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Table of Contents

Of Spartan Women and Men—Anna Rose Barrack.....	3
Changing Perceptions of Nuclear Weapons: The Life of Joseph Carlson—Elizabeth Carlson....	12
FBI COINTELPRO Discrepancies: How and Why the FBI Disproportionately Targeted the Black Panther Party—Steven Gabler.....	20
Break the Chain: Incarcerated Women Fight for Prisoners’ Rights in the 1970s—Layla Hernandez.....	39
Historians, Truth, and the Past: Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial—Paulina Leder.....	52
Orientalism: An Examination of American Military Perspectives in Iraq—Paulina Leder.....	61

Of Spartan Women and Men By Anna Rose Barrack

Sparta has long been a fascination of historians and those with a love of the ancient world. The Spartan legacy has inspired countless movies, books, and TV shows. All portray hordes of men with rippling muscles hurling spears into invading armies. What these cinematic portrayals often forget to touch on are the women who were just as brutal, strong, and agile – or so we are told. In fact, ancient writers state that Spartan women were in fact educated, physically fit, and had agency that was unnatural for women to have, since the “natural” woman of ancient Greece did not possess these characteristics. The image of the Spartan woman that emerges from this depiction is a masculine woman who lacks the feminine features and qualities that were required for Greek women to possess. An assumption emerges that Spartan women were much more equal to men than the rest of Grecian women.

My paper will argue that the gender norms and limitations still existed in Sparta but were merely placed on a different scale. It was the impression that the gender norms were not institutionalized that contributed to Sparta’s anomalous reputation. For it was not Sparta’s militant tyranny, nor her xenophobia that invoked the most criticism from non-Spartans, but the way that they allowed their women to experience niceties reserved for men, such as education, the ability to speak in public, and other rights that would be considered inalienable in a modern society.

To understand how and why Spartan women evolved into educated and productive persons it is important to understand Spartan society. Thus, I will begin my paper by briefly discussing the historical background of Sparta and how its portrayal is contingent on historical context. After a strong context has been laid out, I will move on to my first argument, the reasoning behind educating and physically training their women. This will take me into my next point that Spartan women were portrayed as masculine because of their physical training, which itself is a reflection of how the Greek world portrayed Spartan society. On the other hand, although such portrayals give the illusion that women were not inferior to men, the patriarchal hierarchy was still prevalent. Spartan gender norms were simply different and to an outsider the women had more freedoms than necessary. Nevertheless, they were still women and they were still inferior. My final argument will draw from public criticisms of Spartan women and how this played into Sparta’s repute as an “other.”

Before giving a brief overview of what it meant to be a Spartan, it is important to preface that they left us little to no evidence. Most sources were written from the perspective of non-Spartan men, which makes the task of analyzing Spartan women arduous. In fact, nearly all of our sources come from a male perspective. Although organized on the *polis*, or “city-state,” model common throughout Greece, it was more of a conglomeration of four large villages.¹ The Spartan military legacy began with Lykourgos and his constitutional implementations sometime during the third century to bring about *eunomia*, meaning good order.² This transition has been a topic of debate for several philosophers, such as Aristotle and Thucydides, on when

¹ Fields, Nic. 2013. *The Spartan Way*. Havertown: Pen and Sword.

² Fields 2013: Introduction.

chronologically *eunomia* came about for Sparta, where it came from, and if Lykourgos was even a real figure. It is an interesting argument, but not one that is necessary for this topic because the Spartans followed these customs regardless of their origin.

Just like everything about Sparta, their political structure was unique and peculiar. The political governance and power were split between two kings: the Agiadae and Eurypontidae.³ Originally, both kings would go to battle together, but it was soon realized that this left Sparta vulnerable. Therefore, it was decided that one king would remain in Sparta, while the other would go to battle and act as a war chief.⁴ The Spartans referred to their constitution as the *rhetra* and it was said to have been “an oracular response brought from Delphi by Lykourgos,” which explains why his ideals are heavily attributed to Apollo of Delphi.⁵ The *rhetra* established that the people, called the *damos*, would elect a council of elders, known as the *gerousia*, and they would hold assemblies.⁶ The *gerousia*, which also included the two kings, would create motions, but it was up to the people if they were to be passed.⁷

Life in Sparta can be described akin to living in a military camp.⁸ All of the men were trained from a young age “toward prompt obedience to authority, stout endurance of hardship, and victory or death in battle.”⁹ War was a constant activity and Sparta was not a *polis* that could afford to lose. Their population was significantly smaller than other *poleis*. If a man was not brave enough to finish his training or was defeated in battle, then he was called an *oi trésantes*, which translates to “the tremblers.”¹⁰ This was considered a fate worse than death as they were humiliated in every aspect of life. In order to make their status as a coward known, they were “forced to shave off half their beard so as to advertise their status as half men” and they were forbidden from personal grooming.¹¹ James Redfield sums it up best when he writes, “In such a society the penalties for failure to conform are much greater than the rewards for successful initiative the result at Sparta was a characteristic character-type: hard-bodied, ascetic, miserly, laconic.”¹²

Analyzing the role of Sparta’s women and how it impacted the portrayal of the *polis* overall is a historical lens that has not been given the attention it deserves. In all other parts of ancient Greece, women were to be seen and not heard. Their given names were never spoken aloud because they were only referred to as “daughter of” or “wife of”. They were men’s property in every sense. According to Thucydides, “the greatest glory for women is to be least talked about among whether in praise or blame”.¹³ So, why not the same in Sparta?

³ Cartledge, Paul. 1981. “Spartan Wives: Liberation or Licence?” *The Classical Quarterly* 31, no.1 :93.

⁴ Fields, 2013.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Powell 2001: 19.

⁹ Plut, *Mor.* 237B.

¹⁰ Fields, 2013.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Redfield 1966: 156.

¹³ Thuc. 2.55.2.

