Birmingham News writer alludes to this growing history and comments on the lack of citizen awareness Avondale writing, “People

sure can live with and around a lot of interesting things and places and know little or nothing about them.”¹ Decades later, this history remains even more ingrained in the neighborhood. Revitalization and the various factors pushing Avondale into each new phase relied on this history and its uniqueness from the Greater Birmingham area and these stories show through the many buildings and landmarks adapting since the early years of Avondale.

King’s Spring, the original name of the land where Avondale currently sits, received its name from the original owner and resident Peyton Griffin King.² The small village consisted of almost nothing aside from the King home and the natural springs that drew travelers, yet it attracted the attention of Birmingham developers who envisioned the area as an industrial community, complimenting Birmingham’s growing iron industry during the 1860s. The land changed ownership repeatedly and quickly, moving from industrialists James Sloss and Henry DeBardeleben to the Eureka Land Company, and eventually to the newly formed Avondale Land Company.³ The city’s founders, including William Morris, chose the name Avondale based on a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio which they believed mirrored the landscape and purpose of the newly acquired King’s Spring. Careful consideration went into the details of forming the new city, including analyzing locations. Avondale Land Company chose this location based on very specific benefits King’s Spring already offered the developing industrial city. Most notably, the Alabama Great Southern Railroad passing through the area provided an easily accessible route for transporting raw and finished good; with an abundance of raw materials readily available within the Jones Valley region in which Birmingham sits, the location naturally led to the early development of Avondale. The Avondale Land Company officially acquired the newly-named Avondale in 1887.⁴

Avondale attracted industry from the very beginning and in turn, the growing population converging towards the available work created a hub of industrial activity. Early businesses included various lumber yards, a stove foundry, and the more prominent cotton mills such as the Smith Gin Company, which later became part of the Continental Gin Company, and the Avondale Cotton Mills.⁵ Avondale Mills began operating in 1897 after a Pennsylvania textile company eyed the new city as the perfect location for their business expansion. After deciding that local cotton farmer Braxton Bragg Comer (B.B. Comer) would head the new mill, cooperation among the Pennsylvania company, shareholders, and the political and economic leaders of Birmingham allowed for the combined financial investments needed for developing Avondale Mills.⁶ During this period, mill building became popular throughout the southern part of the United States, but success was rare as money for construction of these mills remained limited.⁷ Fortunately for its developers, Avondale became one of the few that reached success. After the opening of the mill, the city of Avondale sprung up around the new industry essentially as a company town with B.B. Comer at the helm. Hundreds of impoverished Alabamians, both blacks and whites, flocked towards the new job opportunities provided at the mill. Avondale Mills continued its growth, receiving praise for employing and offering much more lucrative wages than the workers had previously made in such occupations as tenant farming, but the labor practices of the mill earned it criticism. One major critique came from the mill's use of child labor, some younger than even ten years old. At times, Comer seemed to defend this practice and denounced regulations stipulating an end for this inhumane labor practice. While the small hands and flexibility of children proved useful in the factories, the practice caused outcry, but excuses for allowing this labor, such as parents giving their permission, became a defense.

B.B. Comer held uncompromising and authoritarian control over the mill. Lynn McWhorter, Professor at Auburn University, writes, “[Comer] controlled their

working conditions at the mill, and by providing housing, recreation, and places of worship, he controlled some of their private lives.”⁸ However, critics of Comer argue that the housing provided by Avondale Mills stood out as among the worst in Birmingham. They note that “...sewers were non-existent, the streets unpaved... The mill village was also adjoined by a prostitution alley called ‘Hell’s Half Acre.’”⁹ Even with some recreational amenities and even a school, B.B. Comer remained criticized for his labor practices, but others acknowledged he gave them opportunities they otherwise never would have had. One such statement, quoted in the writing of Donald Comer, says:

From the beginning of his cotton mill industry B.B. Comer depended largely for his help upon men brought in from the rural regions of Alabama. Those who had had a hard struggle on many a little farm welcomed the opportunity presented by a textile mill to have regular employment, with regular cash paydays and better food and living comforts than they had ever had before. One of Comer’s constant ambitions for his employees was to help them buy a home and preferably a farm home. To that end the textile plants which he built were located in rural regions where it was possible for men to work at the mill and at the same time live on the farm all or part of the time.¹⁰

Reformations coming from the Progressive Movement and other labor reformers, and the passing of leadership of Avondale Mills to Donald Comer in 1907 eventually produced positive changes for employees of the mill.¹¹

From the beginning, Avondale Mills proved a profitable industry and Donald Comer, son of B.B. Comer, carried on this success by expanding into Sylacauga, Alabama a few years later and by improving the overall morale of the mill’s employees. Donald Comer saw the value in educating those living in the mill town, so school improvements and the inclusion of adult classes enriched the community.¹²

Within the Avondale Mills community, the employees had more provided for them than in the typical mill town, but they still faced the control that rested under the surface in the form of indebtedness. By providing the workers with living necessities, and a few extra amenities, which proved a significant change from their struggles as poor farmers, the workers stayed complacent in their work. The mill experienced further growth and Donald Comer, reflecting on these early years in 1947 writes, “As the years went on Avondale expanded, its capital increased, its profits were re-invested. The modest beginning in the Birmingham plant was the nucleus of the Avondale Mills of today, employing more than 7,000 people... consuming annually nearly 20% of the entire State of Alabama... Under the pattern set by my father at Avondale, as we grew, we learned.”¹³ In 1975, he claimed Avondale Mills enjoyed status as the top producer for various yards and fabrics with offices and mills throughout many states, but the height of the mills took place in the late 1940s when an estimated 7,000 people worked for the mill.¹⁴

The Great Depression took a major toll on Birmingham with some of the city’s largest employers such as Tennessee Coal & Iron reducing wages by half or even more. This trend fit that of most of the industrial cities of the South, where the Depression hit the hardest because of a lack of a diverse economic system that crumbled under its dependence on the city’s major industries.¹⁵ A few decades earlier, in 1907, Birmingham became the largest city in Alabama after beginning the annexation process of many of the surrounding neighborhoods. The city successfully acquired Avondale in 1910, despite disapproval from many residents who desired localized autonomy.¹⁶ During the Depression, these neighborhoods relied on the relief and support of Birmingham, but for many, that relief did not come. Throughout Birmingham, cuts for city services and necessities like sanitation by the local government reached new highs by 1935, favoring keeping the city out of the ‘red-zone’ over providing citizen relief.¹⁷ Federal relief measures faced resistance from the city’s economic elite according

to a representative of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration who stated, “The old private agency attitudes and methods still prevail on the whole in the direction of the program, and I sometimes question how we will ever be able to make any real progress in Birmingham.”¹⁸ With this reluctance in accepting federal aid, Birmingham continued suffering, dragging its citizens further into poverty.

“FOR AVONDALE COTTON MILLS, THE GREAT DEPRESSION LEFT A LASTING IMPACT ON THE COMPANY, RESULTING IN LAYOFFS, STRIKES, AND FEDERAL INTERVENTION. THE EARLY IMPACTS OF THE DEPRESSION CAUSED DECREASES IN PRODUCTION, WAGES, AND LABOR HOURS AS WELL AS MANAGEMENT RESORTING TOWARDS ENTIRE PLANT SHUTDOWNS AS THE BUSINESS ELITE ATTEMPTED COPING WITH THE PLUMMETING ECONOMY.”

For Avondale Cotton Mills, the Great Depression left a lasting impact on the company, resulting in layoffs, strikes, and federal intervention. The early impacts of the Depression caused decreases in production, wages, and labor hours as well as management resorting towards entire plant shutdowns as the

business elite attempted coping with the plummeting economy. This provoked a desperate and increasingly frustrated workforce looking for any way to support their families. Naturally, labor unions found a motivated and malleable working-class population intrigued by the promise of radical change and the union's support of their rights as laborers. For Avondale Mills, unions remained prohibited. Donald Comer took an unyielding anti-union stance during the Depression, reminding his workers of all Avondale Mills offered them, urging that because of this, unions would not be needed.¹⁹ Those accused by the foreman of being associated with unions faced unemployment, but these deterrents did not put an end to the threat of unions or strikes. Throughout Alabama, over half of the nearly 40,000 textile workers staged protests and walkouts. At Avondale Mills, the United Textile Workers of America called for a walkout in July 1934 to protest the diminishing wages and for better working conditions. In response to this strike, Donald Comer ordered an immediate shutdown. Comer did not reopen the mill until orders that all laborers should resume work came from President Franklin D. Roosevelt.²⁰

After the early 1950s, the ownership of Avondale Cotton Mills changed multiple times, leaving the Comer family, and becoming reincorporated and merging with various other textile companies. In 1971, the original Avondale Mills closed, leaving only the various expansion branches operating.²¹ The announcement of the closing came on October 17th, with Birmingham News stating with expressive prose, "Like economic cavalry in the distance, rescue for some will come too late; and so, after 74 years, death spreads slowly and sadly through the bones of an old-line Birmingham industry... One by one, somebody throws a switch and the "smack" of lighting-like shuttles fall silent and the chugging cadence of the great banks of looms drops off to a mere whisper of its former self."²² The textile market changed, leaving the once profitable company fighting against the import industry at a reported annual loss of a million dollars by the current plant manager, Wayne Spraggins.

The final days of the mill operated as a near ghost town, with only a fraction of the looms operating and other machines already transported to other mills or sold. Within two weeks of the news, Avondale Mills closed its doors, leaving hundreds unable to transfer to another branch out of work and a staple of the community lost.²³



Avondale Park, Birmingham, Alabama

Avondale Cotton Mill's local branch closed decades before branches in the rest of country, which officially ceased operation in 2006 after a series of accidents and injuries. The local closure heavily impacted Avondale, but the transition from an industrial town into a poverty ridden community without an economic or industrial center resulted from a culmination of factors. Before the closure, the 1950s proved a difficult time for towns and industrial centers such as Avondale. As urban, industrial spaces faced issues of crumbling infrastructure, pollution, and traffic congestion, the Truman Administration pushed for expanding the interstate highways throughout the country.²⁴ The draw towards the suburbs, away from crime and poverty, and into these new communities became a national trend known as suburbanization.²⁵ Birmingham and its neighborhoods experienced this trend as the population shifted into these developing suburbs "over the mountain," a phrase meaning on the other side of Red Mountain. The general

trend of these industrial cities followed a pattern of population peak in the 1950s, followed by a reaction of city populations to suburbanization and post-war economic prosperity, and then the decline of inner-city populations. With the tax base moving out from the inner cities and their surrounding neighborhoods, these urban spaces and the remaining industrial centers continued crumbling.²⁶ Congruently, a migration of the black population into these vacating cities occurred, into what urban historians Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl call “transitional neighborhoods,” altering the socioeconomics of the cities.²⁷ Even before the closing of Avondale Mills, city planners sectioned areas of the neighborhood into low income housing projects for blacks and created a public elementary and high school for that community.²⁸ Following the building of this community, coupled with the neighborhood-wide loss of jobs with the closing of the mills, Avondale continued its downward projection.

During the negotiations for the 1887 purchase of the Avondale land by the Avondale Land Company, Peyton Griffin King included the land that came to be Avondale Park, in an agreement with the Avondale Land Company that this area would be used solely for a public park and would remain undeveloped industrially or residentially. The park quickly became the center of Avondale, attracting people from Birmingham and surrounding cities for family gatherings and other recreational activities.²⁹ The annexation of Avondale by Birmingham did not impact the park other than making it apart of the larger park system, and earning it the distinction of “the most popular and best patronized of all the city parks.”³⁰ For many, the natural features drew them into the area and various articles and photographs of the early years of the park show how its popularity soared. Positive reviews of the park described the open space as a beautiful 37-acre tract of land with springs, grassy meadows, trees, and a pond full of wild fowl. Outside of these features, there stood tennis courts and baseball fields as well as the Avondale Zoo.³¹

Around 1913, the idea of a zoo in Avondale Park surfaced, but the story of how this zoo developed remains morphed by myth and legend. One story involves a traveling zoo and its owner who put on a few shows in downtown Birmingham while stranded, attracting locals to the beloved elephant, Miss Fancy.³² This elephant piqued the interest of the Birmingham Advertising Club, who made an offer for Miss Fancy and when the owner accepted, the zoo became reality.³³ Another more detailed and verifiable account appeared in the Birmingham Post-Herald in 1968. This story begins in 1913 with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus coming to Birmingham for a one day show. When a Birmingham official discovered the traveling circus would sell one of their elephants if they received an acceptable offer, the city, including newspapers and school children, raised a \$2,000 offer for the desired circus elephant. The elephant they purchased, Miss Fancy, quickly became a fixture within the Avondale community, stirring up her own myths such as wandering the neighborhood and loving booze.³⁴ Other animals such as bears, peacocks, and monkeys later joined Miss Fancy, but none reached the same acclaim that she did.³⁵ The zoo remained popular, but when the Great Depression hit in 1929, the small zoo lost the necessary funds for taking care of the animals, and eventually closed. Like the zoo, Avondale as a whole faced huge losses during the Depression era and did not recover for many decades.

In the 1970s, Avondale found itself in a poor condition of dilapidation with a reputation for crime and drugs. Within Avondale, the park became a center for what the neighborhood referred to as the “hippie element” or “undesirables.” Fear plagued the city and the stories of crimes happening in the park produced increased apprehension towards visiting the park. Newspapers played into these stories, printing descriptions of the hippies that stated, “They were dressed as “hippies” “freaks” – the uniform of scores of young people who are regular park visitors.”³⁶ The reporter of this story, Charles Nix, described his fear of walking through the park and talking with these hippies with perceived hostility towards him as an

outsider with a camera around his neck. Nix talked with many of the hippies in the park, learning the truth of drugs and sex in the park, but that the violence was not coming from this group. Despite this, residents and business owners remained uneasy about the gatherings, grouping the hippies and juveniles in with the groups dealing with hard drugs and violence. Narcotics Agents took walks, both as uniformed officers and in plain clothes, through the park at the urging of the neighborhood demanding more police presence. The success of these walks remains unknown, as photographs printed within the Nix story of officers patrolling in plain clothes shows how easily these clean-cut officers stood out among the crowd of long-haired youth. The officers also acknowledged they could not just arrest everyone in the park.³⁷

**“IF YOU DIDN’T HAVE A GUN
OR KNIFE IN YOUR POCKET
WHEN YOU GOT TO THE DOOR,
THEY WOULD HAND YOU ONE
BEFORE YOU WENT INSIDE.”**

Residents of Avondale detested these groups and began calling for changes such as the introduction of a curfew, increased park security, and installing more lights.³⁸ The Birmingham News reported that, “Residents say many of those gathering in the park are “undesirables” and that last year some 127 convictions resulted from arrest on drug use and other violations.”³⁹ They also began to question who the park was for, despite it being a public park, and called for a complete removal of the “hippie element.” Park Director Frank Wagner publicly responded to these demands saying, “Anyone who is of the opinion that we can go into this park and clear out the ‘undesirables’ is simply not being realistic, considering this is a public park... and the courts striking down

certain laws pertaining to vagrancy and loitering.”⁴⁰ Wagner believed that law-abiding citizens also accounted for those seen in the park, discounting that the problem was as severe as residents made it seem. Still, some requests gained support, such as that of a 10:30 pm curfew.⁴¹ This curfew did not curb concerns, however, and issues of crime and “seedy behavior” continued spreading throughout Avondale.

For residents and business owners, the bygone era of Avondale with the most popular and beautiful park in the city was a bittersweet memory of the past. Within articles and discussions regarding the deteriorating condition of the park, the nostalgia for this former community treasure shines through. Almost no businesses remained in the area, aside from a few bars, convenience stores, and gas stations. Some of these early bars included The Long Branch Saloon, where Avondale Brewing Company presently is located, and Avondale Bar, previously residing in the Fancy’s on Fifth building.⁴² One past owner of Avondale Bar, Mike Curl, remembers Avondale during the 1970s, from the violence and rough atmosphere to the homeless people sleeping wherever they could find a place. The bar was not much more than a gathering place for locals, offering little more than a single pool table, pinball, and a limited selection of beers. Most of the customers consisted of men working at the local car lots and other blue collar jobs. Avondale Bar, he said, barely broke even, never really making a profit because of crime happening at the bar itself as well as carrying the stigma of the neighborhood. Every Sunday the bar would be broken into, Curl remembers, and all the money from the pinball machine would be taken as well as the seemingly weekly expense of replacing the door.⁴³ The Long Branch Saloon faced its own crime. Curl said that, “If you didn’t have a gun or knife in your pocket when you got to the door, they would hand you one before you went inside.”⁴⁴ For Curl, it became too much and he sold Avondale Bar a few years after taking ownership. With crime at this level and the reputation that followed it, years of disinterest, or open disdain, in Avondale from both the city and its residents further diminished the

neighborhood.

The revitalization movement in Avondale initially met resistance from those who did not believe it could ever reach success. Local newspapers reported on the deterioration of the structures within the park, showing how the area lacked any budget for upkeep and necessary maintenance. Structures such as the Avondale Villa, originally built in 1931, on the backside of the park faced possible demolition, but residents fought back against this possibility. In a 1978 article, photographs of the villa showed highly damaged roofs, destroyed restrooms, and crumbling walkways. Vandals from the preceding decades made use of the walls for graffiti and overall destruction. Walter Garrett, the City Recreation Superintendent, reported that, “The renovations hinge on whether or not we’re able to get the funds to do the work,” and with an estimated \$200,000 needed, this proved to be no easy task.⁴⁵ Other proposed updates and renovations in the park included the installation of lights throughout the baseball fields and improvements for the existing tennis courts.⁴⁶ A grassroots effort focused on park revitalization began the arduous task of gaining support of residents and city officials. The primary goals early on were the removal of the crime and drugs from the park, implementing security measures such as lighting, and renovating the existing structures including the amphitheater and villa. These improvements could not be financed by the neighborhood itself, so the support and backing of the city became imperative.