Spartan women had a unique upbringing in comparison to what was the norm for rearing girls. The biggest divergence from gender norms was the implementation that it was required for girls to be educated and physically trained.¹⁴ The women began undergoing physical training due to Lykourgos implementing female education into the structure of society. Xenophon comments on this in the *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians* and writes that “the first and foremost function of the freeborn woman was to bear children,” and therefore “the female should no less bodybuilding than the male”.¹⁵ In fact, it was the only polis in Ancient Greece where training females was not only required, but supported by public authority.¹⁶ Women were able to participate in foot races, wrestling, and throwing the discus and javelin.¹⁷ There is a debate as to whether they exercised in the nude like the men did. This notion is brought about from depictions on Athenian vases of nude women exercising; and since Athenian women certainly did not go nude in public, historians have concluded that they could be Spartan.¹⁸ This can also add to the discussion of the depiction of Spartan women as masculine, since they may have been depicted as working out in the nude which was a common action for men.

However, this prescription of athletics had little to do with the right for women to train as men do or to maintain physical health, and everything to do with the future of Sparta. As stated above by Plutarch, the principal task of women was to create children; children that would grow to be Spartan warriors. Paul Chrystal says it best when he states, “a strong, fit, and educated mother delivered strong babies for a strong Sparta”.¹⁹ The creation of valiant and successful male warriors was viewed as being on par with being a warrior in the army themselves.²⁰ In addition to ensuring the strength of future Spartan armies, women were physically trained, because when the men left for war, the women were tasked with defending the homeland. Therefore, they needed to be agile enough to safeguard the homeland, even though “they were not trained for actual combat.”²¹ This trust was forced, since competent citizens were not indispensable due to Sparta’s limited population.²² Therefore, it is not surprising that there are tales of foreign invaders approaching the city and the woman, having no choice, don the armor themselves to fight.²³ While outsiders viewed the Spartan woman’s physical training as a luxury, the underlying reasoning was always there – to bolster future males and the state. It was not because there was an ideal that it was important for women to be physically fit for their own wellbeing.

Although females were only educated for the sake of educating their offspring, this was still an luxury that was rarely experienced by other women in the ancient world. They most likely could read and write on a basic level, however the literacy of Spartans overall is a common topic of debate among researchers. The idea that reading or writing was popular in Sparta at all is commonly debated. Historians such as Anton Powell report that “in Spartan theory, a man did

¹⁴ Pomeroy, 2002: 7.

¹⁵ Xen. *Const. Lac.* 1.5.

¹⁶ Pomeroy, 2002:5.

¹⁷ Plut. *Lyc.* 14.2.

¹⁸ Neils, 2012: 206.

¹⁹ Chrystal, 2017: 97.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Pomeroy, 2002: 16.

²² Powell, 2001: 229.

²³ Keith, Alison. 2015. *Women & War in Antiquity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

not multiply words, he acted.”²⁴ This means that they valued reading and writing on a minute scale, and even that may be an exaggeration. There was little reason for men to learn how to read and write when their primary education was in military training and combat styles. The emphasis on education was on creating strong bodies, not fostering strong minds. Sarah Pomeroy argues that it is very likely women could have learned to read and write.²⁵ They certainly had the time to learn, as Spartan women were not married until they were at least eighteen. The consensus will forever be muddled as there is very little literary evidence from Sparta.²⁶ From the evidence we have, I believe that only a very small part of the population was literate, most likely those who were the wealthiest or most influential. In my opinion, the average Spartan citizen probably felt no need to know how to write and only knew how to read religious texts and poems, if that.

A Spartan women's education consisted of learning from poets, such as Alcman, dancing, and music.²⁷ There were other components that they were taught, such as festival practices, and the most unique factor was that they “were encouraged and trained to speak in public.”²⁸ Not only was a woman trained in public speaking extremely rare, but it was also extremely untraditional. In any other city in Greece, esteemed women were expected to sit quietly and only make themselves known when necessary. They were to speak as little as possible and rarely referred to. This can be seen as heavily incorporated into Athenian society. Another unique aspect of Spartan women training was that they learned how to ride and drive horses. It was very unusual for any Greek to have horsemanship skills at all for it was “not part of a traditional Greek physical curriculum.”²⁹ Again, this only added to the incrimination of Sparta by the rest of the ancient world. It was simply one more skill that made them different and unique, therefore they were strange and could be easily criticized. Even with the educational luxuries described above, it would be naïve to believe that women benefited from such learnings because Spartan society did not believe them to be equals. In the end, all that mattered was the strength of Sparta. While it may seem like a courtesy that women were not married until “they were in full bloom and wholly ripe”³⁰, it was more so that the children produced from the marriage were not “small and ill-developed.”³¹

The people of Sparta are portrayed as an extreme in all modes of life. The women were educated and there is endless commentary on their physical attributes. This was an extreme for females in the sense that the norm was to have no education and physical training. In turn, the men were then portrayed as rigid, ultra-masculine war machines. If the men were not viewed as such strong and bellicose beings, there could have been a risk that the Spartan women could almost be seen as equals. In Margaret and Patrice Higonnet *Behind the Lines*, they discuss a way to view gender norms through the metaphor of a double helix in the context of women assuming the jobs of men during World War I. However, it can be applied to Spartan society to explain how gender inequality was still very prevalent, despite the difference in quality of the woman’s lifestyle. Higonnet uses the image of the double helix to “look at women not in isolation but

²⁴ Powell, 2001: 239.

²⁵ Pomeroy, 2002: 5.

²⁶ Powell, 2001: 238.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Pomeroy 2002: 9

²⁹ *ibid.*: 19.

³⁰ Plut. *Lyc.* 15.3.

³¹ Lefkowitz and Fant 1992: 84.

within a persistent system of gender relationships.”³² With the women on the subordinate strand of the double helix, no matter how far their status in society rises, the men will always be one step higher.

This is exactly the case for Sparta. The innate elevated status of women contributed to the reason for the men needing to be seen as ancient Greek supermen. This is not to devalue their shift to a militaristic society, but rather as a contributing factor to the Spartan man’s hypermasculine stereotype. The ideology of gender norms as a double helix only adds further reasoning to these aggressive portrayals of Spartans by scholars such as Aristotle. While the Spartan women certainly had much more freedom than the average Grecian woman, they were in no means equal to men; even Sparta, the most backwards city in Greece, had to draw a line somewhere in regard to gender. As much as Spartan society produces a strong mirage of gender equality, it was merely disguised misogyny because it presented itself differently than in other societies.