The Friends of Avondale Park, founded in 1989 by Martha Jane Patton, led this grassroots effort. In an interview with Patton, she recalls proposing a spring day event in the park before she knew of its reputation. After announcing her idea for the event’s location, she faced incredulous silence from those in the meeting. She then learned of the dangerous reputation, but believed that, “No one wanted to actually admit that there were serious problems in Avondale Park, yet people continued to avoid the park.”⁴⁷ Patton became determined to make the park

safe and began gathering information on the park, primarily through residents and her own observations. In the park, she saw the litter, broken fences, and putrid pond water. Through conversations with residents and colleagues about her observations, the idea of organizing The Friends of Avondale Park (FOAP) slowly evolved. After further planning and a cultivation of the support of the community, FOAP formed under the Advisory Board of Avondale with Patton serving as the first president of the new organization. Other charter members included Jenny Skillman and Diana Marbury Sharp. Together, these three women decided on their primary goals for forming The Friends of Avondale Park, including: “[One,] full utilization of the park, [two,] restoration of the park, and [three,] maintenance of the park.”⁴⁸ After the official chartering, the real work began with surveying residents throughout specific Birmingham neighborhoods to gauge the reputation of the park in order to understand why people avoided the park as well as what they would use the park for if they could.⁴⁹

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INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY."**

Also, during these early stages, other residents joined the efforts, responding to flyers advertising FOAP and believing in the overall mission of restoring the park. The work involved applying for grants, fundraising, litter cleanup, and neighborhood canvassing among other bureaucratic tasks to gain

city support.⁵⁰ The work paid off, however, and in 2006 Avondale Villa began its renovation process and other projects moved closer towards reality throughout the park. The architect responsible for the renovations, Jack Blackwood, discussed the progress with news reporters who wrote, “Blackwood added he felt the Avondale and nearby Forest Park are coming back. Young couples are moving into some of these old houses and renovating them, and I think it will be a real nice part of the city.”⁵¹ Regardless of these early successes, years of work remained, but FOAP remained successful in lobbying for support and providing the catalyst for Avondale’s return.

As Avondale Park revitalized, the rest of the neighborhood slowly began following behind. Early businesses included the Bottletree Café that operated from 2006 until 2015, but along the primary area of the park, Munchies Convenience Store remained the notable constant, operating for more than 40 years. In 2009, Michael Dykes took a chance on Avondale’s viability and opened Parkside Café, a retro themed bar in the former Avondale Marble Works building from 1902.⁵² Dykes was enticed by the neighborhood as well as the building itself and decided to risk business ownership within the once seedy area. Other businesses such as an antique store and later Parkside Home & Garden occupied the building before the new bar, but did not last long. Part-owner Robert Bagwell worked at Avondale’s Bottletree Café when Parkside Café opened and joined Dykes soon after. Bagwell recalls opening the bar as being a risky decision because no one knew if Avondale would really make it as a profitable neighborhood.⁵³ A few months later, Bagwell joined Dykes at Parkside and watched as Avondale grew around them, eventually believing in the changes slowly happening in Avondale and buying part-ownership into Parkside Café. Regular bar patrons in its early days included longtime Avondale residents, including some of the lost hippies of the 1970s who recall the days of the park being a party.⁵⁴ The Avondale Brewing Company opened a few years after Parkside Café, bringing more business to the area, but the neighborhood still lacked the desired

draw from downtown Birmingham in an effort towards attracting more than local business.

After 2010, Avondale began rapidly developing as restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues opened throughout 41st Street South and along Avondale Park. Bob Vines, a commercial real estate broker working throughout Avondale believes that much of this change came over his discovery of crack-cocaine distribution shop disguised as a carwash near present day Avondale Common House.⁵⁵ Vines states that:

When [Vines] came down here, a bank hired [him] to sell a wand carwash. Not a drive-thru carwash. Where you drive in a spray your car down. And what [he] realized, it was really a crack cocaine distribution place. So shutting down this operation where crack deals went down out of the back of a car became priority number one... [He] brokered real estate deals on all of them: Fancy’s, Melt, Rowe’s, Wasabi Juan, Wooden Goat, Satellite...and it just all fell into place.⁵⁶

Vines also notes that aside from his work in clearing out a drug distribution shop within Avondale, the timing also played a major role in bringing businesses to Avondale. His discovery of the crack front happened around 2008 or 2009, as the economy began recovering from the previous recession. Vines noticed that people again had money and started operating businesses while banks started lending more easily again. This environment allowed Vines to broker many of the deals for new businesses Avondale’s commercial area.⁵⁷ After the demolition of the “car wash,” development came quickly for Avondale. While Vines may be correct in his observations and the impact of his work, other factors such as the dedication of these early business owners and their initial ventures into food trucks also made a major impact.

In 2012, the MELT food truck, a gourmet grilled cheese purveyor, hit the streets of Birmingham, operating for hire at festivals and sporting events throughout Birmingham. The truck became a near

instant success in Birmingham, so a physical, permanent location proved the logical next step. The owners, Paget Pizitz and Harriet Reis, chose an old car garage just off of the Avondale Park as the location of their store in 2014. Throughout Birmingham, food trucks paved the way for multiple store locations and an ever-growing number of registered food trucks. Some trucks have gained such a strong following that they have expanded their business as brick-and-mortar locations. In that way, MELT's success is not unique, but telling of the overall reception Birmingham had towards new dining locations. *Weld: Birmingham's Newspaper* covers the growth of local food trucks writing, "One of those, Eugene's Hot Chicken, opened its store location in the Uptown district..."⁵⁹ The food truck takeover did not stop with permanent restaurants opening. Annual food truck rallies located at the Avondale Brewing Company began in 2016 and illustrates the growth and reputation for food trucks within the Avondale community.⁶⁰ Within just a few short years, the restaurant and entertainment scene in Avondale exploded: 2015 Saturn music venue opened with Satellite coffee and bar next door; 2016 Paget Pizitz and Harriet Reis opened Fancy's on Fifth, a restaurant paying tribute to the famed Miss Fancy; the same year, Hot Diggity Dogs opened in the same building as Fancy's on Fifth. As more businesses opened, the draw to Avondale continually increased whether by the increasingly diverse set of merchants or, also likely, the changing public perception of Avondale from its former days of crime.

Through years of revitalization and dedication by residents and community leaders in Avondale, much of the neighborhood's former prestige returned, and in some ways, even better than before. The neighborhood, built on a foundation of industrialization, faced decades of challenges and misdirection as it attempted to redefine itself within the post-industrial society. Constants such as Avondale Park and some existing buildings provided the skeleton for rebuilding the once popular neighborhood, but not before an extensive

redevelopment of the area's reputation and commercial district took place. This work centered on Avondale Park and bringing back the beauty of the area and removing the crime and "hippies" plaguing the neighborhood. As this reputation slowly changed and visible progress led by The Friends of Avondale Park brought back interest by residents as well as city officials, the commercial district started thriving with bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

While this new transition within Avondale contrasts with the early blue collar aims of the neighborhood, the history of early Avondale shows through these businesses naming themselves after former neighborhood mainstays, such as Miss Fancy appearing as Avondale Brewing Company's logo and the namesake of one of their signature brews.⁶¹ Other projects include the renovating of historic buildings, such as the former Continental Gin Company location becoming the Cahaba Brewery and the old Avondale Marble Works building housing Parkside Café built upon this history of the neighborhood. While the changes overall are viewed as positive for the neighborhood, longtime residents and business owners see the negative side of this transition. They question who these changes are really for when former community bars, such as Parkside Café, become filled with who Robert Bagwell identifies as "those kids from over the mountain" who "are not the intended clientele."⁶² Others, however, disagree with the critique, arguing that there is no noticeable disruption and even if a disruption existed, it may be a positive thing. One local business owner, Bruce Lanier argues that:

The crowds that the brewery brings in, whether it's an Over the Mountain crowd or not, are comfortable in a place where they would have never, ever, ever even slowed down for a red light before...And that's good. There's no way to characterize that except as good. If it hasn't displaced existing businesses to parts of town where they can find cheaper rent, and if it's ultimately drawing people in there to a place for locals

– both North and South Avondale – to go to, that’s good. Now if it gets to a point where somebody wants to come in and buy up all that multi-family between the park and 3rd Avenue, and raze it and turn it into a SoHo? That’s [when you] need to start worrying.⁶³

Even without a consensus of the real impact of this revitalization, the movement carries on with even more businesses moving into the area, including a few small

retail stores with a scheduled opening around 2019.⁶⁴ As Avondale continues growing and changing over time, its unique history remains part of this story of transition as local businesses continue incorporating relics of Avondale’s past, setting the neighborhood apart from the rest of Birmingham.

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GRAVES BLOCK: WILLIAM GRAVES AND THE PAVING BRICKS OF THE SOUTH

by Steve Filoromo

Brick by brick, laid continuously after one another, southern cities sought to improve their living conditions as they grew, advancing and improving the transportation connections that allow for individual neighborhoods and industrial centers to come together. In response to these advancements, industrial leaders found themselves in a position to grow their fortunes by offering supplies to aid this growing demand. These needed supplies included not just coal and other minerals, but also bricks for roads and buildings. Birmingham experienced rapid growth as the turn of the 20th century approached. In turn, the demand increased for bricks in response to population and city growth. A notorious capitalist, whose involvement would leave a legacy of roads and buildings, found himself with a grand opportunity. William H. Graves invested in the city's new opportunities as Birmingham industries grew quickly. Graves, a respected member of the Alabama State Bar, saw Birmingham's potential and invested in real estate initially. However, with his interests and skill as a businessman, he led the development of a network of paved streets throughout the South. By examining Graves's life, paving company, and products, such as bricks inscribed with "GRAVES B'HAM ALA" still found today, his mark and impact on the South can be explored. Additionally, these "Graves bricks" create a physical trail that traces his role in paving a "New South".

Throughout the neighborhoods and city streets William Graves and his company worked, leftover bricks found on abandoned or neglected lots point to the legacy of one of Birmingham's most illustrious characters. William Graves lived an interesting life; however, few records of his life exist prior to his time in Birmingham. Born in 1833, William Graves spent his early years in Knoxville, Tennessee until his parents passed. As a young adult in Knoxville, he completed

his law school education, but found himself faced with an entirely different duty.¹ Confronted with the Civil War on the horizon, Graves embarked on the battlefield in 1861 rather than going into a law practice. Despite this hiatus from his profession, his commitment to the law and clear interest in ethics manifested once again after the end of the Civil War.

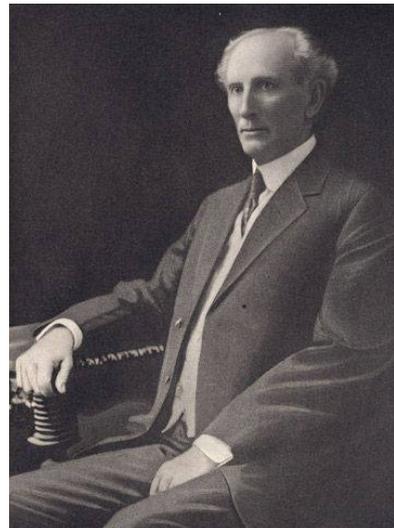
Following the war, Graves made his way towards Montgomery, Alabama to work as a lawyer, beginning his civilian life once again. While in the area, he met various railroad officials and through these professional connections, Graves managed to cultivate a promising career in law.² He eventually married Florida Whiting in October 1868, the daughter of an industrial leader and started his family.³ In Montgomery, Graves became one of the fascinated and eager onlookers of the growing industrial hub of Birmingham only a short distance north. Birmingham in its infancy during the 1870s drew industrial entrepreneurs and investors alike who saw its immense potential. Graves, who found financial success in his law career, became one of those investors. With the promise of industrial demand stirring business, Graves could not pass on the opportunity and eventually moved to the growing city in 1890.⁴

Despite minimal records connecting the "William H. Graves," the prominent lawyer and Civil War veteran, to the "William H. Graves" that built the shale brick empire, enough exists to track his migration to Birmingham.⁵ Because of the turbulent changes brought on as the industrial growth fed into Alabama, Graves saw an opportunity to invest in real estate.⁶ By the time he arrived in Birmingham, the young, industrial center festered, building towards an industrial boom that set in motion exponential economic growth. Graves's interest in the promise of this opportunity, coupled with his business prowess, allowed for the establishment of his own

brick company. This company aimed to supply and fund Graves's building projects while also filling the city's need. One project, still standing today in downtown Birmingham on 3rd Avenue North, is the "Graves Building," one of the last standing structures bestowing his name. However, 1900 saw the establishment of the Graves Shale Brick Company, a construction bricks producer.⁷ The company established itself five miles north of the city – right next to a switch in the track for the Southern Railroad and Louisville & Nashville Railroad, popularly known as the L & N Railroad. When comparing Sanborn Fire Insurance Map records of the period to modern satellite images, the company's former location becomes noticeably overtaken by modern developments.⁸ Originally, however, this strategic location allowed for the large-scale transport of materials without the additional transportation to the rail site, further allowing reduced costs and increased profits.⁹

It would be impossible to reconstruct every activity of Graves and his company; however, industry news journals serve as an unofficial record of some of the more impactful years of the company. In 1902, a report from the *Brick and Clay Record* describes the facilities in great detail, showing all aspects of the furnaces, presses, mines, and kilns that Graves and his son-in-law had invested in. Graves acquired 340 acres containing 100 acres of a shale deposit where they could mine for blue and brown shale.¹⁰ These materials went through a variety of processes in specialized equipment such as dry pans, automatic cutting tables, and several large kilns for material processing. The property included state of the art equipment from Freese & Company and American Clayworking, with several large permanent buildings, kilns, and driers. Graves and his son-in-law and general manager, Harrison Stuart Matthews, known H.S. Matthews, organized the company with prominent up and coming leaders, even putting together a sixty-person workforce who had a maximum output of 75,000 bricks a day.¹¹ A reporter from the *Brick and Clay Record* noted the uniqueness of the industrial

compound, concluding that the Grave Shale Brick Company remained the only brick manufacturer of its kind not only in Alabama, but throughout the southern region. Indeed, no other plant matched the company's magnitude of production at that time.¹² Shortly thereafter in 1904, another report described the mine and its over sixty-person workforce as having a daily output of 50,000 bricks.¹³ While those numbers remained large, they never reached suspected maximum output. These figures do show, however, that Graves and his associates aimed to organize this company to be a true power house that could grow and adapt as needs evolved.



William H. Graves

to the company at a lower cost, increasing their profit margin. An interview in *The Clay-Worker* shows Graves and Matthews also prepared to expand business efficiency and capacity by weighing the benefits of adding several down-draft kilns to keep up with the high demand of their pressed bricks.¹⁴ These provisions that Graves aimed to provide and supply his company helped them facilitate swift growth, comparable to other growth measures taken by various Birmingham companies. Despite Graves's spending increases (as aforementioned), he positioned the company for increasing demand.

In 1903, word of Graves business spread further among industrial news channels. When he and H.S. Matthews built their plant, the timing overlapped with the acquisition of the coal mine that sat adjacent to the railroad and their property. They hoped to take ownership of this mine to supply the needed energy



Graves Brick

William Graves quickly became a prominent figure in the industry and became involved with paving blocks by 1905. During a meeting in March 1905, Graves spoke out against how much he and his colleagues invested

in their companies with only output small output comparatively; whereas, asphalt pavers in 1905 spent a great deal of money on advertisements around the US, contributing to the fact that companies paved over 5,000 miles of asphalt at that time.¹⁵ Graves's speech prodded his colleagues into improving their marketing strategies presented to city officials, which in turn increased the amount of business the company handled.¹⁶ Essentially, he recognized that he and his colleagues needed to market themselves as leaders of a vital and reputable local industry. By offering this suggestion, it is clear that the intent behind paving blocks did not solve the problem, but merely provided a better option. The blocks, in his mind, seemed to exude wealth – not just the wealth of an individual, but more so the wealth of a city, which he really reinforces by stating that those who make paving bricks are making “first-class products.”¹⁷ Graves would have had to be inspired to speak out to his colleagues against the cement paving industry, and wanted for he and them to secure more city contracts.¹⁸ Graves insinuated that by buying and laying these blocks in within a city, an image of wealth and high class takes the forefront to those noticing. Whether or not this was the case for all brick-paving manufacturers remains undetermined; however, Graves seemed intent on marketing these pavers as a method to separate class, not just by the cities and neighborhoods that could afford them, but also within city streets. Overall, marketing these blocks as a symbol of high status and placing them

on the prominent commercial streets, a permanent exclusionary aesthetic, without explanation, denotes boundary and establishes a city's landscape character.

The following years show continued growth for Graves, but also a transition from being known as the Graves Shale Brick Company, to then being known as the Graves – Matthews Paving Company. Noted in a 1902 report from the *Brick and Clay Record*, Graves acquired equipment to produce outside finishing brick in addition to its main product, building brick.¹⁹ In 1906, an additional report from the US Geological Survey on the clay contributing to regional economic geology states that the Graves Mine (which was a part of the company's brick production facilities) was producing both chemical and paving bricks with a maximum daily capacity of 50,000 bricks, although they suggest that the actual output at this time was around 28,000 to 38,000 thousand bricks a day.²⁰ Growth continued within the company; however, its maximum capacity for output fluctuated. This may have resulted from equipment needs changing and a potentially smaller output. Sources do indicate some internal strife in the early days, and while it is not directly mentioned, the lower capacity may have been affected by that based on prior knowledge of Birmingham mining communities.²¹ The exact types of businesses that required Graves's bricks during this period remain unidentified due to few remaining records. Some that do exist point to Graves Shale Brick Company producing thousands of bricks daily to supply orders for new projects appearing in the Birmingham cityscape. Outside of government funded projects, private construction projects left very few records, contributing to the difficult task of piecing together the scope of Graves's business influence.

At the dawn of 1909, the company solicited work in other southern cities, further expanding the business potential. This business tactic became familiar as they took notice of other southern cities beginning to cash bonds for municipality improvements. Naturally, they pushed for their pavers to be selected for these

projects. Their prices were mid-range, and they applied for bids all throughout the South. They lost a few of these bids to better-priced suppliers in cities such as Jacksonville, Florida, and Meridian, Mississippi.²² Despite losing out on two of those contracts, Graves acquired a contract for paving Central Avenue in St. Petersburg, Florida as well as a contract to pave Chestnut, Broad, Court, Fourth, and Fifth street in Gadsden, Alabama. These projects totaled 22,000 square yards of vitrified bricks at only \$1.71 a yard, totaling \$37,620, equivalent to over \$1.042 million dollars today.²³ The company offered competitive prices as cities began to plan for street improvements. Although he initially sold construction blocks, it is clear that the company intended for the bulk of business to come from pavers.

"THE GRAVE SHALE BRICK COMPANY REMAINED THE ONLY BRICK MANUFACTURER OF ITS KIND NOT ONLY IN ALABAMA, BUT THROUGHOUT THE SOUTHERN REGION. INDEED, NO OTHER PLANT MATCHED THE COMPANY'S MAGNITUDE OF PRODUCTION AT THAT TIME."

Between 1910 to 1912, records of the working conditions and finances of the company through industry journals present insightful narratives. At one instance, Graves sold "full equipment with extra heavy pipe fittings" for a six-track steam brick drier, presumably to make room for newer equipment.²⁴ However, a swift change in the industry took place in 1911, but versions of this change vary by source. In one account, Graves speaks to how the first six months of the year pushed the industry into a

stalemate, with overstock piling up and deals falling through. Supposedly, this stalemate resulted from cities selling bonds in 1911, causing orders to slow down for the company. Graves anticipated that business will pick back up as they maintained a positive outlook with their potential contracts.²⁵ Contrary to this account, another prominent journal reported the Graves Shale Brick Company as making numerous equipment improvements and preparing for expansion.²⁶ Considering the financial difficulties the industry faced in the early years of 1911, seeing this range of business potential becomes a point of interest. These reports of internal business improvements contradict industry setbacks during this period, but these expansions allowed for future contracts because investment allowed for growth. With internal improvements made, Graves stayed in business and maintained his financial backing to the company.

In this same time frame, records note changes in the company's management, particularly with the original general manager H. S. Matthews. Matthews searched for other opportunities in May of 1910 and left the company after announcing his new position as vice president and general manager of Alabama Consolidated Coal & Iron. Shortly after, in 1912, he became president.²⁷ Matthews expanded the Alabama Co. through 1916, acquiring numerous paving and construction contracts, most notably in Gulfport, Mississippi.²⁸ Matthews eventually left Alabama in 1916 when he purchases the Silver Creek Mine in Rome, Georgia to open Matthews Iron & Coal Co. in late 1916.²⁹ While Graves business dealings remained steady, but not notable during this time, the subsequent chain of events continued to change the company. First, Graves' business partner and general manager leaves, leaving Graves to arrange for a replacement to understand the nuance and needs of the company. This seems like a potential blow as the industry struggled and it is unclear as to whether or not Matthews' departure resulted from market struggles. Graves then appoints another manager, Frederick Gunster, who also held a position

as a purchasing agent for the company as shown in a 1914 yearbook from The Black Diamond Directory.³⁰ During this period of change, no indication through records support continued business expansions or work outside of their normal paving and construction contracts.

Records of Graves business dealings in 1916 take a bit of a turn with the fate of the company, coinciding with Matthews's complete departure to Georgia. By this time though, it seems as if the bulk of his business deals, or at least the ones that laid entire cities with his bricks, had already taken place. Graves proved, through constructing many county highways and streets for cities, that he operated one of the largest plants in the south. However, Graves sold the Graves Shale Brick Paving Company to Southern Clay Manufacturing Company for \$100,000, roughly equivalent to around \$2.4 million dollars today.³¹ With the little-understood relationship he maintained with the new company, speculation remains as to whether or not he kept a degree of separation with the company to begin with. It seems possible that when Matthews left, he may have returned to oversee the transition and protect his investments. And with his vast real estate investments, it appears he spent more time in his vacation homes and working himself amongst the Birmingham elite. His activities with the company all but disappear after 1916, despite it still being active, but experiencing a decline in 1916 until its 1920 closure.

Potentially, Graves experienced more time on his hands following the sale. He rubbed shoulders with the culturally elite of Birmingham starting after his arrival to the city. His interests in politics, law, and ethics continued even after he left law for business. He wrote a novel in 1917 named Junius Finally Discovered, which he dedicated to the Thomas Paine National Historical Association.³² While the book does not detail his personal life or achievements, it offers a contrast to his dealings with the shale bricks, further suggesting this separation with the company. Through his novel writing and socializing,

Graves presents himself as not spending all his time cultivating his business, especially after the company became firmly established. In fact, whenever there is mention of Graves in historical writings outside of industry records, nothing indicates he oversaw a massive company. Generally, he is regarded by his early Birmingham investments and his literary work. While the only solid tie into the mining industry early on came with the marriage to Florida Whiting, daughter of a railroad tycoon, and his son-in-law, H.S. Matthews.

"GRAVES PROVED, THROUGH CONSTRUCTING MANY COUNTY HIGHWAYS AND STREETS FOR CITIES, THAT HE OPERATED ONE OF THE LARGEST PLANTS IN THE SOUTH. HOWEVER, GRAVES SOLD THE GRAVES SHALE BRICK PAVING COMPANY TO SOUTHERN CLAY MANUFACTURING COMPANY FOR \$100,000, ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO AROUND \$2.4 MILLION DOLLARS TODAY."

One of the difficult parts of attempting to reconstruct the history of Graves Company results primarily because their public recordings remain limited to industry newspapers and journal from their heyday. Another issue revolves around the location of the mine itself. Finding the location of the mine aids in further contextualization of the work. Initially, the location was missing under the review of the literature and hidden from the early maps due because it stood outside the city.³³ However, an early account for the location stems from an industry journal, where it reports on the company's 100-acre mine five miles

north of the city. An additional account states that the company owned 340 acres in the area. This same source also elucidates one of the key factors that allowed such great success for the company. With the site being adjacent to the railroad, Graves's transportation allowed for a clear advantage in comparison to his colleagues. Graves also grew his mine and improved its efficiency by acquiring the coal mine next to the site – further allowing a steady stream of fuel to keep the furnaces running.³⁴

William Graves's relationship to the city further establishes his mark on Birmingham. Elements include a mine five miles outside of the city and a building carrying his name in the theater district of the downtown district. His activity is spotty, but from outside of Alabama, municipal journals hailed him as one of the most prominent brickmakers in the "Pittsburg of the South." Because of his business, "Graves" bricks are found all throughout the southeast still to this day. Wherever one may walk in Birmingham, especially in the few areas that still contain paved sections, such as Five Points South projects completed by 1911, some of his pavers remain.³⁵ In addition to these pavers still in Birmingham, his building on 1814 3rd Ave North stands still awaiting redevelopment.³⁶

Within the city, Graves became known for his capitalist investments, achievements, and literary prowess. His home shows his high status through its beautiful architectural details and sheer size. Three stories tall, with intricate architectural detailing from the façade to the roofline clearly would set it apart from the homes outside of Glen Iris, while clearly reminiscent of the prominent homes of the Birmingham elite. Graves became associated with

other Birmingham developers. While in the early days of his company in 1905, he built his home on 1214 11th Street South close to Glen Iris Park where Robert Jemison, Sr. lived.³⁷ Graves amassed quite an amount of business in residential construction at the time of his home's construction, leaving a legacy that remains hidden today. With his connection to Jemison though, his place in the history of the city is further solidified, as he established himself amongst the Birmingham elite.

Captain Graves death in 1931 further signaled the end of an era to major industrial developments in the South. After paving the way for the new south, Graves established his legacy as a crucial capitalist during the development of Birmingham, but his history remains long forgotten to the history books. While nowadays a brick may be seemingly insignificant, those bricks are some of the only connections surviving that demonstrate to the extent Birmingham exert itself as an industrial force to reckon with. His novel, *Junius Finally Discovered*, may be the only direct link to his activity, but his support and development of this Shale Brick Company created massive impact throughout the south. While generally regarded as insignificant to the grander picture of industrial development in Birmingham, the Graves Shale Brick Company, is extremely important for understanding how not just Birmingham, but the South's streets came to be. Contemporary urban development overtook many areas impacted by Graves; however, his legacy protrudes the landscape of history, leaving different pieces of the puzzle scattered through Birmingham that when pieced together, show how William Graves. Graves paved new roads for Southern industry.

1 George Cruikshank, *A History of Birmingham and its Environs: A Narrative Account of Their Historical Progress, Their People, and Their Principal Interests* (Birmingham: Lewis Publishing Company, 1920), 2:73-5.

2 Ibid.

3 Very little records exist on the family, and in general, there is not much to corroborate much of the information on the family. Florida Whiting Graves, grave marker, Elmwood Cemetery, Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama, digital image s.v. "Florida Whiting Graves," findagrave.com.

- 4 Cruikshank, History of Birmingham, 73-4
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 "Interesting Clayworking Plants of the South." Brick and Clay Record 21, no. 6 (December 1904): 247.
- 8 Sanborn Map Company plate 547, "Sanborn Fire Maps: Birmingham," (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1911).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 "The Graves Shale Brick Co., Birmingham, Ala." Brick and Clay Record 16, no.1 (January 1902): 21.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 "Interesting Clayworking Plants of the South." Brick and Clay Record 21, no. 6 (December 1904): 247.
- 14 "In Dixie Land." The Clayworker 39, (1903): 661
- 15 "A Suggestion for Paving Brick Manufacturers." Municipal Journal & Public Works 18, (March 1905): 127.
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- 26 W. E. Dunwody. "The South's Opportunity." Brick and Clay Record 38, no. 7 (April 1911): 356.
- 27 "New Directors for Alabama Consolidated." The Iron Trade Review 46, (May 5 1910): 850; "Monthly Bulletin." Mining and Metallurgy 85, (January 1914): xxxv.
- 28 "Streets and Roads." Municipal Journal 60, no. 20 (May 18, 1916): 710; "Rapid Changes in South." Iron Trade Review 59, (November 9 1916): 930. To further clarify, he acquired the Silver Creek Mine in Rome, Georgia.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 "Directory of Coal Mine Operators" The Black Diamond's Yearbook and Directory (1914): 106.
- 31 "Editorial Notes and Clippings." The Clay-Worker 65-66 (1916), 618.
- 32 William H. Graves. Junius Finally Discovered (Birmingham: Dispatch Printing Company, 1917), 1.
- 33 "The Graves Shale Brick Co., Birmingham, Ala." Brick and Clay Record 16, no.1 (January 1902): 21.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Sanborn Map Company plate 204, "Sanborn Fire Maps: Birmingham," (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1911).
- 36 Brent Godwin, "Major Redevelopment in Work for Theatre District Buildings," Birmingham Business Journal, March 14, 2018, <https://www.bizjournals.com/birmingham/news/2018/03/14/major-redevelopment-in-works-fortheatre-district.html>.
- 37 This is formerly known as Virginia Ave. Blue Book Birmingham. Roberts & Son, 1913. p. 24.

LAWS OF THE LAND: AN EXPEDITED SURVEY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF SLAVERY THROUGH 1865

by Kendra Bell



Portrait of Harriet Tubman.

The minutiae of social and economic impacts of slavery in America are often oversimplified, resulting in an uninformed opinion concerning the attitudes held by activists in the modern world. Difficulties exist for some to find correlation between the issues involving race and the events that transpired some four hundred years ago and such a misunderstanding contributes to growing tensions between races in the current political climate. Those that skim the subject often avoid confrontation with the legal features surrounding the peculiar institution, which is arguably one of the most determining factors that increased the intensity of the injustices laid against black people in the states. People have difficulty comprehending the frustrations of many people of color, including but not limited to African

Americans, concerning contemporary oppression. This is especially prevalent in cases where an individual is not directly descended from a group known for extensive suffering at the hand of racial privilege. In an age of information, one where the entire history of humankind rests at the tips of one's fingers, remaining naive to social injustice becomes an inadequate excuse. In order to assess and dismantle preconceived biases of the validity of victimization claims, American history must be re-evaluated to identify the defining moments in the legal evolution of American administration.

The Old World

Modern European involvement with the African continent began as early as the 15th century. Henry the Navigator, a Portuguese explorer and Duke of Viséu, began expeditions in the Sub-Saharan region of the continent.¹ This survey of the environment and the relationship with Islamic traders developed a strong understanding of African topography and culture that cultivated a trade network for Europeans to interact with the coast of West Africa for generations before the year 1500.² As a result, the use of African slaves was prevalent; however, the institution of slavery had not yet evolved comparably to American chattel slavery. The existence of slavery in Africa prior to European involvement more closely relates to indentured servitude than slavery. African slaves resulted from loan repayment or capture from other tribes, but a key difference between African slavery and European was that the status of a slave did not result in a life-long, racially targeted condition, passed on hereditarily.³ Even in North America, this characteristic was not an initial constituent of enslavement, though the race segregation of status became prevalent shortly after the successful establishment of colonies in British America.

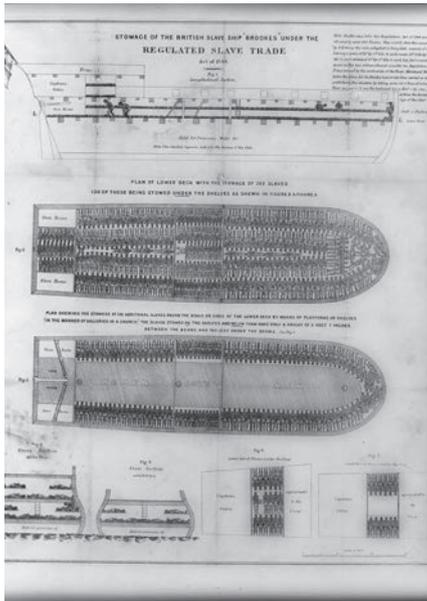
During the Age of Discovery, Africans were brought with Spanish conquistadors on their expeditions to the New World. Researchers such as Leo Winter and Van Sertima theorize that substantial archaeological and linguistic evidence support African inhabitants in the Americas prior to Columbus.⁴ For instance, as early as the 1480s, Africans were transported to South America and forced to cultivate the sugar plantations by the Portuguese.⁵ Other theories suggest the migration of African peoples without the influence or direction of Europeans. Van Sertima claims that the Olmec society in Mesoamerica actually originated from Africa and inhabited the Americas long before Columbus found his way. It is important to note that many of these theories are considered “alternative” as no definitive validity exists for such claims; should more evidence surface perhaps that status may change. Whether or not there was a pre-Columbian African presence in the New World, there is at least a universal agreement that the slave trade penetrated exploration towards the end of the 15th century and beginning of the 16th. When Vasco Núñez de Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean in 1513, it is believed he brought as many as 30 Africans to accompany him.⁶ Hernán Cortés led an expedition into the Americas, where scholars attribute the conquest of the Aztec empire to him, and did so with Africans alongside him.⁷ Technically, these Africans would have been slaves to the explorers, however it is necessary to once again state that the roles and status of slaves did not equate to what is more closely related to chattel slavery.

When the conquest of the New World began, the Renaissance in Europe was in full swing. W.E.B Du Bois expressed that the exploitation of Africans in the slave trade resulted from the Renaissance in conjunction with the Commercial Revolution, or the trade-based economy of Europe, which permeated the consumer market until the rise of the Industrial Revolution. According to Du Bois, these social movements encouraged “...the freedom to destroy freedom, the freedom of some to exploit the rights

of others.”⁸ The profiteering that occurred arguably finds roots in willful ignorance. Though, it cannot be said for certain what those that walked the cobbled streets thought of Europe in the 14th century while attempting to survive in a world shrouded by the blanket of the Black Plague. Perhaps they did not anticipate the extent of the commercialism that would deny millions of basic human rights as they went about their daily lives. Conversely, the exploitation of human beings still factored into initial enslavement; conjured justifications convinced people at the time of the validity of their actions, but this topic will be discussed later in this particular presentation of information. Nonetheless, it can be understood that Du Bois’s theory is entirely plausible, however there remains little researchers can do today to embody the mindset of those at the time and find the true factors of causation.

European expansion inspired the cultivation and colonization of the newly discovered environments in the New World, regardless of the fact that many places were already inhabited by native peoples. As these colonial ventures began, it became clear that many Europeans were incapable of successfully establishing colonies, as they were unfamiliar with the terrain, carried many diseases that depleted the native communities, and were incredibly susceptible to New World diseases. Then, in 1517, Bartolomeo de las Casas initiated the use of immigrated peoples to the Americas as the labor force to drive Westward exploitation, permitting the importation of African slaves and driving the slave trade.⁹ As previously stated, the Renaissance was a powerful force motivating the European venture of expansion, yet the ideals of humanism stood in contradiction to the harshly enforced and abusive nature of New World slavery. Humanism consisted of an increased importance of the nature of the individual and focused on the needs and values of human life. Therefore, the contradictions of belief and action allowed the morality of enslavement to be scrutinized at the conception of the practice. To illustrate,

Portuguese sugar plantations in South America nearly eradicated the native population used to cultivate the crop.¹⁰ In this instance, the value of individual human beings was determined to be less than that of the value of potential sugar yields and therefore



Printed Ephemera Collection Dlc. Stowage of the British slave ship Brookes under the regulated slave trade act of British Great Britain Liverpool Liverpool, 1788

only way for Europeans to accommodate the labor shortage and benefit from the new commercial economy was to enslave others, but that enterprise directly conflicted with their socially formulated moral compass. In order to bypass any righteous transgressions, Europeans drafted a series of rationalizations with little supporting evidence, if any at all, to convince themselves of justification. One of these arguments stated that without the involvement of Europeans and the installment of slavery, Africans would not have been introduced to Christianity, therefore saved by the religion. On the contrary, evidence supports the spread of Christianity

was a risk that the Portuguese willingly accepted in order to increase sugar supply. I would like to emphasize that the lives of many were appraised by those to whom the life did not belong, a blatant violation of the morality of humanity.

In order to compensate for the sacrifice of ethical integrity, Europeans crafted drastic pseudo-mechanisms to justify the economic venture of slavery. The

extending to North Eastern Africa shortly after Pentecost in the 1st century C.E.¹¹ Hence, such a use of this justification was unfounded. Another religiously based rationale comes from the story of the curse of Ham in the Bible. To summarize, people believed the ancestors of Ham were cursed to be slaves for eternity as a result of sinful indulgences.¹² To fully express the reasoning for this, the text must be shared:

Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. He drank some of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a cloak and placed it over both their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father's nakedness...When Noah awoke from his drinking and learned what his youngest son had done to him, he said: He [Canaan] will be cursed. He will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers. He also said: Praise the Lord, the God of Shem; Canaan will be his slave. God will extend Japheth; he will dwell in the tents of Shem; Canaan will be his slave.¹³

From this passage, Europeans concluded Ham to be the ancestor of Africans solely because of the color of their skin. As a devout society, Europeans believed enslavement to be their divine duty as the status of the descendants of Ham was explicitly stated by the all-knowing being.¹⁴ This endured centuries of debate, and similar to the previous misconception of Christianity's influence on Africans, remained unfounded. Firstly, there was the fact that Ham was not cursed but rather his son Canaan, and second, that neither race nor skin color were ever mentioned in the text. In other words, there was no indication of the determiner of slavery in the decadency of Ham. Therefore, the only logical thing to do was find other outlets of justification.