Much of what we know of how Spartan men interacted with each other comes from accounts by Plutarch, namely his essay on Spartan customs. From this, we can see the brutal nature with which they trained their men and the hypermasculine illusion they hoped to cast. They prided themselves on extreme obedience and self-control. Youths were purposely put on a starvation diet during their education so that they “should never become accustomed to being sated”.³³ This perpetual hunger was supposed to allow the boys to learn how to suppress their impulses in every aspect of their lives, allowing them to be level headed within battle.³⁴

Every single aspect of the men’s training was beyond what any person should be able to endure. Spartan soldiers were known for their brutality and mercilessness in battle. Even when they were spearing men down in war, they were concerned about looking masculine. Lykourgos included in the Constitution that the men should wear a red cloak in battle “because he believed this garment to have least resemblance to women’s clothing,” along with a brass shield.³⁵ It makes one wonder what Lykourgos believed feminine armor to look like. The fact that this detail was necessary to justify their choice in uniform is evidence enough that Spartan men were overly focused on not just appearing masculine, but also making sure there was no way they could appear feminine. Everything comes back to the argument that the men needed to make sure that they had a firm grip on that upper strand of the double helix.

Any right, luxury, or agency that women appeared to have always had cracks with feminine inferiority seeping through. This can be seen when looking at educational practices and specifically marital traditions. Despite both sexes having an education, they had two very different curriculums. The children physically train together until the age of seven, when the boys leave for the *agoge*, essentially a grueling military academy. In turn, the girl stays home with her parents, specifically her mother, until she is married off.³⁶ From there, the women’s education was centered around future eugenic productivity, and mental capabilities were in the

³² Higonnet and Higonnet 1987: 34.

³³ Plut. *Mor.* 237f.13.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ Xen. *Const. Lac.* 11.3.

³⁶ Cartledge, 1981: 90.

background. Everything a woman did had the purpose of ensuring that their offspring could be raised as fierce, educated Spartans. It was important for the women to have these qualities, so that they could pass it down to their children. If a woman was adequately educated, then she would have the ability to educate her own children, that they hoped to be male, and thus create an even better Sparta than the generation before.

When it came to marriage, absolutely nothing was consensual. Plutarch writes of the Spartan customs in his *Life of Lykourgos*. The bride was essentially kidnapped on the night of her wedding and carried off by force.³⁷ Then she was taken to her bridesmaid where her hair was cut off, she was put in “a man’s cloak and sandals,” and left alone in the dark to wait for her husband to consummate their marriage.³⁸ This is a sharp and jarring contrast to how brides are treated in the modern age. Anything feminine was completely stripped away and even went so far as to wearing men’s clothing. This gives the impression that Spartan men did not want to acknowledge that their wives were women or had female features, for that was all to be disguised by physical alterations and even their bodies were to be cloaked by the night. Yet there was no regard for how the bride might be feeling after spending her whole life with her mother and other matriarchs, and as a virgin no less. There is never any mention of consent or of a bride that is excited for her wedding day.

This discussion on gender stereotypes leads to the conclusion that one of the main reasons Sparta was treated as an “other” in the ancient world is because of how they treated their women. It has been established that it was unconventional for women to train physically and have an education. Essentially, it was useless for them, anywhere else in Greece, to have any skills that were not necessary for household duties. In addition to their different lifestyles, Spartan women had drastically different behaviors than any other females, which were often brought up during any criticisms of Sparta. Aristotle famously criticizes Spartan society in his *Politics*. One of his main arguments was that Spartan women had too much freedom and exerted themselves into political affairs, even though they “were no better than other Greek women when it came to defending their country.”³⁹ Again, it is important to note that Aristotle is commenting on Sparta after the Battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C., which decimated Sparta as a *polis*. In fact, any criticisms that are discussed are incumbent on where Sparta falls on the historical timeline. For example, after Sparta was victorious against Athens in the Peloponnesian war in 404 B.C., “much credit was given by Athenians to the special character of the Spartan constitution.”⁴⁰ However, we just discussed how Aristotle criticized their constitution for allowing women to live in luxury.

There was ample material to be used as criticism for Spartan women. In addition to their looks, their behavior and demeanor were a popular topic of conversation. They were notorious for being strong-willed and independent. They were also extremely patriotic. There are stories of women killing their own sons because they returned from war as cowards. Reportedly, they told their sons to either “come home with their shields or come home on their shields.”⁴¹ Plutarch

³⁷ Plut. *Lyk.* 15.3

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ Pomeroy, 2002: 16.

⁴⁰ Lefkowitz, 1992: 83.

⁴¹ Chrystal, 2017.

tells of an instance where a messenger informed a Spartan mother that all five of her sons were killed in battle. To this she responds, “I did not inquire about that, you vile varlet, but how fares our country”.⁴² This behavior is a far cry from the delicate and maternal nature that a woman was expected to have. Additionally, there were liberties that Spartan women were able to take that just were not socially acceptable in other Greek city-states. For example, the Spartan women “were the only Greek women who consumed wine,” which was considered an activity reserved for men.⁴³

The Athenians even went as far as to satirize Spartan women in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*. The character, Lampito, that represents the Spartan women is said to “look strong enough to strangle a bull.”⁴⁴ This could be taken to mean that they saw the Spartan women as strong and healthy, which could be true. However, the fact that she was usually played by a rather large man and given a comically strange accent does not imply good intentions. Again, we see this pattern of Spartan women portrayed in a masculine sense, which would have only added to the men’s need to be seen as even more masculine. How the women are depicted is a reflection on the men, especially since a man’s masculinity is only as much as the woman’s femininity. This brings us back to Mary Higonnet’s idea of the double helix. The Spartan women are seen as manly and thus the men must be infinitely more.