Pseudoscientific theories were developed in order to supplement the lack of real reasoning other

than capital gain for Europeans to feel any need to enslave Africans and other populations. Some of these ideas have survived the trials of time and can still be heard in discussions of modern racial issues. In particular, the idea that Africans were descended directly from the Great Apes and exhibited primitive qualities. Essentially, it was understood with no substantial supporting evidence that had Europeans not interrupted the African economy and culture, the African population would have been subjected to minimal socioeconomic advancement.¹⁵ This concept may have evolved, or at the very least contributed, to the cultural facet of Social Darwinism. For a community dominated by religious influences, inadvertently and vehemently denying the principle of human evolution due to a monogenesis belief system, to simultaneously advocate for the exact same philosophy only applied to Africans strictly because of the color of their skin is convoluted. The concept of polygenesis, or the idea that different races of human are from different origins, inherently conflicted with Christianity, which does nothing but weaken the stability of European claims. These justifications were not only unfounded, but contradictory as well; their existence can only be concluded to have been constructed to mask the immorality of African enslavement.

The New World

The Transatlantic slave trade dramatically influenced the economy of the New World. It was a component of the Triangular trade system in which raw materials, manufactured goods, and labor force were transported between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The number of Africans that were captured, enslaved, sold, and transported in this system, which included children, has been widely debated for many years as records for such information were rarely kept. However, it is estimated that over 9,566,100 Africans were encumbered in this system between 1450 and 1870.¹⁶ The process used by Europeans to acquire, prepare, and carry out the enterprise of slavery broke down in compartmental activities. Sometimes a direct

kidnapping would take place, done both by Europeans and other Africans, but more often Africans would be sold at trading posts on the West Coast of Africa by other Africans. Often, Africans would voluntarily subject themselves as their understanding of the situation was not encompassing the true nature of the enterprise. It was seen as a way to ensure economic stability for individual families.

Again, African slavery was alternative to American as the status was similar to an indentured servant and not a lifelong condition.¹⁷ John Barbot, an agent for the French Royal African Company between 1678 and 1682 described instances where African slave traders would bring other Africans to be sold as slaves to the Europeans and, confused by the different languages, would end up sold as slaves as well.¹⁸ Once acquired, Africans would have been stripped completely of clothing and have all body parts inspected intensively; any Africans over thirty-five years of age or in possession of any kind of imperfection would not have been selected. Otherwise, the slaves would have been branded to distinguish country of ownership.¹⁹ European slave traders acknowledged the dangers, such as rebellions, associated with enslavement, Africans were separated from family, friends, and even those that spoke the same or similar languages. As if the physical torment was not enough, to take away that which makes us humans, communication, creates an unimaginable torture. It is the ability to connect with other, especially in times of hardship, that etches the stories of our lives into our history. To take that away is purely dehumanizing. It resulted from the need to deter possible mutiny or rebellions, but the effects of this were incredibly severe on what would become African American culture. In fact, the evidence of this action is presented in the variation of language roots within Ebonics as Africans found ways around their language barriers and formed a new and individual language. This eased the minds of white traders, especially those that would be accompanying their slaves on the journey Westward.

The next step was the Middle Passage, or the

harrowing sea journey across the Atlantic that would take many lives. During the Transatlantic Slave trade, the Middle Passage exposed millions to diseases, malnutrition, and deadly conditions of bondage that affected the well-being of blacks and whites for generations after arrival.²⁰ Records show that 90 ton ships were allowed to carry as many as 390 slaves, as well as security and crew, though such regulations were rarely enforced.²¹ It is not too difficult to see how the blatant disregard for the well-being of the exploited extended to a disregard for safety ordinances: slaves were calculated against how many would be lost on the journey to ensure the most profit, if that meant carrying more than the regulation called for then it was done with little concern for consequences such as depletion of supplies.

The conditions of the enslaved consisted of constant hand and foot binding to at least one, if not multiple, individual(s), little to no time above deck, insufficient food provisions, and much more that would sometimes result in suicide of Africans.²² The previously mentioned John Barbot expressed the common occurrence of white officers that broke the teeth of slaves in order to force subsistence into those who refused food because of the desire to keep as many slaves alive as possible, even if they were to arrive in near-death conditions. During transportation and after arrival, the process of seasoning²³ This process is when the most effort was placed explicitly into dehumanization. At this point in the journey of a slave, he or she was told that individual purpose was monetary value for the slave owner. The names given to people at birth, what they would use as a staple of themselves, were stripped and replaced with what was deemed “acceptable” by their new owners. This process was key in ensuring a power dynamic and the protection of a stratified society in New World colonies in which Europeans, even if poor, would remain higher than slaves.

Though slavery preceded European occupation of the North American continent, the unique establishment of chattel slavery in the English

colonies dictated a lasting racial imbalance in the blueprints of American history. It had not taken long for the development of the foundations of modern racism to manifest in the colonies. The most concise examples were codifications that determined the status of a human as directly tied to his or her race. One of these instances will be discussed later in relation to the implementation of specific laws concerning the subject matter. Early on, the status of blacks was not necessarily defaulted as that of a slave. Poor whites and blacks were indentured servants; for an indicated amount of time he or she would have been a laborer for whomever owned the contract, which could have been transferred from one owner to the next through the duration of the servitude as the contract essentially classified individuals as temporarily bound to their employer.²⁴ After the contract ended, he or she would have earned freedom. Soon, however, distinctions were made between indentured blacks and indentured whites.

In 1661, just forty-two years after the first African indentured servants were brought to Jamestown, the Virginian colony made a legal declaration of chattel slavery, which deepened racial divisions and contributed to the social and economic attitudes of colonists.²⁵ Each colony had a disparate relationship with the institution of slavery. Some, such as the Carolinas, experienced more economic reliance on free labor than others like Maryland or Pennsylvania, and therefore implemented certain precautionary laws to prevent the downfall of the institution. Others, though not entirely sympathetic towards those enslaved, refrained from enforcement of the same severity in their codifications of slavery. There was a gradual implementation of laws concerning the severity of the condition of slavery to varying degrees throughout the new English settlements. For example, the official declaration of the legality of slavery in Virginia did not affect the status of black indentured servants who had already earned freedom; however, the same administrative application of Maryland in 1663 enslaved all blacks in the population, even those

who were already free.²⁶ Arguably one of the most impactful laws that was applied was the change of a biracial child's status from directed by the father, to that of the mother. What made this particular distinction so impactful was the fact that African and African American women faced a great risk for rape and sexual assault, particularly by white slave-owners. Before this implementation, the racially-mixed children would have been considered free because of the status of the father, or contractually obligated to servitude for a number of years if the father was an indentured servant.

**"IN SOME RESPECTS,
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AMERICAN REVOLUTION
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BUT THOSE PRINCIPLES
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FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR IN
AMERICA."**

The concept of slavery itself and its transverse shroud of personhood was difficult for oppressors to discern. Was the slave still a person? Did he or

she possess a soul or an abstract manifestation of qualities that make humans sentient? Especially with Christian slaveholders, this reflection was dripping in hypocrisy. Of course, it was the duty of followers of Christ to inspire salvation in the hearts of others, to spread the word of their god and convert lost souls, but what if it meant losing capital? For a time, some slaves had achieved freedom by having been baptized, as many colonists believed no individual who had been saved by Christianity could have been considered a slave. Such beliefs resulted in the unintended loss of slaves, which were a form of property. In order to protect the institution of slavery, Virginia established a law in 1667 which stated that "...the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom." After evaluation of the discrepancy, Christian slaveholders concluded that salvation was a divinely protected sacrament, that is, unless the value of one's estate was at stake. The same law was administered in Maryland in 1671 and in New York in 1706. However, New York's variation of the law also perpetuated the supposed invalidity of a slave as a person, as he or she could not have been considered a "competent witness" in a legal case.²⁷ Previously stated laws served the purpose of protecting slavery, while other laws were intended to restrict the rights and mobility of slaves and black people in general, which ultimately dehumanized the descendants of Africans.

Such degradation of slaves was necessary to deter rebellious occurrences; the incessant limitations placed on blacks counterintuitively encouraged revolutionary ideas of freedom of the oppressed. In 1694, Virginian slaves had become "ungovernable," mostly for behaving in ways that did not supplement the stratifying society at the time.²⁸ Perhaps it was the development of black communities that was starting to worry white slave owners; an increase of communication and comradery of blacks would eventually lead to conspiracies and rebellion. In retaliation, the local government installed slave codes that prohibited slaves from leaving the plantations

without possession of written permission from the master, as well as any slaves found guilty of rape, murder, theft, insolence, or association with free blacks or whites to have been punished by mutilation and, in some cases, hanging.²⁹ Similar laws were passed in other colonies not long after, as well as provisions regarding the treatment of fugitive slaves with identical forms of punishment.³⁰ Some of the laws put in place that restricted slaves were prohibition from meeting in groups larger than seven without white chaperones, participation in any form of trade, possession of any sort of weapon, or even allowance of education consisting of reading or writing between 1659 and 1733.³¹ With all of the active withholdings for slaves to develop any sort of culture or sense of community, it proved folly. Though the laws were in place and the interaction between one another was limited greatly, there was always an element of hope for a better future, as well as the sharing of the slave experience, that tied the community and strengthened the bonds that were formed in such times.

As the American Revolutionary War approached, the evolution of humanistic ideals transcended into debates on human rights and ownership of guaranteed freedoms. Colonists, particularly the lower working class, expressed concerns and grievances against the elites and the crown. The newly coined “patriots” believed that certain unalienable rights and freedoms were being violated by the king. After the American Revolution, Americans were deeply fervent about the principles and protections that they had so recently fought for. The effects of these philosophical enlightenments were different depending mainly on location. In the North, people associated these freedoms and equalities of man with the humanity of slaves.³² Were white Americans the oppressors to those of African descent in similar ways to British oppression of colonists? Did Africans and African Americans deserve the same freedoms that white Americans deserved? These questions were also asked in the South, though they were contemplated differently. A formidable reason proved simply because of the variation in dependence on free labor

in the economy of the area.

In the South, the denial of rights to a group of people remained incredibly ironic, as there was a strong celebration of freedom. In the North, where reliance on free labor was less intense, there was less of a desire to maintain the rigid system of human ownership and the idea of freedom’s extent was more fluid; applying the principle to African Americans was easier to do.³³ Drawn from the fact that the plantations were located in the South, people in places like the Carolinas and Georgia were completely dependent on the industries of rice and cotton and these materials required a great deal of labor to be harvested. Since the cultivation of said industries required a large labor force, the multitude of slaves in close quarters made Southerners become paranoid. Slave owners were aware that there was a risk of mutiny, that the ideals which brought about a country of freedom would entice slaves (who greatly outnumbered the whites) to rebel. To ensure a guaranteed right to what slaveowners considered their “property” as well as ease the anxiety of potential uprising, slaveholders implemented a much harsher use of force on the slave population. This stemmed more than just physical abuse, but also mental and emotional to reduce the humanity of slaves and discourage revolutionary antics.³⁴ In some respects, the principles of the American Revolution allowed members of the new free land to begin breaking down the foundation of the institution of slavery, but those principles also conversely fueled a formulation of a much more rigid codification of slavery that would postpone the progress of basic human rights for people of color in America.

The New Frontier

The roots of capitalism were prominent in the early republic, even from the beginning, and it has been incorporated so thoroughly into the administration and system of governance that it is impossible to discuss one topic without mention of the other. If white European settlers in North America were pre-human ancestors, slavery was the Acheulean hand-

axe that launched a new era in history.³⁵ The effects of slavery as a capitalist enterprise became increasingly evident during the antebellum period. Now facing the new frontier of King Cotton, everything was centered on making money. In fact, the treatment of slaves at the time, which consisted of mass migrations to the West and the extensive separation of families, was “relentlessly financially driven” (Franklin 2009; 134).³⁶ Slavery was an embodiment of capitalistic structures of hierarchy. Though this included the accumulation of money, whites had inadvertently, or possibly intentionally, established a hierarchy in which the highest social positions, held by the rich, white, and typically male, would never have been subject to loss of status by the lowest positions of poor people of color and slaves. Some researches indicate the principle that “a person is a person through other people,” which can be used to frame the perception of oppressors at the time.³⁷ Essentially, a person is deserving of human rights, but the concept of personhood and who it applies to is defined by other people. If people do not recognize a group of individuals as ‘persons,’ then no need exists to extend rights. The power and freedoms which were to be held by people, as described in revolutionary cries across the globe, were purposely denied to an entire race of people by the establishment of racist institutions to ensure profit and status of emerging capitalists. The effects of this denial would transpire long after the laws of enslavement were lifted.

The first wave of national reform of racial institutions began before the 1830s; however, the movement for the abolition of slavery grew and transformed until the 1860s. Though the main theme of the abolitionist movement was the end of slavery, the degree and conditions of which caused great divisions within the political platform. To illustrate, the movement of manumission was characterized by biracialism, but that is not to suggest that both blacks and whites possessed the same feelings towards abolition. The views of the majority of white abolitionists were slightly evolved from the beliefs of gradual emancipation. Those attitudes remained and were

expressed through their participation with anti-slavery action.³⁸ These beliefs were centered around the idea that there was no rush to end slavery, just that it should eventually end. For white abolitionists to be so relaxed with policy making emphasizes the obvious lack of true consideration for the freedom struggle. In fact, slavery was viewed through a religious lens as sinful. Consequently, to have demanded immediate freedom would have suggested that African Americans were in some way equal to the white man, which was not a sentiment held by many white abolitionists, even if they advocated for manumission.³⁹

"THE POWER AND FREEDOMS WHICH WERE TO BE HELD BY PEOPLE, AS DESCRIBED IN REVOLUTIONARY CRIES ACROSS THE GLOBE, WERE PURPOSELY DENIED TO AN ENTIRE RACE OF PEOPLE BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RACIST INSTITUTIONS TO ENSURE PROFIT AND STATUS OF EMERGING CAPITALISTS."

Another division was not necessarily tied directly to race; however, there was reasonable suspicion that white support to the movement was driven by the intention to remove freed African Americans and displace them in Africa.

From one perspective, the purpose of this would have been based on the pretense that since white

and black people are not equal, it would have been impossible for the two to live together peacefully, especially after something as terrible as slavery.⁴⁰ There were also black supporters of colonization, with quite different motives, such as the creation of specialized communities that promoted the unification of African Americans to their African roots. Over time, the black support for colonization grew less and less intense and eventually it was not common in the community, as it was understood that the proposal of colonization was a mask for the removal of free blacks used by non-abolitionists.⁴¹ Yet another division within the platform was the risks to which advocates were willing to take in order to achieve freedom. In other words, many white abolitionists, as aforementioned, were only moderately invested in the movement and insisted on a prolonged series of policy in statements toward eventual freedom. Meanwhile, African Americans campaigned for petitions and policies of freedom to be formed immediately. There were also those that took the approach of acquiring freedom by means of violence. Walker's Appeal, Nat Turner's Rebellion, The Liberator, John Brown, and even Frederick Douglass were ambassadors for the enticement of violence in slave communities.⁴² All of the different methods of dealing with the institution of bondage by the abolitionist movement resulted in a constant state of mismanaged efforts, though eventually progress was made in achieving freedom.

What many fail to consider in the discussion of the movement is the role of women. It is common to picture abolitionists fighting passionately and vigorously for freedom, yet few women were credited with the progress of the abolitionist movement; however, women regularly risked their lives for freedom. Harriet Tubman, for example, as well as many others whose names are lost, aided in freedom taken by force with the Underground Railroad.⁴³ African American women were not only forced to face the same struggles as black men in the United States, but were also forced to face struggles of being a woman of the 1800s whose self-worth was determined by the state and the discretion of men.

These women were generally expected to undertake motherhood above all other things, including personal health, and conduct their lives around benefiting the society by remaining docile to the whims of a male-dominated society. All of this in conjunction with struggles unique to black women, such as being more prone to sexual exploitation due to the labeling of worth as property to be used by others for whatever is desired. African American women and white women banded and combined the fight for race equality with the fight for gender equality.⁴⁴ It is necessary to correlate women to the efforts of emancipation because it is also one of the first major moments in history in which there was real discussion feminism and an evaluation of the extension of human rights to women in a way that transcended the boundaries of race at this moment in time.

Slave Experience

In order to encompass the depth of how codifications were placed, one must also observe how these laws affected those oppressed on a personal level. The slave experience was in no way universal. There were a multitude of factors that affected the individuals' lives in many different ways; therefore, it remains difficult to dilute these experiences into any sort of standard. However, aspects of slaves' lives can be more easily interpreted by using such a model. Common occurrences through countless lives, such as the separation of families and the objectification of people as property with the intentions of sole profit for slave owners highlighted shared struggles.⁴⁵ African American children were taught their "place" in the world through a white lens at a very young age by means of self-protection. They learned how whites perceived them and from there were able to determine the best way to survive in a world that demanded a brush with death daily. Children were also taught values such as self-respect and the importance of family and community by their parents.⁴⁶ These and many other factors played a part in individualizing the slave experience.

Black men and black women had very different

experiences in the antebellum South. One difference was the fact that the occupations held by each person varied, likely aligned with sexist interpretations of skills and duties that could be accomplished best by gender.⁴⁷ As previously mentioned, young girls faced the harsh reality of the great risk of sexual abuse by white men.⁴⁸ All women were placed in a separate column of “human” than men, and black women another column altogether, of “sub-human”, also separate from black men. The expected roles, behaviors, and degrees of control that were forced upon black women were incredibly severe, to the point where a woman’s natural ability to produce children and control her own body was policed through written rules concerning the breastfeeding of newborns: a schedule of when, down to the minute, where, how much, and everything that could potentially be considered of a woman’s role as a mother and as a slave depicted the dehumanization of African American women to an extreme level.⁴⁹ Black men were taught to be close to their families and communities by their experiences. It was necessary to develop a strong support system in order to preserve as much humanity as possible while confronting the difficulties of being a slave. Consequently, the hardship that was endured and the separation of genders in daily life cultivated a deep and strong comradeship between men and an emotional disconnect with women.⁵⁰ This disconnect evolved into the perception of exhibiting emotions as a weakness, that the men were meant to endure hardship with enough strength to get through it, that struggle was weakness. The emasculating projection of African American men’s self-worth has caused issues in the modern community that is rooted in this time period.