Now that the gender norms of Sparta have been laid bare, it is easy to see that their society was not as equal as originally thought. The purpose of this paper was to shed light on the fact that gender inequality was more than prevalent in Spartan society, it just had to be viewed through the lens of a Spartiate to be seen. However, other Greek cities were fooled into this assumption, and thus Spartan men had to alter their image so that their status was not threatened. While there were other reasons behind their endless and intense training, it was fueled by the need to be seen as the alpha male of Greeks because their female population was so intimidatingly strong on its own. It is unclear whether the men altered their image due to how their women were portrayed or vice versa. However, it is my opinion that the women most likely adapted to how Spartan society was evolving and when the men noticed this change in their females, they began to increase their perceived masculinity.

Additionally, Spartan women contributed to the image of Sparta as an “other” because there was a mirage of gender equality that led other cities to think of Sparta as an anomaly. This led to an abundance of criticism from philosophers on how they occupied as a society and using the behavior and alleged freedom of Spartan women was an easy target. It is important to understand that at the end of the day Spartan women were treated just as unfairly as other women in their society, only in a different way. This understanding can allow historians, researchers, or anyone who has an interest in Spartan history to be more cognizant of their assumptions on women, who will never have a voice, which are drawn from the conclusions of men, who never wanted to hear them.

⁴² Plut. *Lacae*. 6.7.

⁴³ Neils 2012: 21-22.

⁴⁴ Loman, 2004: 7.

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Changing Perceptions of Nuclear Weapons: The Life of Joseph Carlson

By Elizabeth Carlson

On August 7, 1945, the *New York Times* proclaimed that the “first atomic bomb [had been] dropped on Japan” and that the nation was on the dawn of a “new age,” the age of “atomic energy.”⁴⁵ An atomic weapon, the first of its kind used in combat, had been dropped on Hiroshima, unleashed unimaginable destruction, and with hope palpable in the articles of that day, would soon usher in the end of the second World War. Far from the shores of Japan, in rural Joliet, Illinois, a seventeen-year-old Joseph Carlson, whose friends had already started to leave for combat, was one of those hoping for peace. He is also my grandfather.

If the atomic bombing of Hiroshima truly was the start of a new age, Joseph Carlson had a front seat to its infancy. At 18, he would enlist in the army and be sent to Japan during the American occupation, where he got to see firsthand the impact of the bombs. Years after leaving the army he would find his way back to the military as a citizen working at the Pentagon, where he saw firsthand how the United States was preparing for a possible thermonuclear war. Yet, there is a huge discrepancy between his views of the atomic bomb immediately after WWII and those in the height of the Cold War. In 1946, he considered the atomic bomb incredibly powerful, but not significantly morally different than other methods of bombing. By the 1960s, he was terrified by a weapon that he saw morally unique from other forms of warfare. What was the difference between these two periods? From the experiences of Joseph Carlson, the answer is clear: knowledge.⁴⁶

Knowledge of radiation and nuclear fallout, especially in the way it affected civilian populations, changed the way these weapons were perceived. Radiation and radioactivity had been a source of excitement and popular attention since it was first discovered by Marie Curie in 1898.⁴⁷ Yet for almost half a century, it represented only a promising new source of energy and medicine to a public that couldn’t get enough of displays of the glowing material.⁴⁸ However, Hiroshima and Nagasaki would display a new, ugly side of radiation that was just as unexpected as it was terrifying. The atomic bombing of Japan marked the beginning of a new atomic age, one where nuclear energy and warfare would terrify the public consciousness. But this could only be recognized after the fact, when knowledge of the effects of radiation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki became public and the implications of which were fully understood.

The atomic bombs were never meant to be radiological weapons. The US military had been looking for a ‘shock’ factor to encourage an unconditional surrender from Japan for months before the atomic bomb was first tested.⁴⁹ The Target Committee for the use of the atomic bomb discussed radiation only to consider how it would affect the pilots dropping the bomb. Scientists in Los Alamos believed that there would be “no lingering toxic effects” from radiation in the area where the bomb was used.⁵⁰ In the eyes of military strategy, atomic bombs were meant to be a show of force and destructive power, proof to the Japanese military that the United States could

⁴⁵ Sidney Shalett, “New Age Ushered,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1945.

⁴⁶ Joseph Carlson, interview by Elizabeth Carlson, September 30, 2021.

⁴⁷ Susan Quinn, *Marie Curie: A Life* (Da Capo Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Quinn, *Marie Curie: A Life*.

⁴⁹ Gordin, Michael D. *Five days in August* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

⁵⁰ Gordin, *Five Days in August*.

devastate their country more efficiently than ever before. They were the next evolution in human warfare, but were not seen as a morally or historically unique weapon.

Reporting on atomic attacks in August of 1945 was focused entirely on the power and strength of the weapons. The bombs were able to “vaporize” steel towers and were “capable of utterly destroying a town,”⁵¹ but the only mentions of radioactivity came from the details of how the bombs were made and deployed, there was no mention of radiation released or fallout that may remain. Joseph Carlson’s memories were similar. He recalled hearing about the TNT equivalency and destructive power of the bombs but knew little else about the weapons. It was easy to ignore the pure destructive power of the atomic bomb as a moral issue when it came at the tail end of a war as horrific as WWII. The immediate estimates of 80,000 deaths in Hiroshima were similar to initial estimates of about 100,000 deaths during the firebombing of Tokyo.⁵² The bombs were perceived with joy and relief from allied forces because they represented an end to combat in World War II, whether through an end to plans for a ground invasion of mainland Japan or the end of the war in its entirety.⁵³ What made the weapons unique, the fact that they released radiation, was not reported on. This omission was not a mistake.