Yet, African Americans were not docile during the long installation of chattel slavery. The story of Nat Turner’s Rebellion was a significant moment in American History. Arguably the most violent, bloody, and fatal slave rebellion in the United States. The death toll was high, more than 50 whites and 100 African Americans, not including those who were executed as a result of trial.⁵¹ The tactics that were

used were undeniably brutal; women and children were no exceptions to the fury that fueled the rebellion. Yet, in Turner’s speech rallying for the event, he addressed that the purpose of the rebellion was not cold revenge and ravenous murder of oppressors but instead an offensive display in a “struggle for freedom.”⁵² In order to completely grasp the event, one must understand the context of the situation further than simply setting and motive. The rebellion was a result of a forced emigration, dehumanization, and instilling of rigid racial institutions since the moment the first Africans were taken to the New World in 1619.

To a degree it can be said that any forms of resistance to the institution of slavery could be expressed with the same intensity. A shipyard revolt in 1775 demonstrates the ardor of freedom with which people were willing to give their lives.⁵³ African Americans took action to change legislation, such as the Massachusetts Petition in 1775 and the Connecticut Petition in 1779 in which many slaves signed to urge local governments to end slavery.⁵⁴ The reason for such actions being, as the Kreyòl (the Haitian Creole population) would say, *tu moun se moun*, or, “every person is a person,” though in a legislative sense, African Americans were not.⁵⁵ They were not naive to the extent of institutionalized racism and knew the steps that needed to be taken to actively change the ways of their treatment. They conjured new business enterprises and facilitated industries in such a way that profitable markets arose. In some cases, catering, dressmaking, and other occupations allowed a few to buy their own freedom.⁵⁶ Runaway slaves, maroon communities, and The Underground Railroad forged a way for slaves to find and take their freedom.⁵⁷ All of these enterprises and challenges faced by the black community established an intricate and personal culture that is continuously built upon throughout history.

The Civil War

The Civil War became a defining moment for the evolution of the institution of slavery in American history. Southern distrust in a newly elected

Republican president had caused a division that would escalate to war. However, Lincoln did not support the abolition of slavery with enough gusto to implement any kind of executive actions, though that did not stop the Southern states from seceding. African Americans knew the opportunity could not be missed, that the next step to achieving freedom was to fight and fight hard in this national strife. From the beginning, “hundreds of thousands” of slaves from all over the country took action and made way to join the Union’s efforts.⁵⁸ Many slaves would get word that the Union army was near, pack what little they possessed, and march to a bloody future of war.⁵⁹ They were not immediately recognized as soldiers; in fact, there was much discomfort from whites surrounding former slaves participating in the military. First, the declaration of black refugees as “contraband” secured that they were not legally obligated to have been returned to former slave owners under the Fugitive Slave Act.⁶⁰ Not long after, African Americans were able to aid in the war effort as soldiers since it became clear that an influx of armed forces would prove beneficial. They managed many duties as they fought for freedom. For example, rallies encouraged others to enlist and they participated in many regiments of “artillery, cavalry, infantry, and engineers”.⁶¹ Women served as nurses, cooks, servants, and took care of laundry to help with the effort. Men were instructed to conduct manual labor most of the time and were also on the front lines of every battle.⁶² They organized raids and sabotaged Confederate fortifications and even served as spies in the South.⁶³ African Americans were not given the same treatment as their white allies. They were paid significantly less, only around \$10.00 compared to white wages of \$13.00+ and given less effective weapons for combat.⁶³ Nevertheless, African Americans stayed strong in their determination for freedom, and even protested their mistreatment. The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts regiment refused their pay for an entire year, until in 1864 the War Department declared equal pay.⁶⁵ African Americans were conscious of the fact that the Civil War was not just a momentary severance of

Northern and Southern values, but the moment that placed their freedom within reach. They fought harder and with more passion and accuracy than the whites next to them, as stated by those very same soldiers.⁶⁶

Conclusion

To propagate a more progressive contemporary society, these analyses aim to conduct a critical examination of African American history as well as several key interpretations of the status of people in the eyes of the law over time. In order to truly advocate for an alliance between all races that constitute American society, it is necessary to understand as much as possible concerning the topic of discussion. The most effective way to do so is a dissection of historical analyses and investigation of hidden information. With this examination, more people may be provided insight into the concerns and struggles that were faced by the African American community for a long time within the context of the country’s history. Perhaps the evaluation would also aid in the connection of these codifications and their effects on African American culture with the struggle that are still being faced today. Only with this understanding can a dialogue of true change begin. It is left to intrigued researchers to bridge the gap between the unintentionally uninformed and the demanders of change and it was the intention of this conglomeration of work to do so.

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THE FAILURE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

by William Winner

The New World facilitated economic opportunity, security, and independence. The adventurous settlers of Jamestown and Roanoke instilled these qualities into their daily lives with the aim of financial gain while the Pilgrims of Plymouth yearned for the relief these qualities offered from religious persecution. Unknowingly, these early European explorers and settlers set the groundwork for the American Dream: the idea that anyone can work their way toward success in the New World; specifically, parents will provide their children a higher standard of living than they had as children.¹ Through the ebb and flow, boom and bust, and pro et contra of economic prosperity, North America offered many, but not all, of its inhabitants a generally positive economic outlook. The American Dream provided the citizens of the English Colonies, and eventually the United States, with an everlasting hope in economic stability and upward mobility. While many of the nation's inhabitants, particularly within the nation's Black, Latinx, and Native American communities, struggle to achieve the economic and social prosperity that the American Dream offers, this optimism remains ever present. For over 400 years, this auspicious promise drove the population to strive for personal and economic affluence, until the Great Depression solidified the notion that this perceived potential prosperity would remain just a dream without a radical shift in the population's view of the American Dream. For most of the population, the American Dream remained an elusive idea devoid of any substantial realized fortune. The country's citizens demanded something more tangible than optimism and hope: concrete programs that insulated the nation against the economic disaster that besieged most of the world. During his inaugural address on March 4, 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt summarized the nation's longing for legislation that would "apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit."² Thus, the economic collapse of the Great Depression

and ultimately the failure of the American Dream represented the impetus for the rise of the social state and the eventual realization that the American Dream was never obtainable for every citizen of the United States.



People arriving at Ellis Island

The economic prosperity of the American Colonies utilized a unique collection of self-governance and an abundance of natural resources in creating the mythos of the American Dream. Famed 18th century economist Adam Smith wrote in his 1776 book, *Wealth of Nations*, "There are no colonies [in the world for] which the progress [of economic stability] has been more rapid than that of the English in North America. Plenty of good land, and liberty to manage their own affairs their own way, seem to be the two great causes of the prosperity of all new colonies."³ Smith's assertion that the English colonies in North America rapidly established economic solvency directly correlates with the development of

the American Dream and the possibility of upward mobility in society that much of the world lacked. In a fortuitous fluke of historical timing, the start of the American Revolutionary War preceded the publication of Smith's *Wealth of Nation* by almost an entire year. The writers of the Declaration of Independence codified the very principle that Smith mentioned as the catalyst for the nation's prosperity –liberty – in the document's preamble. The pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness became engrained in the ethos of the United States and, eventually these simple words transformed into the American Dream.⁴ The unprecedented rise from abject poverty towards absolute wealth and fame of American figures like Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and P.T. Barnum represented the ultimate goal of the American Dream; with hard work, cunning intellect, and perseverance anyone can reach the apex of society and economic prosperity. The ever-present allure of the American success story hung over the U.S. population, taunting them with rags to riches tales, further embedding the American Dream in the nation's consciousness.

"THE UNPRECEDENTED RISE FROM ABJECT POVERTY TOWARDS ABSOLUTE WEALTH AND FAME OF AMERICAN FIGURES LIKE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, ANDREW CARNEGIE, JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, AND P.T. BARNUM REPRESENTED THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE AMERICAN DREAM."

While the American Dream proves a concept fully embraced by most, a tangible form of a concept so

abstract remains elusive. The American Dream is more diverse than acknowledged yet carries some ubiquitous themes. The multitude of variations of the American Dream all maintain three fundamental elements: obtaining economic security, having an opportunity for upward social mobility, and having access to both life's necessities as well as its luxuries. James Truslow Adams coined the term "American Dream" in his 1931 bestseller *The Epic of American*.⁵ Adams called the American Dream a "dream of a better, richer and happier life for all our citizens of every rank."⁶ Often, the majority of the population never obtained, nor remotely realized, the Dream, but the tantalizing potential is there, and at its core, this is the American Dream – hope. From the inception of the American Colonies through the creation of the United States of America and beyond, the goal of reaching a comfortable lifestyle through perseverance and hard work has entrenched the population with the American Dream.

Universally, the economic status of any population can be divided into the haves and the have-nots, with multiple levels between. Generally, individuals do not drastically change their economic status, nor is there an expectation for this change. Following the industrial revolution, the United States' upward mobility coefficient hovered around the 35% mark, from 1870 to 1920.⁷ Having an inverse-correlation, this coefficient is the relationship between a parent's wealth, or poverty, and how that economic status is expected to directly affect the offspring's income when compared to the nation's mean income.⁸ Thus, for every \$1 of economic advantage or disadvantage a parent collects, compared to the mean, a child in the late 19th century is expected to receive \$.35 in income gains or reduction.⁹ This coefficient for the era in United States' history the spurred the mythical "land of opportunity" and the American Dream seems incredibly close to the world's current average economic mobility, 40%.¹⁰ A select few citizens achieved the upward mobility in the American Dream –including Franklin, Carnegie, Rockefeller, Barnum– but the majority of the population toiled their lifetime

in the economic level of their birth. To this point, the nation's average economic elasticity nearly doubled, from 35% to 49%, during the early 1900s, a period preceded by two massive influxes of immigrants into the country.¹¹ Interestingly, this period should have witnessed an explosion in upward mobility, a lower coefficient or percentage, because "the children of immigrants are ... able to climb the social [and economic] ladder most rapidly."¹² The decreased mobility in a period that should have witnessed a boon in economic mobility stands in stark contrast to James Truslow Adams' American Dream.

The American Dream provided the United States' population with an ambitious drive for economic success that aided the nation's development and expansion into the world's leadership in manufacturing. At the end of the 19th century, the United States reached the pinnacle as the world's largest and most powerful economy. The country's economic and political elite strived for the conservation of their personal status quo, the continuation of the nation's prosperity, and the prevention of economic calamity, a feat that eventually proved both fleeting and disastrous for the nation and the world. These failed efforts to control the nation's economic machine combined with multiple political debacles to create a global financial disaster. Eventually, The Great Depression shifted the public's attitude towards the American Dream, highlighting many of the Dream's failings.¹³

The precipitating events of the Great Depression begin with the Industrial Revolution and the economic shift from an agrarian society towards a manufacturing and consumption-based economy, or, the shift from a largely rural nation toward increased urbanization. Founding Father Thomas Jefferson envisioned a vast population of yeoman farmers providing the nation with a wealth of small independent farmers, which would distribute the nation's wealth across its citizens and prevent the large accumulation of wealth that perpetuated Europe's aristocracy. In a letter to John Jay, Jefferson

expressed what he saw as the young nation's need for small farming society:

We have now lands (sic) enough to employ an infinite number of people in their [the land's] cultivation. Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent (sic), the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its (sic) liberty and interests by the most lasting bands.¹⁴

Jefferson's desire for small independent farmers and skilled craftsmen, "yeomen of the city," serving as the backbone of the nation fit the 18th and early 19th centuries perfectly, until the Industrial Revolution transformed the economic and social dynamic of the United States.¹⁵ The mass migration towards manufacturing jobs in the nation's metropolitan centers during the mid-1900s challenged Jefferson's plan for the nation, reducing the number of rural farmers and skilled craftsmen while increasing the prevalence of unskilled labor in cities and pooling the nation's wealth and power into the hands of a decreasing number of citizens, and their companies. The explosion of large companies represented a fundamental shift towards large corporate entities and, subsequently, the federal government acquiescing to their demands. Alan Trachtenberg labeled this "The incorporation of America."¹⁶ Jefferson Cowie identifies Trachtenberg's argument as the explanation for the shift in political and judicial opinions that corporations are individuals and are therefore due the protection of the 14th amendment.¹⁷ This period of the "centralization of economic power in what had, not too long ago, been a small producers' democracy, led many to see the era [in] dramatic terms" which Mark Twain coined as the "Gilded Age" because of the era's "superficial ornamentation [that] hid a rotten core of scheming patronage and political profiteering."¹⁸

The "Gilded Age" promised economic prosperity that fueled massive waves of immigration into the United States during the late 19th and early 20th

century. Additionally, the rotten core of profiteering encouraged the mass exploitation of the nation's unskilled workforce. Wage suppression and worker abuse provided the impetus for rampant labor unrest which politicians and the judiciary stifled throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s.¹⁹ With the government suppressing unions by legislation, court ruling, and even military force, labor leaders like Sam Gompers and Eugene Debs worked tirelessly toward garnering a cohesive vision for the members of their unions. They advocated for greater economic solvency while never fully welcoming every potential member into their unions, typically excluding members upon overt racial and ethnic discrimination reasons.²⁰ The collective living condition of the unskilled worker remained stagnant with little hope of rising from perpetual poverty, but the continuing infusion of millions of unskilled workers from Europe and Asia produced widespread discrimination and further unrest.

The concentration of power in a decreasing number of people alienated the United States' working class, divorcing them from any of the independence and political power they experienced before the industrial revolution.²¹ The explosion of unskilled workers shifted the focus of employment, from the end-in-itself that skilled craftsmanship provided toward simply a means of production, thus removing the self-serving satisfaction in craft production.²² Organized labor countered these forces and offered the lonely worker the power that the government, courts, and corporations removed through years of worker suppression tactics. The Knights of Labor, an early and effective labor union, openly decried the great capitalists and corporations that degraded the "toiling masses."²³ Organizations like the Knights of Labor recognized the inherent flaws in the American Dream and advocated for ambitious remedies that aided the working class, but much of the intended measure missed huge portions of the population.

African Americans have been, and often still are, excluded from the American Dream. Being a slave and

achieving the American Dream are mutually exclusive. Slaves desired being released from bondage and that is not the same as striving for upward social mobility or economic security. Wanting your child to not be beaten and sold as property is not the same as desiring a higher standard of living for them. The relationship between African Americans and the American Dream changed after the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War. Freedom opened the American Dream to the African American population, albeit with limited access. Former slaves began recognizing the benefits within the American Dream and the potential it offered their children. Specifically, the increased opportunity for education and steady wages.²⁴

"HOWEVER, THE AMERICAN DREAM PERSISTED. MILLIONS OF IMMIGRANTS POURED INTO THE UNITED STATES' CITIES BELIEVING THEY COULD ACHIEVE THE AMERICAN DREAM WITH HARD WORK. FURTHERMORE, UPWARD 'MOBILITY AND GROWTH WERE... REAL IN THE UNITED STATES TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN THEY WERE IN THE OTHER COUNTRIES."

Slavery will forever be a blight on the United States' history until the end of time itself. The cruelty and longevity of the United States' system of slavery warrants this continued scornful reminiscence. The abhorrent treatment of African Americans only highlights the overall racist history of the United

States' and its white Christian population. This history, along with the limitations that slavery placed upon African Americans, cannot be overstated.

Labor Unions recognized the flaws in the American Dream but perpetuated the racial discrimination that the nation's minorities experienced. For Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Eastern Europeans, and others, the American Dream was either never offered or they never even knew it existed. Even James Truslow Adams realized the imperfect implementation of the American Dream in the United States.²⁵ Before the Great Depression, an increasing number of people understood the inherent limitations within the American Dream and actively worked to expand workers' rights across the United States, but millions would be excluded from the nation's unified optimism.

However, the American Dream persisted. Millions of immigrants poured into the United States' cities believing they could achieve the American Dream with hard work; furthermore, upward "mobility and growth were ... real in the United States to a greater extent than they were in the other countries," especially the countries of their origin.²⁶ The explosion of the nation's population coincided with consistent growth in economic productivity, but the economic boom of the "Gilded Age" waned during relatively short-lived recessions of the 1890s and 1900s; the boom returned, thus, ever perpetuating the mythos of the American Dream: success and prosperity are within reach.

The United States cornered the world's industrial market by the mid-1920s setting the stage for a global disaster following the stock market crash of 1929. The economic collapse reached a dizzying array of industries and families across the United States and the world. The disaster did not spare any segment of the economy. Five thousand of the nation's banks closed which "eliminated \$7 billion of depositors' assets" and forced hundreds of thousands of home foreclosures.²⁷ Farmers received an extra dose of punishment from the Great Depression: crippling

debt, plummeting prices, and a severe drought that compounded and resulted in the near collapse of the United States' farming industry.²⁸ The failure of the nation's economy resulted in half of its gross national product withering away like the drought stricken fields of the "Dust Bowl".²⁹ As the Great Depression reached its crescendo, the strong willed and independent U.S. population looked inward toward "declarations of self-blame, guilt, doubt, and despair," never fathoming that their plight was the result of events well beyond their control or collective imaginations.³⁰ New Deal-era politician Harry Hopkins summarized the Great Depression as being "beyond 'the natural limits of personal imagination and sympathy'" where "[y]ou can pity six men, but you can't keep stirred up over six million" people.³¹ As the nation dove into the depths of economic ruin, the nation's citizens yearned for something or someone to do something. Political leaders proved inept in the country's greatest moment of need and the population knew the calamity required a change, both politically and socially. The American Dream failed; a person could not simply work themselves towards prosperity, no matter how hard they worked and how dedicated they remained, and surly not when six million other people struggled from the same destitute conditions.

The nation's collective despair generated a shift from personal responsibility towards a unified desire for the greater good. Progressive reformers seized this shift in economic ideology and refocused the political landscape towards increasingly liberal social programs. Franklin D. Roosevelt won the presidency in 1933, based on a platform of social welfare programs that the populist believed would remedy the nation's economy. Roosevelt, during one of his regularly broadcasted Fireside Chats, recognized that the nation had progressed from the "individual self-interest and group selfishness" towards a collective more focused on the welfare of the entire nation.³² President Roosevelt described how he needed experiences away from Washington so he could "get away from the trees... and look at the whole forest."³³ Roosevelt implied that the nation

started recognizing the collective over the individual, a feat necessary for the growth and recovery of the nation. The implementation of the social welfare programs began the refocus and regeneration of an obtainable American Dream. He commented on the growing interest for the greater good by noting that an increasing number of people are “considering the whole rather than a mere part relating to one section, or to one crop, or to one industry, or to an individual private occupation”³⁴ Roosevelt called for legislative provisions that reduced unemployment and provided “practical means to help those who are unemployed;” the Social Security Act of 1935 and the New Deal developed as the nation’s political answer for the Great Depression.³⁵



Waiting for relief checks during Great Depression.