The atomic weapons program in the United States had been shrouded in extreme secrecy from its inception. The United States did not want to release any information about nuclear weapons until they were ready to be used, and indeed Americans did not know of their existence until after they were first used in Japan.⁵⁴ When the first nuclear bomb was tested as a part of the Trinity Tests in July 1945, scientists were shocked by how much radiation was released.⁵⁵ Radioactive fallout spread throughout populated areas of New Mexico, raining down on people as a strange summer snow.⁵⁶ In the immediate aftermath rates of infant mortality skyrocketed, in the long-term, rates of cancer in the area far outpaced that of those in the rest of the country.⁵⁷ This was not a case of governmental negligence or malice; the scientists simply did not expect the extent of radioactive fallout. The chief medical officer of the operation immediately changed his recommendation for nuclear testing, increasing the radius in which no living person should be present during tests from 10 to 150 miles.⁵⁸ Yet when locals asked what the large explosion they had seen was, secrecy had to be preserved. They were told it was only the detonation of a large “ammunition magazine”.⁵⁹ When Robert Oppenheimer brought reporters to the site of the Trinity Tests, he assured them that absolutely no lingering radiation existed at the site.⁶⁰

Even in Japan, knowledge of radiation spread slowly. In John Hersey’s groundbreaking reporting on Hiroshima and its aftermath, he details the story of one man whose radiation sickness was so extreme he required transfer to hospitals outside of Hiroshima. The doctors there

⁵¹ Shalett, “New Age Ushered.”

⁵² New York Times, “Justified Bombings? A Survivor’s Reply,” *New York Times*, August 6, 1995.

⁵³ Kenneth D. Rose, *One Nation Underground* (New York: New York University Press Books, 2001).

⁵⁴ Gordin, *Five Days in August*.

⁵⁵ Lesly M.M. Blume, “U.S. Lawmakers Move Urgently to Recognize Survivors of the First Atomic Bomb Test,” *National Geographic*, September 21, 2021.

⁵⁶ Blume, “U.S. Lawmakers Move Urgently to Recognize Survivors of the First Atomic Bomb Test.”

⁵⁷ Blume, “U.S. Lawmakers Move Urgently to Recognize Survivors of the First Atomic Bomb Test.”

⁵⁸ Blume, “U.S. Lawmakers Move Urgently to Recognize Survivors of the First Atomic Bomb Test.”

⁵⁹ Blume, “U.S. Lawmakers Move Urgently to Recognize Survivors of the First Atomic Bomb Test.”

⁶⁰ Gordin, *Five Days in August*.

treated him like a “curiosity.”⁶¹ When American army doctors went to visit him, they were confused by his illness. The scientists at Los Alamos had not expected such radiation sickness. One, Norman Ramsey, recalled that they had estimated the blast radius would be much larger than the area of radiation injuries, simply put, that “any person with radiation damage would have been killed with a brick first.”⁶²

In 1946, Joseph Carlson turned 18 and enlisted in the army. He was quickly sent to Japan where was a Technician Fifth Grade, or Tech-5 and worked directly with Japanese contractors and translators. When I asked him if he ever visited Hiroshima, he told me that he had only seen it once when traveling across the country by train. He recalled that he had been impressed by the desolation, it was a “big wasteland,” but Tokyo, which had been firebombed during the war, had also been a “big wasteland.”⁶³ The destruction of the atomic bomb was not unique.

When I asked Joseph Carlson what opinions of people in Japan were of the bomb, he told me the stories of three men he met during his time there. The first was a Christian minister working as a translator to feed his family. He disagreed with the use of the bombs on moral grounds, but for the same reason he disagreed with war in its entirety. The atomic bombs were not special in his eyes. The second man was the owner of a hotel who had lost his entire family during the firebombing of Yokohama. He was “numb” to the atomic bombs. To him, the firebombing had been worse, with more overall deaths. He didn’t see a difference between the two types of weapons when “the end results [were] the same.”⁶⁴

The final man was Kisaburo Uno, a former Kamikaze pilot turned foreman of a construction company. Uno was educated as an engineer before he had joined the Navy, but after the war, the devastation of Japan made it impossible to find work in that field and nearly impossible to find any work at all. As a foreman, he was assigned to a project with the US army, excavating the crash site of a B-29 to identify the craft and its pilot. That is where he met Joseph Carlson, the army tech overseeing the excavation.⁶⁵ Uno spoke excellent English, and that combined with the fact he was very young, close to Carlson’s age, led them to become friends. When Carlson asked Uno what he thought of the bombs he replied that he was conflicted. On one hand the bombs had killed many of his own people, on the other they had saved his life and, in his opinion, ended the war.⁶⁶

Uno knew firsthand how far the Japanese military was willing to go to hold to avoid the shame of surrender. Maybe his role as a Kamikaze pilot, one that had been rapidly approaching the date of his final flight when the war end, had left him biased, but he truly believed that Japanese military leaders would not surrender under any circumstances. Uno was sad that his people had died from the bombs, but was glad it had been used, if that had been what was required to end the war.

He certainly did not see the atomic bombs as some irredeemable American evil. His final gift to Joseph Carlson, at the end of their time together, was his former Kamikaze headband and flag, along with a note of goodbye. In this note to Carlson, he writes that he wishes that Carlson

⁶¹ John, Hersey, “Hiroshima,” *New Yorker*, August 31, 1946.

⁶² Gordin, *Five Days in August*.

⁶³ Carlson, interview.

⁶⁴ Carlson, interview.

⁶⁵ Carlson, interview

⁶⁶ Carlson, interview

bring both items back to “the states.”⁶⁷ Despite the war, despite the bombs, he was still willing to share his life and story with not just his friend, but the entire country of a former enemy.

There is a key detail missing from all of Joseph Carlson’s stories: radiation. When I asked him the men’s opinions of specifically radiation, he told me that that no one knew enough about it for it to have any impact on them or their opinions of the bomb. For those in Hiroshima however, they were forced to confront the reality of radiation. John Hersey reported that as sickness lingered over Hiroshima nearly a month after the bomb, rumors of the bomb emanating some sort of “poison” incensed a people that had been previously “resigned and passive about the moral issue of the atomic bomb.”⁶⁸ It was not the destruction of the bomb itself, but the threat of something in its nature that would make their home unlivable that terrified and upset the people of Hiroshima.