The Social Security Act developed from a collection of modest state and local programs designed as aid for the “indigent old, the blind, and dependent children.”³⁶ Roosevelt wanted “to ensure that [all] Americans would be protected in good times and bad,” not only the citizens in the limited number of municipalities that provided welfare assistance, which

were routinely underfunded.³⁷ Roosevelt called the Social Security Act the “cornerstone in a structure” designed to “provide a measure of protection... against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age.”³⁸

Following the creation of the Social Security Act, the Social Security Administration entered an extensive information gathering phase where it discovered the nation’s elderly survived in conditions resembling Roosevelt’s predicted poverty-ridden existence.³⁹ A Social Security publication quantified the elderly’s state of near destitution, describing that over three-quarters – six million– of the nation’s aged lived “wholly or partially dependent on [their] children, other relatives, or friends” and over one million subsisted “wholly or partially” on the support of private or public social agencies.⁴⁰ The nation’s population lived under a financial “sword of Damocles,” economic disaster being all but guaranteed by premature spousal death, catastrophic injury, or the gradual decline into old age for all but the richest.⁴¹ The wage insurance in the Social Security Act offered protection of these damning eventualities.⁴² Roosevelt appealed to the nation’s changing vision of the American Dream and actively lobbied for many of the elements that tied the population to the Social Security Act; “[w]e put [the] payroll contributions,” in the act, Roosevelt said, “so as to give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their pension and unemployment benefits. With those taxes in there, no damn politician can ever scrap my social security program.”⁴³

Historically, politicians in Washington, D.C. passionately held the view that an individual’s “unalienable Right” to “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” could not be infringed upon, as long as that pursuit did not infringe upon some else’s pursuit of the same.⁴⁴ Many notable New Deal agencies completely changed this status que in the nation’s capital. Progressive politicians seized upon the public’s clamoring for policies aimed at protecting workers and expanding their right to join together in

unions. The National Labor Standards Act (NLSA), commonly referred to as the Wagner Act, after the legislation's author Senator Robert Wagner, codified unions' rights under the protection of the 14th amendment. Wagner confessed about the prodigious movement in national opinion necessary for enacting reforms for organized labor; reminding John L. Lewis, the mineworkers' union leader, that "the time is ripe" to advance union rights and not the historical political "suicide" from years past.⁴⁵ The passage of the Wagner Act provided real equality between the nation's corporations and unions, but the nation's minorities experienced no such equality.

As the collective consciousness of the United States sought ever increasing progressive programs and political leaders, outright racism and discrimination endured throughout much of the nation and in the very agencies designed from the increasing liberal ideals of the nation.⁴⁶ The population yearned for a greater opportunity to achieve the American Dream, but not at the expense of racial equality. Knowingly or not, the language of the New Deal created a pervasive culture of racial inequality; the Social Security Act of 1935 excluded "domestic and migrant" workers from participating in the program, which disproportionally affected the minority population of the country.⁴⁷ To a small degree this changed in the 1950s, when the Social Security Act was expanded to include agricultural workers, allowing millions of the nation's minority workers participation in the Social Security program.⁴⁸ The United States' citizenry in the early 1930s gathered a unified vision for an increasingly equitable economic system which, combined the slow passage of time with the success of the Social State, ushered in greater social, political, and economic advances than anyone ever imagined.

The Great Depression and the failure of the American Dream share existence. The economic disaster illuminated the fundamental flaw in the eternal optimism that permeated the United States' psyche; neither hard-work nor perseverance could remedy the individual or nation's economic woes.

By repeated romanticized storytelling, the American Dream developed a cult-like following, perpetuating the myth that anyone can be an economic success. The intrinsic optimism of the American Dream contradicts the natural order of the world's socioeconomic structure. The hope, faith, and wish-fulness that a lowly peasant can game the economic structure of the world is asinine. Everyone on Earth, unknowingly, participates in a genetic lottery: the winners are born into wealth and the unlucky are tasked to toil in a merger existence; the United States' population is not exempt from this inevitability. Herein lays the American Dream, there is a chance.

For over 400 years, the belief that anyone can pull themselves out of the lowest depths of the country's economic system by their bootstraps fooled an entire nation; that is until the Great Depression wiped away much of the United States' economic production and created roving bands of vagabonds that wandered the nation looking for an opportunity, a chance for success. Then, the masses gathered their collective voices and sought a thing more real, actually tangible, and genuinely obtainable than optimistic hope. By joining hands and demanding socioeconomic programs designed to aid the poor and, eventually, the disenfranchised, the people of the United States achieved a more unified prosperity, but never complete unity, that led mankind into the 21st century. The American Dream did not die during the Great Depression, it merely transformed: from needing a fortunate stroke of economic luck to reach financial security – into an alliance between the social welfare state, with strong effective social programs, and hard work for a substantial opportunity to reach a successful and secure economic future; and a little luck never hurts. But, after years of success, the social programs in the United States created a burgeoning middle-class that is obsessed with the mythical American success story. This renewed fetishization of the American Dream has distanced them from the realization that a strong system of social programs and a growing middle-class go hand in hand.

1 Raj Chetty et al., "The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility since 1940," *Science*. sciencemag.org, April 28, 2017, accessed January 15, 2019, <http://science.sciencemag.org.ezproxy3.lhl.uab.edu/content/356/6336/398>.

2 Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1933. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14473>.

3 Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Edited by S. M. Soares. MetaLibri Digital Library, 29th May 2007. 442-43, https://www.ibiblio.org/ml/libri/s/SmithA_WealthNations_p.pdf.

4 "Declaration of Independence," *Archives.gov*, accessed August 5, 2018, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

5 Matthew Wills, "James Truslow Adams: Dreaming up the American Dream," *JSTOR.Daily.org*, May 18, 2015, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://daily.jstor.org/james-truslow-adams-dreaming-american-dream/>.

6 Ibid.

7 Claudia Olivetti and M. Daniele Paserman. "In the Name of the Son (and the Daughter): Intergenerational Mobility in the United States, 1850-1940." *The American Economic Review* 105, no. 8 (2015): 2695-724. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43821353>.

8 "A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility," *OEDC.org*, June 15, 2018, 26, accessed April 3, 2019, <https://www.oecd.org/social/soc/Social-mobility-2018-Overview-MainFindings.pdf>.; In a perfect world, a parent's economic status will not affect the child's economic outcome, thus a 0% intergenerational elasticity. Conversely, if a child's income is completely linked to the parent's income, this will represent 100% intergenerational elasticity. Both of these figures are the extreme scenario and unobtainable.

9 Claudia Olivetti and M. Daniele Paserman, "In the Name of the Son."

10 "A Broken Social Elevator?"; Across the 35 nations of the Organisation (sic) for Economic Cooperation and Development, the average intergeneration economic mobility is 40%, meaning 40% of a parent's economic advantage or disadvantage will be passed on to the next generation.

11 Claudia Olivetti and M. Daniele Paserman. "In the Name of the Son.;" Olivetti and Paserman cite the

United States as having two periods of substantial immigration, during the 1880s and the largest wave between 1900 and 1915.

12 Ibid.

13 There have been countless books, articles, and papers written about the cause of the Great Depression and the failure of politicians to thwart one of the largest and widest reaching economic disasters in recorded history. This paper will forgo an in-depth analysis of the Great Depression and focus on the failure of the American Dream within the constraints of the buildup to and beginning of the Great Depression and how this changed the nation's view of the American Dream.

14 "From Thomas Jefferson to John Jay, 23 August 1785," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/O1-O8-O2-O333>. The spelling and sentence structure are taken directly from Jefferson's writing.

15 Jefferson Cowie, *The Great Exception: The New Deal & the Limits of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 41.

16 Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1982), 3.

17 Cowie, *Great Exception*, 39.

18 Ibid, 38.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid, 56.

21 Ibid, 41.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 George Anderson. "LETTER FROM A FREEDMAN TO HIS OLD MASTER." *Liberator* (1831-1865), September 1, 140. <https://login.ezproxy3.lhl.uab.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy3.lhl.uab.edu/docview/91086854?accountid=8240>.

25 Wills, James Truslow Adams.

26 Cowie, *Great Exception*, 60.

27 Ibid, 98.

28 Ibid.

29 The Dust Bowl is the commonly used name for the manmade ecological disaster of the 1930s, centered around the six states adjacent to the Oklahoma panhandle.

Preceded by an unusually wet period, which prompted an expansion in the farming industry of the area. A long and intense drought followed the creation of thousands of acres of new farm land. The farming practices of the era exacerbated the situation by removing the topsoil's protective layer of grasses, thus exposing the topsoil to violent wind storms that eroded the soil and created a barren landscape. Multiple attempts at combating the disaster proved futile and relief arrived only after the drought ended.

30 Ibid, 98.

31 Ibid.

32 Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Fireside Chat.," April 28, 1935. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T.

Woolley, The American Presidency Project. Accessed May 4, 2018 <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

[ws/?pid=15046](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15046).

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Nancy J. Altman and Eric R. Kingson, *Social Security Works!: Why Social Security Isn't Going Broke and How Expanding It Will Help us All* (New York: New Press, 2015),

8.

37 Ibid, 8.

38 Ibid, 9.

39 Ibid.

40 Marjorie Sharon, "Economic Status of the Aged," March 1938. Social Security Administration accessed June 5, 2018, <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v1n1-3/v1n1-3p5.pdf>. This research dictated that anyone over the age of 65 would be counted as "aged."

41 Altman and Kingson, *Social Security Works!*, xviii.

42 Ibid.

43 Cowie, *Great Exception*, 111.

44 "Declaration of Independence."

45 Cowie, *Great Exception*, 109.

46 Many of the agencies created during the New Deal excluded African Americans and other minorities from receiving any assistance from the programs. Also, the Southern States implemented harsher Jim Crow ordinances that further disenfranchised African Americans.

47 Altman and Kingson, *Social Security Works!*, 11.

48 Ibid, 168.

RETHINKING AND RECLASSIFYING THE TIMELINE OF AMERICA'S WAR IN VIETNAM

by McCallie L. Smith III



Paratroopers Resting En Route to Quang Tri

In the decades following World War II, the United States immersed itself in military action across Asia, resulting in arguably one of the most unique, experimental, and misunderstood wars in American history. As with any major historical events, the general public may only interpret the situation on a surface level, unexposed to the deep and underlying details that truly develop that particular moment in time. In the case of the Vietnam War, many accept the idea that American occupation of the Indochinese peninsula began in 1965, yet such a depiction of the war establishes a misunderstanding of the incredibly significant event. To encourage a complete understanding of the dynamic between the two nations, the timeline of the Vietnam War requires both reevaluation and correction. To accomplish this, details of the war can be categorized into four major components: development of American interest in

Southeast Asia, military and political aid to South Vietnam, growing tension and aggression between the countries, and the engagement of extreme military action.

The belief that the Vietnam War began in 1965 is typically rationalized by one of two explanations, or the combination of both: the fear of the “domino effect,” best expressed as the possibility of the spread of communist control would cause a global shift toward the far left of the political spectrum, or the Gulf of Tonkin “incident,” in which the U.S. engaged in a direct confrontation with North Vietnam.¹ However, neither of those justifications can be considered a sole factor that led to American occupation as the United States actually had a long-standing interest in the fate of Vietnam, as well as a significant number of military personnel on the ground in South Vietnam prior to 1965.² This information indicates a much older and complex relationship between the two nations that when assessed, form a structurally sound foundation of background for the war.

The United States began addressing the issues surrounding Vietnam, particularly the perception held by government administrations that the southeastern Asian country was a threat to national security, through means of military channels, rather than political in the 1950s-60s.³ Considering the severity of the situation, major political decisions were made to move toward more militaristically driven actions without the knowledge or support of the American people. This unintentional ignorance of the American people creates a fallacy concerning the true nature of America’s position in the war. To encourage a better understanding of the dynamic between the two nations, a redefinition of the war’s timeline allows for more complete analysis. This new

representation is best expressed when divided into four components: the first being America's developing interest in Southeast Asia with the support of French colonial forces, the second, the period of military aid and political assistance to South Vietnam. Next, the growing presence and direct responses to aggression with military personnel and aid. Finally, the period of extreme military action against North Vietnam, and the eventual withdrawal in 1975.

Vietnam proves no stranger to defending against foreign invaders. Under the Han Dynasty, the Chinese invaded and conquered Vietnam in 111 BCE, but by 939 CE, the Vietnamese people were able to defeat the Chinese and reclaim their country.⁴ Another instance of foreign intrusion in Vietnam happened in the mid-nineteenth century. France invaded the Southeast Asian country in 1882 to colonize and impose Western beliefs, ideals, and values on the people of Vietnam; of these cultural impressions was the conversion of the Vietnamese people to Christianity and the implementation of a different educational system.⁵ The Vietnamese population exhibited major opposition to the imposition of French culture. Historian R. B. Smith illuminates the resistance to the French through 'the affaire de Bien-Hoa' which involved an attack on a prison east of Ho Chi Minh City. "The events suggest a degree of coordination among Vietnamese [...] in the growth of anti-French Feeling."⁶ Smith also informs that, "it was not until 1930-1 that the French had to face a recurrence of the kind of widespread rural opposition that had taken place in 1916."⁷

Vietnam endured French occupation until Germany invaded the European nation during World War II. The Nazi Party established the Vichy government in all French colonies, which included the occupied Vietnam.⁸ This newly instituted fascist authority allowed the Japanese Imperial Army to gain access to all Vietnamese airfields, ports, and other critical areas. Once obtained, the locations faced conversion into staging points for the spread of the Axis war efforts across Southeast Asia.⁹ Again, much of the

Vietnamese population exhibited dissatisfaction to their new oppressors. Ho Chi Minh, a well-educated, well-traveled, and well-respected Vietnamese politician, drew support and followers from both North and South Vietnam. He led the Viet Minh, an independence movement comprised of communist and Vietnamese nationalists, openly fought against the Japanese during World War II, and continued to be a major figure throughout both Indochina Wars.¹⁰ In August of 1945, only a few weeks from the formal surrender of Japan, Ho led an uprising in which the Viet Minh and other political organizations overthrew the Japanese administration controlling his native country. In September of the same year, the newly independent country celebrated their successful coup d'état when Ho Chi Minh established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.¹¹ However, this freedom was short-lived as the French aspired to reclaim their colonial territories in Indochina after World War II and attempted to regain control by invasion.

"THERE EXISTED THE POSSIBILITY OF AVOIDING BLOODSHED AND DIPLOMATICALLY HANDLING THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM, HOWEVER, THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY."

On January 18th, 1946, from the northern capital in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh wrote a letter addressed directly to President Harry S. Truman. In this letter, Ho praised the Allies for their successes and boasted on their desire to establish peace around the globe. He informed Truman about efforts made by the Viet Minh during the war, for example, how they had

fought the Japanese and French collaborators on behalf of the Allied endeavours. He also disclosed to Truman the methods the French used to collaborate and work alongside the Japanese during World War II, elaborating that the French had increased their aggression towards Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh saw the devastating potential of this aggression and pleaded to the president:

...on behalf of my people, and my government, I respectfully request you to interfere for an immediate solution to the Vietnamese issue. The people of Vietnam earnestly hopes that the great American Republic would help us to conquer full independence and support us in our reconstruction work.¹²

These astounding words describe Ho's desire to have an independent, unified republic in Vietnam. An aspiration not all that different from those of the American founders during the late eighteenth century. There existed the possibility of avoiding bloodshed and diplomatically handling the situation in Vietnam, however, the American government would not seize the opportunity. Many argue over the reasoning for America's refusal to recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Perhaps the causation of comprehensive conflict is parallel to the uninformed nature of the general public's opinion on the Vietnamese War; the right information to deduce a viable inference on the subject. If credible sources were provided, to discern the truth, the arguments over the issue may cease. The pleas of Ho Chi Minh's for American support during a fight for independence were transcribed in his letter to Truman, yet his words remain rarely examined. Why are more scholars not paying attention to or choosing to ignore this letter? The answer could be access, as the letter likely had been classified as top secret and not available for an extended amount of time.

One useful reference to this letter exists in the recent Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentary series on the Vietnam War by directors

Ken Burns and Lynn Novick.¹³ Burns and Novick address the letter in the first episode of the document series titled "Déjà Vu (1856-1961)." When the letter is mentioned in the documentary, they claim that president Truman's aid never presented the executive leader with the letter. Either Truman never received the letter, like Burns and Novick claim, or it is possible that he received it, but simply chose not to act. In the case of the latter, it would suggest that it was perceived as the best way to maintain his integrity.¹⁴ However, regardless of what is true, the outcome remains the same: Truman did not want to cause unnecessary friction between the United States and the newly re-established democratic French government.

Knowing that France has been one the United States oldest democratic allies, it can be surmised that the United States did not wish to exert its influence or power against the French in support of Vietnam. Such action, if taken, could have challenged the French as an American ally and could have potentially destabilized the foundation of French democracy. Also, it would put a permanent stain on western democracy. This letter from Ho Chi Minh to President Harry Truman is not popularly cited or present in the historiography of America's War in Vietnam, apart from Burns and Novick's documentary, but it remains a critical moment for United States relations with Vietnam. This aspect of America's relationship and stance on Vietnam that has been ignored, or inaccessible in the past should be included in the history of the Vietnam War and recognized as a vital aspect to understanding the evolution of the war.

By 1946, Vietnam split into two independent governments. The North possessed a communist government, while the Southern region sported a democratic administration. A war between the French and Viet Minh forces ensued and came to be known as the First Indochina War. Assured of victory at first, the French quickly dismissed the true cause of the war—the will of the people of Vietnam, including both communist and anti communist leaders, to unify

and gain their independence.¹⁵ The United States continuously grew weary of the spread of communism in Vietnam and the “domino effect” it could have on the rest of Southeast Asia. The “domino effect,” or “domino theory,” had been developed by the former Allied Supreme Commander, Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954.