In America, initial reports of radiation sickness in Japan were dismissed by atomic scientists as “propaganda.”⁶⁹ In part, this was because of a belief that radioactive effects of the bombs could not be as extreme as reported, but as more information became available from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ignorance turned into cover-up. US officials worried that the horror and destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, specifically the radiological effects of the bombs, would be too horrific for Americans to contend with and lead to the US losing its moral high ground in its use of the bombs.⁷⁰ They were right, John Hersey’s “Hiroshima” shocked the American public with its description of the radiological effects of the bombs.⁷¹ Suddenly the joy that they had garnered in August, 1945 turned into fear and disgust. In the opinion of journalist Lesly Blume, his work, which simply detailed the effects of a nuclear attack on a civilian population, created a “nuclear taboo” around not only nuclear weapons, but nuclear energy that has affected how these things are viewed in the public consciousness to this day.⁷²

In the immediate period that followed, the early Cold War, Americans were forced to confront a terrifying new form of destruction, nuclear fallout, at a time when nuclear war seemed increasingly likely. What scared Americans about the nuclear war was the unknown that fallout represented. They had used the first atomic bombs without understanding the radiation that they would release and were horrified by effects that felt unforeseen and unpredictable. The fear of the public psyche was that trying to use these weapons again would lead to new, worse unintended consequences.

It didn’t help American’s fears that the first “delayed reaction[s]” to the atomic bombs⁷³ were only being discovered at the same time as scientists and politicians were debating the possibility of creating the hydrogen bomb, a nuke far more powerful, with a larger radioactive output than anything denoted before. In 1950, the New York Times ran an article warning that the “ending of all life by bomb foreseen” by the possible invention of the Hydrogen bomb.⁷⁴ This

⁶⁷ Kisaburo Uno to Joseph Carlson, 1946.

⁶⁸ Hersey, “Hiroshima.”

⁶⁹ Gordin, *Five Days in August*.

⁷⁰ Lesley M.M. Blume, *Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-up and the Reporter who Revealed it to the World* (Simon and Schuster, 2021).

⁷¹ Blume, *Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-up and the Reporter who Revealed it to the World*.

⁷² Blume, *Fallout: The Hiroshima Cover-up and the Reporter who Revealed it to the World*.

⁷³ The United Press, “Eye Cataracts in Japan Laid to Atomic Bombing,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1949.

⁷⁴ William L. Laurence, “Ending of All Life by Hydrogen Bomb Held a Possibility,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1950.

time, it wasn't the destructive power of the weapon that was in focus, but its radioactive nature. "Radioactivity [was] the killer" that would end the world.⁷⁵ Even politicians that still approved of the use of the atomic bomb as a show of force, a weapon to strike at "sources of power,"⁷⁶ balked at the idea of the hydrogen bomb. They had hope that a weapon so strongly associated with fallout and radioactivity "would never be delivered."⁷⁷

Popular culture of the era reflected this fear. Fiction that tried to imagine a world at nuclear war was fixated on how humans would survive specifically nuclear fallout.⁷⁸ Fallout shelters became a regular element in these types of fiction and a preoccupation in the minds of the American public. The question was always who would be allowed into these shelters? Would private shelters gun down those trying to force their way in, as in 1963 novel *Triumph*? Would civil defense shelter place the rich and powerful deeper underground, more secure from radioactive fallout, as in 1959's *Level 7*?⁷⁹ Narratives were based around fear not of the blast itself, though it was always described in terrible fashion, but in the radioactivity that would threaten the lives of those that remained. *On the Beach*,⁸⁰ a novel and later movie that captured public attention, starts only *after* a nuclear war 'ends.' The characters are forced to wait in Australia for nuclear fallout to travel to them from the North and kill them all. The desolate images of people slowly succumbing to radiation sickness and committing suicide depicted a dread of using specifically *radioactive* weapons, whose effects would linger and poison the world, not just a more destructive armament.

The 1954 monster movies *Godzilla*⁸¹ and *Them!*⁸² both reveal fears unleashed by the newly invented and tested hydrogen bomb. In both movies, the monster is awakened, not intentionally or even by understood phenomena of nuclear weapons, but by effects of radiation complete unforeseeable when they were used. In *Godzilla*, hydrogen bomb testing not only awakens an ancient monster but makes it more powerful, giving it radioactive breath that it uses to attack Japan. In *Them!*, giant ants are discovered in the desert of New Mexico, mutated due to the effects of the first atomic bomb tests. Both reveal a fear that the new hydrogen bomb would have unintended radiological consequences beyond what scientists understood, just as had happened with the first nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the end of *Them!* the scientist character makes this plain. When asked if the monsters were the result of just the first atomic tests, what other horrors could have been created by all the bombs exploded since, he responds, "when man entered the atomic age, he opened a door into a new world. What we'll eventually find in that new world, nobody can predict."⁸³ Hiroshima was the start of a new age, not because of the use of a new type of weapon, but because it revealed consequences of radiation that no one expected or could moralize and as a result created a fear of atomic energy and radioactivity which had not existed previous to World War II.

By the 1960s, Joseph Carlson worked as a civilian member of the Department of Defense in the Pentagon at the height of the Cold War. He had a view of nuclear war strategy far better informed than the average citizen, and he was terrified. He shared an office with the man

⁷⁵ Laurence, "Ending of All Life by Hydrogen Bomb Held a Possibility."

⁷⁶ New York Times, "M'Mahon Against the Use of Atomic Bomb Now," *New York Times*, July 17, 1950.

⁷⁷ New York Times, "M'Mahon Against the Use of Atomic Bomb Now."

⁷⁸ Rose, *One Nation Underground*.

⁷⁹ Rose, *One Nation Underground*.

⁸⁰ *On the Beach*, directed by Stanley Kramer (1959).

⁸¹ *Godzilla*, directed by Ishiro Honda (1954).

⁸² *Them!*, directed by Gordon Douglas (1954).

⁸³ *Them!*, directed by Gordon Douglas.

responsible for readiness for war and who worked regularly with civil defense divisions. He spent time visiting the command center installation at Cheyenne mountain, where nuclear missiles would be launched and nuclear war fought. He told me that he with his understanding he was “more scared of radiation than I know [his wife] was, or [even my] dad.”⁸⁴ More scared even, than a population already terrified of nuclear war.