South Vietnamese Liberation Fighters Clearing Roads to the Enemy

Authors Peter Leeson and Andrea Dean explain in an article published by The Journal of Political Science that: “According to the democratic domino theory, increases or decreases in democracy in one country spread and ‘infect’ neighboring countries, increasing or decreasing their democracy in turn.”¹⁶ President Eisenhower established the “falling domino theory” during his time as Commander-in-Chief, and it spawned from his concern over the growing presence of communism around the globe. The dominoes in his theory were other democratic nations, which were being “threatened” by communism. However, the real major, overarching concern was the threat to western democracy that loomed if these dominos

fell. Eisenhower’s perception of potential threat eventually led the United States to supply aid to the French during their conflict with the Viet Minh and the communist government of North Vietnam. A French garrison at Dien Bien Phu in North Vietnam fell to the Viet Minh in May of 1954, leading the French to negotiate an end to the war. This urge to conclude the conflict resulted in a peace conference in Geneva that same year.¹⁷ The events that transpired between 1945 and 1954 should be viewed as the first of the proposed segments to America’s war in Vietnam as these years saw an increase of concern over the situation surrounding Vietnam for the United States. The land of the free began to focus more resources to ensure the protection of the democratic South of Vietnam from the communist North.

The Geneva conference, spanning from April to July of 1954, prompted a ceasefire and the division of the country into two separate regions divided by a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). All Viet Minh were to remain on the north side of the DMZ, and the French stayed south. The purpose of the DMZ was to endure until a democratic election between the leaders of both the North and South unified the country of Vietnam in 1956.¹⁸ Despite the efforts that were put forth, the elections to unify the country never actually took place. Ngo Dinh Diem, the leader of South Vietnam whose actions can be closely aligned with the term “corrupt,” preemptively proclaimed himself the first president of the new Republic of Vietnam a year before the elections were slated, barring them from ensuing. The North continued to display aggressive actions against the South and the division within the nation was visible to the United States. Because of the hostile nature of the North, America ultimately supported Diem as the democratic leader in South Vietnam. The Viet Cong, referred to as VC by American forces, acted as agents of the North and conducted idiosyncratic guerilla warfare on the military corps of the South. In response to this aggression, the United States began to increase aid and ultimately military personnel to the South Vietnamese government.

During the First Indochina War between the French and Viet Minh, the United States developed unease concerning the state of affairs in Vietnam, particularly the fear of the red blanket of communism being draped over other lands. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Harry S. Truman and his administration were urged to increase influence through support of the anti communist forces in the south. Launching a ground war on the Korean peninsula, President Truman sought to protect the democratic government of South Korea from communist overthrow. The situation in Korea on the surface seems to be identical to Vietnam; a communist north fighting a democratic south for unification. However, as similar as the situations may have been, they differed dramatically.¹⁹ In a statement given on November 30, 1950, President Truman addresses the aggression in Korea and says, “If [communist] aggression is successful in Korea, we can expect it to spread through Asia and Europe to this hemisphere. We are fighting in Korea for our own national security and survival.”²⁰ Here, President Truman’s words solidified America’s military resolve in Korea and perpetuated the anti-communist sentiments of the United States.

During the Korean War, the United States government continued to support the South Vietnamese the French with various forms of aid against northern communists. The United States also sent officers from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and military personnel as a part of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) attached to the American Embassy as early as October of 1954.²¹ MAAG groups, which are still implemented today, are relatively small organizations that consist of individuals from various intelligence agencies and military personnel from multiple branches. MAAGs are established and deployed to countries that are allied with the U.S. who request military aid and assistance. MAAGs work on behalf of the American government in advising and aiding allied governments on all matters of defense. The MAAG that operated in South Vietnam in 1954 conducted operations in a truly advisory status. Meaning that from 1954 to 1961, the

MAAG only provided military advice, intelligence, and financial aid to the South Vietnamese government rather than physical assistance. In conjunction with the French, South Vietnam was supplemented through means of training ranging from tactics to the use of new weapon technologies, also general advice on all military aspects.²² Over time, the number of advisors began to increase, and as the number of advisors increased so did the scope and nature of their operations.

The belief that communism was a monolithic entity spreading across the globe set on the destruction of western democracy permeated throughout Washington. A strong belief in the “domino effect” that could happen in Southeast Asia was held by the Americans and persisted over the course of America’s military involvement in Vietnam and proved to be a critical miscalculation, ultimately leading to an unfortunate outcome. President Eisenhower said in a meeting on January 19, 1961 between his outgoing administration and the incoming Kennedy administration; “if Laos is lost to the Free World, in the long run we will lose all of Southeast Asia.”²³ This perception transcended to Kennedy’s administration, though adversely applying to Vietnam. Both administrations, like Truman’s before, saw communism as a monolithic entity and viewed it not only as threat to liberal western democracy across the world, but a threat to national security as well. This would lead the American government to treat the situation in Vietnam as a direct threat to national security and make several miscalculated decisions politically and militarily. The possibly the greatest occurred when the United States used military channels to treat the communist threat in Vietnam rather than a political, less physically- confrontational approach.

By 1961, the situation in Vietnam had become a grave concern to the United States. At the time, approximately 16,000 United States Military Advisors had been dispatched to South Vietnam. Once they arrived, they provided aid the South Vietnamese Army by training and patrolling alongside them in the field.²⁴

President John Kennedy's decision to send military advisors to South Vietnam added more men and more stress to an already strenuous situation in Vietnam. That same year, in a National Security Action Memorandum, President Kennedy stated:

The U.S. objective and concept of operations stated in the report are approved: to prevent Communist domination of South Vietnam; to create in that country a viable increasingly democratic society, and to initiate, on an accelerated basis, a series of mutually supporting actions of military, political, economic, psychological, and covert character designed to achieve this objective.²⁵

**"THE BELIEF THAT
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MONOLITHIC ENTITY
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THROUGHOUT WASHINGTON."**

This approval allowed American military forces to operate within a certain degree of impunity and conduct clandestine and covert military operation across North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Now with a sizeable force represented on the ground in Vietnam, America was in direct opposition to North Vietnamese forces. By responding to the growing aggression in Vietnam with military intervention the United States now had "boots on the ground" and was at war in Vietnam. Even though American soldiers in the field were advisors, they were fighting alongside and leading South Vietnamese forces in combat against

VC and North Vietnamese forces. Scholars have commonly applied the "boots on the ground" phrase to the moment when American Marines landed on the beaches of Saigon in 1965. Published in 2009, John Prados's book, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* uses the phrase in reference to the action taken by President Johnson in 1965 that led to Marine deployment.²⁶ However, I argue the phrase "boots on the ground" should be applied to the sending of 16,000 military advisors to Vietnam under President Kennedy. This amount of direct engagement is reflective of the misinformation of the public and is significant in the understanding of America's military commitment to Vietnam.

Early 1962, the United States continued to increase military assistance to South Vietnam. In doing so, the United States set up a joint-service command with the Department of Defense (DOD). This joint-command would become known as the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), whose responsibilities encompassed the overseeing of all military assistance and military action taken by the United States in Vietnam. MACV would be overseen by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and they were to report to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who answered only to the president. The formulation of MACV and the intricate system of authority came out of necessity.²⁷ Within the year, the scope of operations, aid, and personnel became too much for MAAG's relatively small staff to handle. In order to properly oversee the ever-growing military presence, as well as the aid and operations in Vietnam, the United States needed to generate a larger command organization within the country. The response to the problem was the creation of MACV, a much larger organization under direct supervision of personnel from the DOD, the JCS, Robert McNamara, and the president. MACV was yet another military response to continued aggression from North Vietnamese forces, though the necessary formation of MACV may also be interpreted as a manifestation of the United States' real fear and belief in the "domino effect" and its supposed threat to national security. The mere fact that MACV

formulated in response to continued aggression from North Vietnam proves extremely significant, as it was only one year after Kennedy made the decision to send advisors, MACVs shows that the United States showed no sign of reducing forces and was resolute in its commitment to preserve democracy in Vietnam.

The year 1963 had great implications for both North and South Vietnam, as well as the United States. South Vietnam experienced a political coup, led by South Vietnamese military commanders, in which President Ngo Dinh Diem was overthrown and killed. The new democratic leader, that was supported by the United States, was South Vietnamese Army General Nguyen Khanh. The same year, tragedy struck the United States when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. With the death of President Kennedy, Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson, became Commander-in-Chief. He was sworn into office while onboard Air Force One before taking off from a Texas airfield to return to Washington. With Johnson inheriting the difficult situation of aggression in Vietnam, he continued to respond to that aggression by military means and proved to be more active in his responses than the previous Commander-in-Chief. Different men with different approaches, both General Khanh and President Johnson shared one similarity with their respective predecessors: General Khanh proved to be just as corrupt and disinterested in the will of the people, and President Johnson believed, like Kennedy, in the “domino effect” and the supposed threat it posed to American national security. South Vietnam would see a revolving door of democratic leaders over the course of Johnson’s presidency, which would only make the situation more strenuous on the United States and South Vietnam.

The United States, still gradually exerting military aid and operations, began using American pilots to fly not only cargo, but conduct missions for the South Vietnamese Army, and for the South Vietnamese Special Forces Commandos in 1963.²⁸ Those pilots would have been, like the advisors, at risk of being confronted by VC or North Vietnamese

Regular Army soldiers. When Johnson gained office, he did not change Kennedy’s cabinet secretaries; he retained every key figure that Kennedy had in his administration. This greatly influenced the projection of the war henceforth. The mishandling of the situation in Vietnam cannot be ascribed to the new president or cabinet secretaries, but from a combination of miscalculated decisions and misunderstandings, as well as continued military responses to aggressive actions, buttressed against a transition of political leaders in South Vietnam and the United States. The following year, the situation in Vietnam grew ever more threatening to the United States. It proved to be the year when the U.S. began to act more severely in Vietnam through military action, which involved launching large scale ground operations in Vietnam. American occupation and involvement in Vietnam reached a boiling point in 1964, when a heavy influx of military response to aggression, the formulation of the Special Operations Group attached to MACV, and the “incident(s)” that took place in the Gulf of Tonkin involving the American ships U.S.S. Maddox and the U.S.S. Turner Joy.²⁹ Perhaps it was the death of President Kennedy that changed the course of action so drastically. Or rather, a truly deep and developed fear of the spread of communism. Regardless of which, the fact remains the same: The United States felt no other alternative than a strong military influence in Vietnam.

The Special Operations Group that was formulated in 1964 was a group known as MACVSOG conducted covert, clandestine, and psychological operations against North Vietnam, as well as into Laos and Cambodia. Individuals and organizations with knowledge of MACVSOG’s existence and scope of their operations were limited due to the very nature of the organization.³⁰ The scope and breadth of operations on the ground in South East Asia had become so extensive that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had to give control of private, furtive, and intelligence operations to MACV, which would come under the auspices of MACSOG. While the CIA still had great pull in the decision-making process

of MACVSOG, according to the chain of command, ultimate control came under: the MACVSOG Commander Colonel Clyde R. Russell in Vietnam, then the JCS, then Defense Secretary McNamara, and finally President Lyndon Johnson. Shortly after its formulation MACVSOG changed its name from Special Operations Group to Studies and Operations Group (SOG) in order to maintain the secretive nature of the group, as well as the unit's ability to be listed on the ledgers and records so they could receive funding inconspicuously.³¹ All of this took place during the early months of 1964. The formulation of SOG, and the nature of its operations, signifies America's commitment to extensive ground operations in Vietnam. It is often not even acknowledged in the standard educational text and traditional histories, but it has great significance to understanding the true narrative of America's war in Vietnam.

Originally, this information had been kept from the American public for many years. The people remained blind to the actions their government took in Vietnam in the years prior to 1965, except for the immediate family of advisors, pilots, and other government operators who were already in country. However, a continuation of ignorance concerning the secret history of SOG and its role with the Vietnam War should be abandoned. The timelines provided by scholars has various beginning dates and very little information on the scope of covert operations prior to 1965; they rarely speak on the significance of the presence of American advisors and pilots prior to 1965. Also, works that do address, in length, SOG and the covert nature of the war, only speak on the actual missions or the SOG without providing an analysis on the overarching effects they had on the evolution of the war. In order to fully comprehend America's war in Vietnam, all of the following must be reconsidered: the significance and role of American advisors and pilots in Vietnam from 1961-64, the miscalculation of the will of the people (both Vietnamese and American), an overbearing desire to respond to aggression with military means by the U.S., as well as the scope and nature of SOG operation in 1964.

In 1964, the United States experienced a controversial exchange of fire between North Vietnamese naval vessels when the U.S.S. Maddox, and the U.S.S. Turner Joy were "patrolling" in the Gulf of Tonkin. This is commonly referred to in American history as the "Gulf of Tonkin Incident." President Johnson used the "incident(s)" to get Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which gave the president greater authority and power over action in Vietnam. The "incident(s)," that had occurred in the Gulf of Tonkin, as traditionally told in history, were presented as an unprovoked hostile action taken by North Vietnam against United States naval vessels "neutrally" patrolling the Gulf.³² That story was true to a certain degree, as North Vietnam had taken aggressive action against the U.S. ships in the Gulf, the controversy centers around the provocation. Either from direct military actions taken at the time, or possibly a series of military aid and actions that had been carried out since 1961, Vietnam was indeed provoked. The Maddox and the Turner Joy were on separate intelligence gathering missions in the gulf in support of a South Vietnamese raid on two North Vietnamese Islands. Robert M. Gillespie, in his book, *Black Ops, Vietnam: An Operational History of MACVSOG*, theorized that the separate missions actually constituted a combined intelligence gathering mission, all in support of the raid being carried out by the South Vietnamese Army.³³ Regardless of the true nature of the events that took place in the Gulf between U.S. and North Vietnamese warships, the outcome of the events had greatly impacted the evolution of America's war in Vietnam. The events gave President Johnson the "authority," and ability to not only frame North Vietnam as a hostile force directing aggressive action directly at America, rather than just South Vietnam, but also to encourage Congress to pass what would become the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

"The closest the United States ever got to a declaration of war in Vietnam was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of August 1964. The events surrounding the resolution generated intense controversy that

continues to this day,” declared Defense Secretary Robert McNamara.³⁴ McNamara’s words ring true and will for generations, they also present a good understanding of what the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution meant to individuals in Washington – the ability to openly conduct military operations in Vietnam without causing international controversy. By having a resolution approved by Congress and not an official act of war, Johnson had the authority to continue enactment of aggressive action against North Vietnam while protecting the United States from North Vietnam’s communist allies. Once again, the United States responded to aggressive actions by the North through military means rather than attempting to address and handle the foreign affairs of Vietnam in a political sphere.

Typically, this point in the timeline is when traditional histories and educational texts begin to talk about the United States in Vietnam. Commonly introducing the idea of the “domino effect,” briefly mentioning advisors prior to 1965, then addressing the Gulf of Tonkin “incident” and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, cut to the United States Marines landing in South Vietnam in 1965. This is problematic for many reasons, as the argument presented here has shown America had been at war in Vietnam long before 1965. The war can instead be from 1954-64 by: the implementation of MAAG, combined with the deployment of military advisors and pilots between 1961-63, alongside the formulation of MACV in 1962 and SOG in 1964 and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that same year. These various aspects of the war are either misinterpreted, chosen to be ignored, forgotten about, or inaccessible.

Now, it should be stated that it has not the intention of this argument to discredit or claim a greater or lesser importance for any American servicemen in

country at the given time from the end of World War Two to the Fall of Saigon in 1975. Rather, it is the opposite. The United States has taught its history about Vietnam in a way that ignores the sacrifices and efforts made by many Americans, both before and after 1965. Failure to recognize the extremely unique position and handling of the Vietnam war with ignorance to educate the American people properly on the complexities of Vietnam undermines the intelligence and maturity of the American people, as well as the service and sacrifice of the war’s veterans.

By examining the traditional narratives of the Vietnam War, additionally combining the gained knowledge of recently declassified documents on covert military operations in conjunction with a new understanding of the role of American military personnel’s advisory status, one can see that America’s war in Vietnam firmly began long before 1965. By addressing this convoluted history holistically, the escalation of full-fledged war hit a high water mark in 1964, not from one single event or belief, but instead from a culmination of many. By understanding that the United States often responded quickly to aggression and actions by North Vietnam through military means, it is apparent that the nature of the war began earlier than prompted, the United States to do everything just short of full mobilization of the country in order to compensate for a threatened political enterprise in Vietnam. As it is presently forty-three years past the fall of Saigon, and only growing further from the Vietnam War, continued attention, study, and research must be done to continue broadening the intricate understanding of America’s war in Vietnam, ultimately persuading a willingness to accept this profoundly difficult part of American history.

1 The terms “domino effect” and “incident” in quotations as one of them (the domino effect) was a political theory which has proven to be only half truth, and the term incident as it relates the actions in the Gulf of Tonkin and the actions that came from it were not truly incidental but were by the true definition of the term.

2 For a better understanding of this common point of view, see Robert McNamara’s auto biography for a good account of general statistical information: Robert Strange McNamara and Brian VanDeMark, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

3 Ibid.

4 Nicola Di Cosmo, "Han Frontiers: Toward an Integrated View," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129, no. 2 (April–June 2009): 199–214, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40593813>.

5 Charles Keith, "Protestantism and the Politics of Religion in French Colonial Vietnam," *French Colonial History* vol. 13 (2012): 141–74, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41938226>.

6 For more information about opposition to French colonial rule see R. B. Smith’s article: R.B. Smith, “The Development of Opposition to French Rule in Southern Vietnam 1880–1940,” *Past & Present* 54 (1972): 94–129. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650200>. 111.

7 Ibid, 117.

8 Vichy is the term applied to the French government during Nazi occupation, as the Vichy government was at the servitude of the Nazis’.

9 *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947–1954* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), 4–5.

10 To read more about Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh during World War two see this publication by the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s Office: *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947–1954* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), 5–9.

11 *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947–1954* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), 11.

12 Ho Chi Minh to Harry Truman, letter, January 18, 1946, National Archives Catalog, Records of the Foreign Service Post of the Department of State, 1778 - ca. 1991, National

Archives, Washington D.C. The spelling of “hopes” in the letter from Ho Chi Minh to Harry Truman, is spelled that way in the letter, and because it is a direct quote the spelling was not corrected for the purposes of this paper.

13 *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, season 1, episode 1, “Déjà Vu (1858–1961),” directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, aired September 17, 2017, on PBS, Apple TV Streaming Service, (Florentine Films, 2017).

14 Ibid.

15 *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947–1954*, (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), 12–17.