In 1960, Herman Kahn of the RAND corporation, a research institute for public policy, released *On Thermonuclear War*, a playbook for how to win a nuclear war that took into account radiation and fallout. Kahn was plain and callous in describing how fallout would impact a population. He performed estimated calculations for the loss of life, economic impact, and the long-term effects of fallout and radiation after a nuclear war. He assured his readers that these consequences were worth the cost of war, that, for example, “while four chances in a thousand [for genetic birth defects] is a high price to pay for the use of radiation, it is not obviously excessive.”⁸⁵ The overwhelming reaction to his book by Americans was disgust, horror, and revulsion. They refused to accept any radiological consequences of a war and preferred to call for the end to all war entirely.⁸⁶ This is in sharp contrast to the initial joy and relief that Americans felt about the bomb immediately following its use in the only ‘nuclear’ war, where the use of the weapon was celebrated as a way to force an unconditional surrender from Japan. The difference between these two military strategies is only the expectation for radiological aftereffects of the bomb.

Joseph Carlson also had firsthand experience living in the Pentagon’s nuclear shelters. During drills preparing for nuclear war, he would spend the night inside one the most secure installations in the country, but he felt no reassurance. The big steel doors that enclosed the cave system of the shelter made a strong impression on him, so too the missile tracking room, which he described as straight out of “Dr. Strangelove.”⁸⁷ These shelters were a part of a system meant to protect key military and governmental members during a nuclear war so they could continue to launch the next round of missiles and pick up the pieces of a broken country after the war ended. In Garrett Graff’s *Ravens Rock*, which investigated these shelters, he reports that these shelters were built at a time when it was becoming increasingly clear that civil defense programs meant to shelter the entire civilian population during a nuclear war would be impossible.⁸⁸ Nuclear fallout meant that the civilian population would have to be left to themselves for weeks, even months at a time before it became safe to emerge from nuclear bunkers. These shelters were a representation of the unique impact of nuclear weapons, that because of their radiological effects, a nuclear war could completely destroy American life in a matter of hours, and reconstruction could take decades, even centuries, due to the long-term impacts of fallout. Hiroshima and Nagasaki proved to an increasingly anxious population not only how horrifying and destructive nuclear war could be, but that the use of these weapons was possible. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Joseph Carlson was not just scared for himself in Washington, but for his family still in Illinois. He was terrified of a war that represented a threat to the entire country and all its people simultaneously.

When Akihiro Takahashi, a survivor of the first and only atomic bombs ever used in war was interviewed 50 years after the Hiroshima was bombed, he was asked what makes atomic

⁸⁴ Carlson, interview.

⁸⁵ Herman Khan, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton University Press, 1960).

⁸⁶ Kenneth D. Rose, *One Nation Underground*.

⁸⁷ Carlson, interview.

⁸⁸ Garrett Graff, *Raven’s Rock: The Story of the US Government’s Secret Plan to Save Itself-While the Rest of Us Die* (Simon and Schuster, 2017).

weapons uniquely horrible, worse than the rest of World War II and all the wars that had occurred before and since. His answer was immediate and simple, radiation. To him, it was a “special attack” because it was a “weapon that used radiation.”⁸⁹ Radiological effects of nuclear weapons were not fully understood until their first use on a civilian population. These effects would not have become public knowledge without reporting on Hiroshima. Effects that could linger for years, creating long term impacts on rates of genetic defects and cancer. Effects that could end all life on Earth with the creation of new, more powerful bombs. Effects that would change the citizen’s relationship with war, now knowing that their entire way of life could be destroyed in an instant and their government could do little to protect them.

The use of atomic weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was significant, but not because of the destruction they created or even the unconditional surrender they would help encourage in the following days. These attacks were significant because they guaranteed that knowledge of radiation and fallout, the consequences of this type of weapon, would seize the public consciousness and control how nuclear energy and even war itself would be viewed in this new ‘atomic’ age. My grandfather was terrified, and still is scared of nuclear weapons not because he saw firsthand the destruction they wrought, but because he understood what the radiological consequences of a nuclear war would be.

⁸⁹ New York Times, “Justified Bombings? A Survivor’s Reply.”

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**FBI COINTELPRO Discrepancies: How and Why the FBI Disproportionately Targeted the
Black Panther Party
By Steven Gabler**

Out of the total 2,679 COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence) operations, fourteen percent were rolled out against the Black Panthers.⁹⁰ In 1968, John Edgar Hoover, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, remarked in a memo—regarding increasing levels of violence and the causes— “the whole problem of violence in American society has been intensified by the recent growth of Black extremist organizations.”⁹¹ Deeming Black nationalists “vicious, hate-filled individuals whose objective is anarchy,” Hoover effectively communicated the Bureau’s stance and reasoning behind its efforts to destroy the Black Panther Party.⁹² Hoover’s rhetoric is reflective of the FBI’s disproportionate use of extreme tactics against the Black Panthers and their absent and/or inflammatory reasoning for doing so. To understand the FBI’s actions and true reasoning for those actions, it is important to understand the rise of J. Edgar Hoover and his agenda, the global social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, and the history of policing and race.

Early in his career, J. Edgar Hoover was placed in charge of the General Intelligence Unit (GID), and together with Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, planned and coordinated raids against suspected communists. Because raids were found to be unconstitutional due to their constant violations of civil liberties, Hoover and Palmer found little success early in the GID’s lifespan. But after the US entered WWI and the country was fully focused on the war effort, Hoover and Palmer resumed collecting intelligence and rounding up suspected communists—all while continuing to ignore civil liberties.⁹³ Ultimately, AG Palmer was placed under congressional investigation, leading to his departure. With Palmer out of the picture, Hoover remained in charge of the GID, and pursued communists in places like labor unions and universities. Hoover continued into the 1920s building a reputation of being a young political prodigy who was staunchly anticommunist and was able to avoid reminders or criticisms of his disregard for civil liberties.⁹⁴

After the death of Warren Harding in 1923, Calvin Coolidge appointed Harlan Fiske Stone to the head of the Justice Department. During his stay as head of the Justice Department, Stone reorganized the Bureau of Investigation and appointed J. Edgar Hoover as the Director of the FBI. As Director, Hoover gained the support of his bosses and the American Civil Liberties Union, by claiming to have simply been following orders during the prime of the GID and Palmer Raids. In actuality, Hoover was an enthusiastic orchestrator of the GID’s anticommunist

⁹⁰ US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions, Other Select or Special Committees and Special Reports | Intelligence Committee,” n.d., 370-371, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>.