16 For a more extensive reading on the domino theory reference this article: Peter T. Leeson, and Andrea M. Dean, "The Democratic Domino Theory: An Empirical Investigation," *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 3 (2009): 533–51. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25548136>.

17 *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War, 1947–1954*. (Washington, D.C.: Office of Joint History, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004). 151–176.

18 Ibid, 151–176.

19 To read more on the political, strategic, and military differences between the Korea’s and the Vietnam’s reference this book: Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, (New York: Presidio Press, 1995), chap. 1–4.

20 Compilation of certain published information on the military situation in the Far East [by the staff of the Armed Services Committee with the assistance of the Legislative Reference Service, Library of Congress] (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1951). 138. HeinOnline, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.comprint/ccpblin0001&i=146>.

21 Robert M. Gillespie, *Black Ops, Vietnam: An Operational History of MACVSOG* (New York: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 1–10.

22 *Pentagon Papers: Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force*. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1940–1968). HeinOnline, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.pentagon/pentpap0011&i=16>.

23 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS): 1961–1963*, John F. Kennedy vol. XXIV, *Laos Crisis(1994) 1* (1994) January - March 1961: Transition from the Eisenhower to the Kennedy Administration. HeinOnline, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.forrel/frusjk0024&i=25>.

24 See Robert McNamara's auto biography for a good account of general statistical information: Robert Strange McNamara, and Brian VanDeMark. In *Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

25 This memorandum was addressing a report from the Vietnam Task Force (VTE) to President Kennedy titled: "Program of Action to Prevent Communist Control of South Vietnam." 1961-1963, John F. Kennedy vol. I, Vietnam, 1961 (1988) 133 (1988) Creation of the Presidential Task Force on Vietnam and the Drafting of a Program of Action on Vietnam, April – May. HeinOnline, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.forrel/frusjk0001&i=155>.

26 John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 127.

27 For a better understanding why MACV was necessary see Robert M. Gillespie's book: *Gillespie, Black Ops*.

28 To find more information on the presence and missions of American pilots in Vietnam before 1965 see Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archives. There they have a large collection of unpublished government documents from the Vietnam War. Including after action reports, and

mission debriefings from American pilots before and after 1965: "AFTER ACTION REPORT [HMM - 163]," Vietnam Center and Archive, Item no. 1201080043, 30 July 1962, Folder O80, US Marine Corps History Division Vietnam War Documents Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, Accessed 05 Dec. 2018, https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/repositories/2/digital_objects/228474.

29 For extended information on all these topics reference the following works: Gillespie, *Black Ops, Vietnam*., McNamara and VanDeMark, *In Retrospect*.

30 Gillespie, *Black Ops, Vietnam*.

31 Gillespie, *Black Ops, Vietnam*, 11-12.

32 The President also presented the "incident(s)" that occurred in the Gulf this way to the American public at the time. He presented it as unprovoked hostile action taken by the North Vitesse against the U.S.

33 For a full explanation of the theory of a combined mission between the Maddox and Turner Joy see Robert M. Gillespie's book: *Gillespie, Black Ops, Vietnam*, 24-27.

34 McNamara and VanDeMark, *In Retrospect*, 127.

HISTORY ON THE SILVER SCREEN: A FILM REVIEW OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

by Kendra Bell



Mary, Queen of Scots

The uncertainty surrounding the accurate development of a mainstream Hollywood production inspired by historical events or people proves neither new nor surprising. Time and time again, with few exceptions, historians are left disappointed by the representations of the past in feature films while popular culture becomes further removed from the truth of history and spoon-fed dramatizations of the past. Of course, the consideration of taking responsibility for the dynamic story of Queen Mary Stuart almost guarantees prevalent inconsistencies and inaccuracies. After

all, most directors do not specialize in the history of their subjects. Josie Rourke, director of *Mary, Queen of Scots*, attempted to tackle the difficulties of presenting a story of a historical figure to popular culture and, while having produced an entertaining film for audiences, once again adds to the never-ending list of bad Hollywood representations of history.

Destined for a difficult and painstaking life, Mary Stuart immediately assumed her royal role of the queen at a young age due to the demise of her father and siblings. For this much weight to be placed on the shoulders of a young woman, of course, she would have developed a fiery edge to cope, however, the film's depiction of this seems to be fabricated, akin to the depiction of food in media advertisements, in which much of the food has been doctored. An audience sees a delicious cheeseburger, patty not too greasy with cheese melted perfectly, a crisp bun and trimmings that must have been plucked and rinsed straight from the earth. Yet, in reality, a clay-formed patty, cheese strategically melted with a heated palette knife, sesame seeds carefully placed and glued with tweezers, all trimmings layered in the forefront of the burger creating depth with a final touch of syringe injected ketchup and mustard. Similarly, in *Mary, Queen of Scots*, the audience sees a powerful, headstrong woman fighting for feminism and ideas far ahead of her time, yet it proves doubtful the dramatic outbursts of her progressive nature were real and transpired as depicted in the film without punishment occurring long before her eventual beheading in 1587.

This framing of her narrative seems exploitative of the progress and the dialogue of today, especially in the movie industry following the popularization of the #MeToo movement. The topic itself remains

important and materials are always needed for sparking conversations about it, however, portraying Mary Stuart's struggle with the limitations of womanhood even as a queen with the highlight of an outspoken and socially forward activist becomes historically inaccurate. Putting the narrative in perspective, she ruled over Scotland alone from 1561- 67, roughly 162 years before the Salem witch trials that persecuted and executed many women for suspicions of witchcraft within a society that utilized a different knowledge system which rejected those that challenged the accepted gender roles of the time. The scene of the film where Mary confronts her privy council and dismisses a member that believes women as inferior and denounces her acceptance of multiple religious subjects in wake of the Protestant Reformation becomes a prime example of a behavior that Mary most likely did not exhibit.

The sexuality of her beloved Lord Darnley serves as another major plot point of the film. Within the context of the film's narrative, the closeness in relation does not become revealed. Lord Darnley and Mary, in fact half-first cousins, share a colorful passion on screen. That is, until the dramatic reveal of his feelings of attraction toward another, her Italian secretary David Rizzio. Historically speaking, Darnley and several accomplices stabbed Rizzio roughly 56 times in front of a six-month pregnant queen, however, the reasons for this are a little bit strewn in cinematic representation. Darnley's romantic relationship with Rizzio does not enjoy any historical evidence considering the political and religious climate surrounding their positions in the administration. Darnley drank excessively, routinely became agitated, and quickly became a dislikeable person in the eyes of others in powerful positions. This eventually isolated him from both his position and his wife, observable when she refused him the authority of the crown in the event of her death. Many rumors spread concerning the true parentage of Mary's son, James, and people suspected an affair between Mary and Rizzio. Sufficient evidence points toward the Darnley's orchestration of the murder of Rizzio, and the claims

of the king consort as a murderer ultimately resulted in his own death. Explosions that attributed toward his demise prove likely intentional, which Rourke's film



Queen Elizabeth

more or less depicts.

Distantly-related Mary and Queen Elizabeth both ruled countries with the aid of council contemporarily as seen in the film. However, one of the biggest components of the movie remains the suggestion of their face-to-face encounter that affected the fate of both of their lives. Though an interesting notion, this becomes an example of nothing more than wishful

thinking. The two women, in fact, never met in person. Rourke's inclusion of distorted accounts and cherry-picked quotes of their written correspondence greatly romanticizes the relationship between the two women.

Mary, Queen of Scots can be presented for the general audience as a period-drama filled with action, romance, heartbreak, sisterhood, betrayal, and "badass queens." Furthermore, the nature of some of the scenes may warrant some message of warning shown before the film's presentation. Understandably, movie ratings are designed as warnings for moviegoers of graphic or gory depictions, but in some instances, there becomes a heightened safety concern of depicting particular things. In this case, the representation of rape proves quite unsettling but the film offers no forewarning. Of course, the degree of sexual abuse exposure people experienced, especially during the 16th century in almost any geographic location, seems insurmountable and understanding this dynamic of society aids to develop the appropriate culture within the film, yet those who lived through similar experiences and unknowingly subject themselves to this imagery on screen may suffer negatively.

Finally, the most comical misunderstanding of historical context is actually a constituent of pride throughout the film. Mary's character establishes a potent passion for the country she rules that

manifests in her distinct Scottish accent, despite the fact that she did not have it. In the context of the movie, Mary just returned from living in France with her late first husband, Francis II. Though this is true, the film itself provides no real pretext for the amount of time she really spent in France and to what degree she assimilated to the culture. She actually moved to and lived in France at a very young age, five to be exact, and did not return to Scotland until the death of her husband, and in the meantime ruled as queen of France as an adult. With this in mind, it remains entirely improbable that Mary spoke with a Scottish accent, as all indications suggest she spoke in a French dialect. Including this important fact from the history of Mary would not have deterred the fierce representation of the Scottish Queen but remains merely a technical detail overlooked during production. Regardless of the accuracy translated through the feature film, Rourke establishes herself as a talented director capable of developing an interesting story that captures the full attention of her audiences. Mary, Queen of Scots follows the expected and predictable method of history becoming "Hollywoodized," but it is important to remain hopeful that someday a film production will create something beneficial to the knowledge of the general population and the pride of historians.

MUSEO: TRAFFICKING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

by Steve Filoromo



Museo Nacional de Antropología

Temples and statues hidden beneath the jungle floor and woven into the vines of the rainforest permeated through Mexican culture as revitalization and interest grew for the nation's ancient history. When the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology, built in 1964, began displaying these large and beautiful relics of the ancient communities, people noted them as a source of cultural pride. However, these stunning displays failed to disillusion people on the methods of acquisition— some still believed these artifacts came from careless plundering, that these artifacts were taken from their land without permission. This argument, explored in detail within Juan Núñez's 2018 film *Museo*, questions the motive behind this cultural exploitation. Set in Mexico City, *Museo* explores the historic art heist for these artifacts that struck fear into the citizens of Mexico. These were their precious artifacts on display, but more importantly, their cultural heritage. Headlines ran throughout the world following the 1985 art heist

at the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology. One read "they only stole masterpieces," but not just any masterpieces, 140 smaller pieces of great value ranging from King Pakal's jade funerary mask and the carved Aztec obsidian jar of the monkey.¹

Museo's plot progresses fast-paced, engaging, and exciting. It successfully clutches something that interests nearly everyone – our cultural heritage, or at least, how we treat it. Archaeology represents somewhat of either an expendable resource, national pride, or something aimed at attracting large profits. This film represents all of these thoughts rolled into one. The opening scene begins with one of the leads, Ben Wilson, played by Leonardo Ortizgris, recounting Juan Núñez's story, played by Gael García Bernal. Ben, often referred to as Wilson in the film, recounts Juan's distrust in history with the thought-provoking quote "how can you be so sure what Hernan Cortes thought" and that "no one can know why someone did what they did except for the person who did it." This precedes the scene where the "Tlaloc" (the deity of water and rain) statue was being moved in the museum, and Wilson seemingly connects Juan's distrust to how engineers took statues like Tlaloc from their original location "without [their] permission." Following this, Wilson recalls Juan's story of visiting the museum with his father where he told Juan about the plundering of the ancient monuments for the museums' collections. Consideration for the importance of artifacts remaining undisturbed within their original settings proves a relatively contemporary concern for archeology, for the body of thought that supported archaeology through most of the twentieth century in the Americas remained quite variable, and often times acted with little regard toward indigenous groups.²

The contrast between the light of the museum and

the dark night as Wilson and Núñez snuck toward the ancient exhibit in the museum became reminiscent of the age-old classic heist movies. Make no mistake, the film's wonderfully-rendered cinematography coupled exceedingly well with a moving score that often echoed the orchestral tones from the 1939 film *La Noche De Los Mayas* (the famous movie score written by Silvestre Revueltas). The film showed beautiful remains of palatial ruins, featured a few actors speaking in 'Mayan,' despite the fact that this is not the focus of the narrative. At times, the story falls off track but picks back up quickly when Juan and Wilson run the roads. While the film focuses on this heist, it also gives insight into the nature of the degradation of cultural heritage.

This idea of plunder and degradation of cultural heritage in *Museo* only really serves at telling the story of how these two characters successfully deceived the museum and made off with these artifacts, only for their plan's eventual falling apart. While the film tells this story well, it brings into question the extent of trafficking. Juan and Benjamin's attempts at selling off the artifacts to a British collector who flaunts the extent of where and what he has collected becomes an interesting moment in the film. While ultimately their plans of selling them failed, this exemplifies the unfortunate treatment of many cultural remains. This

fascination and lust for these rare archaeological remains nothing new in Mexico, let alone the rest of the world. Several times throughout the movie Juan and his crime partner Benjamin touch on the fact that heists are nothing new within the museum world (of course this generally arises when they attempted selling the artifacts). The International Council of Museum's Red List for artifact trafficking in Mexico reveals that items consisting of jade and metal (among many others) face a high risk of theft and are protected by several national and international regulations.³

Overall, *Museo* proves to be a must-see film. While this review does elaborate on additional background information, the film's beautiful scenes, the relationships between characters, and the nature of the story all make for an interesting viewing. Its odes to ancient artifacts and outlooks on the nature of the museum are something long argued about amongst the various museum-like institutions throughout the world. Continued thought and dialogue on these topics remains important, and seeing them presented for a general audience becomes a positive step, for while the film does celebrate the story of these criminals, the nuance hidden within the film does not go unnoticed.

1 William Stockton, "Pre-Columbian Artifacts Stolen from Mexican National Museum," *The New York Times*, December 27, 1985, Accessed from <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/12/27/world/pre-columbian-artifacts-stolenfrom-mexican-national-museum.html> *Museo*. Directed by Alonso Ruizpalacios. Los Angeles.

2 YouTube, 2018. In regard to the comment of archaeological theory, this was more so to elucidate how some Latin American countries that were exiting dictatorships were following a movement sometimes referred to as "social archaeology." While the intent is not bad, it

was sometimes misappropriated and misunderstood to archaeologists and was equated to the more negative aspect of culture-historical theory; however, this exact point should merely act as additional information and really holds no bearing over the rest of the film.

3 International Council of Museums. *Red List of Endangered Cultural Objects of Central America and Mexico*, (Paris: International Council of Museums, 2009).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND EDITORS



Alice Grissom, a junior majoring in History and English with a linguistics concentration, is thrilled to spend a third year on the board of the Vulcan Historical Review. In addition to the VHR, Alice also serves on the editorial boards of *Aura Literary Arts Review* and *Sanctuary Literary Journal*, and has previously served on the editorial board of *Inquiro Undergraduate Research Journal*. Alice has a passion for interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences, as evidenced by her range of majors and minors (Economics and Women's and Gender Studies), and has presented original research at multiple conferences. Outside of academic interests, Alice works with the Desert Island Supply Co. to provide creative writing and poetry workshops to students in the Birmingham City Schools System, and tutors at the University Writing Center.



Kendra Bell is a candidate for Bachelor's degrees in Anthropology and History with a minor in political science from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She currently works as a museum presenter with the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and plans to attend graduate school to pursue and conduct research in archaeology after graduating from UAB in 2021. Her research interests are socioeconomic patterns and impacts of political division in various time periods and regions. Specific examples include the first and second intermediate periods in Egypt, political reform in the Victorian Era, and American political parties since the 20th century.



Laura King received a Bachelor's in History with a double minor in African American Studies and Sociology from UAB. She currently is finishing a Master's in History from UAB and has completed internship and volunteer work with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the Birmingham Black Radio Museum, and the Vulcan Park & Museum. Her research interests include both black radical movements as well as the classical Civil Rights Movement. She has served as an editor for the *Vulcan Historical Review* before leading the editorial board in publishing the current volume.



Logan Barrett received a Bachelor's in History from the University of Montevallo. He is currently finishing a Master's thesis in History from UAB which explores the congruence of Birmingham's labor and civil rights history for economic justice. His research interests include black radical activism, colonial and early United States, and United States labor history. He is currently employed at Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark.



McCallie L. Smith III is a candidate for a Master's degree in History at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. A University of Alabama alumnus, he received his Bachelor's degree with a major in Anthropology and minor in History and worked several years for the UA's Office of Archaeological Research. His research interest include American military history, the American War in Vietnam, American popular culture and music, veterans' studies, and other various aspects of modern American history.



Steve Filoromo is currently pursuing his Bachelor's degree in anthropology and history with a focus in archaeology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Currently, he is the President of the Anthropology Student Association, and has worked in different educational, archival, and business development roles at the Museum of Science & History (FL), the US Space & Rocket Center (AL), and other private companies. Additionally, he has volunteered for several archaeological sites in the southeastern US. Steve's research interest includes historic southeastern archaeology, cartography, and historic preservation.



Tammy Blue received a B.A. in English with a concentration in professional writing from UAB. She is currently finishing a master's in history from UAB with research interests that include African-American studies and lynching violence in the United States. Tammy is a fellow of the Jefferson County Memorial Project, in partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative. She has enjoyed serving as an editor for the *Vulcan Historical Review* this semester, and is excited to have one of her articles published in this edition. Tammy presented "Blood on the Great Seal of Alabama" at the 2019 Alabama Historical Association's annual meeting in Tuscaloosa.



William J. Winner lives in Birmingham, Alabama with his three children, three dogs and his best friend Haley, who he was lucky enough to marry ten years ago. He is a student at UAB and will graduate in April 2019 with a B.A. in history. He enjoys political and socio-economic history, which is the focus of his studies. After graduation, William intends to pursue his master's in history.

PAMELA STERNE KING



The 23rd volume of *Vulcan Historical Review* is dedicated to Pamela Sterne King. With over 30 years' experience in teaching and historic preservation, Professor King has become a fixture at UAB. Considering her unparalleled knowledge of Birmingham communities and desire to open dialogue on Alabama's difficult histories, her position will be hard to fill. Through her classes on public history, the history of Alabama, and the troubled legacy of George Wallace, Professor King left her mark on countless students lucky enough to have learned from her.

While Professor King challenged students' understanding of industrialization, urban development, and Birmingham's role in the civil rights movement, she is perhaps best known for her popular neighborhood walks. From Norwood to Avondale and Fairfield to Five Points South, no one can bring a neighborhood alive like Professor King, particularly through her discussion of race, economics, and architecture.

Following decades of service to the History Department, Professor King will be missed—not only by the editorial board, but also by the countless students who enjoyed being in the classroom or out in the city with her. Thank you, Professor King, for your wisdom, kindness, and humor. We wish you a happy retirement and will sincerely miss you.



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