⁹¹ US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions,” 09/18/1968, 879.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ Stephen M. Underhill, “The Life and Times of J. Edgar Hoover, 1895–1932,” in *The Manufacture of Consent, J. Edgar Hoover and the Rhetorical Rise of the FBI* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2020), 4-8, <https://doi.org/10.14321/j.ctvswx80s.6>.

⁹⁴ Underhill, “The Life and Times of J. Edgar Hoover,” 7-8.

platform and abuse of civil liberties.⁹⁵ At the time, Hoover did what he needed to in order to keep his job, and as he cemented his authority and reputation, he returned to his status as “repressor.”⁹⁶

As Director, Hoover completely revamped the Bureau of Investigation. Hoover developed training schools, standardized different Bureau systems, and employed individuals skilled in public relations. Hoover’s main goal in making these changes was to establish an unquestionable and unbiased reputation and authority. To Hoover, prioritizing these seemingly legitimate reforms and stocking up on public relations managers and problem solvers was a way to accomplish his mission of building up the Bureau as an extremely powerful and reputable government agency.

In the late 1930s, Hoover boasted that his oversight and leadership had turned the Bureau back into a state like “the old General Intelligence Division of the Palmer Raid days.”⁹⁷ Hoover and the Bureau were enabled by the Espionage and Smith Acts, both of which led to budget increases and expansions of the Bureau’s power and flexibility in pursuing targets. As a result of this expansion of power and increased funding, the FBI came out of World War II with increased power, increased funding, and a reputation for being “a bulwark of American democracy, [and] the fearless protector and defender of [the nation] in troubled times.”⁹⁸

Shortly after WWII, when President Truman announced a program to find and expel communists working inside the US government, Hoover created his own categories and policies for discovering and pursuing communists. With Hoover at the helm, the FBI helped to establish the wave of paranoia and fear of communism as a second Red Scare.⁹⁹ Baseless accusations, political repression, and fear mongering were all tactics utilized by the infamous Senator Joseph McCarthy—but also by the FBI. To be suspected of being a communist, all a person had to do was agree with a single communist or communist ideology. For example, the FBI investigated a childcare center in New York City and found nothing indicating communist involvement, besides the fact that the center set up other programs like after-school care.¹⁰⁰ The legacy of the FBI during the Second Red Scare can be explained through the words of the journalist, Sanford Ungar: “Although the FBI was supposedly an impartial, open-minded agency...they whipped the Red scare back into existence...”¹⁰¹ Not too far after the collapse of McCarthyism, the end of the Second Red Scare, and right before an era filled with social upheaval and unrest, the FBI formalized its counterintelligence efforts through COINTELPRO. COINTELPRO was the broad label for the FBI’s “Counterintelligence Programs designed to destroy individuals and organizations the FBI [considered] to be politically objectionable.”¹⁰²

During the 1960s and 1970s, an explosion of social upheaval and unrest rocked American society and helped create a favorable social and political environment for activism. Groups

⁹⁵ Michal R. Belknap, “The Mechanics of Repression: J. Edgar Hoover, the Bureau of Investigation, and the Radicals, 1917-1925,” *Crime and Social Justice*, no. 7 (Spring-Summer 1977): 54-56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/29766005>; Underhill, “The Life and Times of J. Edgar Hoover,” 4-8.

⁹⁶ Belknap, “The Mechanics of Repression,” 56.

⁹⁷ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), 29.

⁹⁸ Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, 32.

⁹⁹ Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, 32-35.

¹⁰⁰ Sanford J. Ungar, *FBI: An Uncensored Look Behind the Walls* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1976), 126.

¹⁰¹ Ungar, *FBI*, 128.

¹⁰² Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, xii.

including, but not limited to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, Students for a Democratic Society, the American Indian Movement, the Chicano Movement, the Black Panther Party, and Weather Underground, all contributed differently to a diverse and rich landscape of 60s and 70s activism.¹⁰³ Not nearly all groups were successful, and indeed, many failed, but because there was such a diverse makeup of social activist groups, more and more people got involved in trying to make change. Importantly, this exceptional level of activism was not unique to the United States.

Perhaps one of the most distinct examples of 1960s and 1970s activism on a global scale was the international student movement. The international student movement was not a single group, but rather a network of different groups made up of students with each dedicated to different forms and efforts of activism.¹⁰⁴ Though there were semblances of an international student movement prior to WWII, it wasn't until after the war when student groups started to network internationally with other student groups.¹⁰⁵

When the international student movement began to gain traction, one of the most important principles of the movement was the use of international conferences. During such conferences, leaders from different groups met to discuss global and domestic political issues, learned about humanitarian issues, and planned out agendas. In addition to meeting at conferences, groups within the international student movement network published magazines, journals, and bulletins.¹⁰⁶ Though historian Philip Altbach maintains that the international student movement was a “failure,” its global scale speaks to the exceptional climate in 1960s and 1970s America and across the world for activism and reform.¹⁰⁷

Examining the United States' extremely troubling history of the relationship between policing and race can help provide context for race relations of the 1960s and 1970s and how that factored into FBI counterintelligence efforts. From a 21st century perspective, the issue of race affecting policing levels and techniques remains a monumental problem for American society, but before and during the 1960s and 1970s, police forces of major cities across the US expanded greatly in power and size, all without significant oversight. These trends helped shape the tension that would boil over between the police and different social groups across 1960s and 1970s America.

In 1965, a series of riots—referred to as the Watts rebellion—broke out in the neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles, California. The riots took place because of an officer violently arresting three Black people after one was detained for drunk driving. The end results included over thirty deaths, thousands of arrests, over a thousand injuries, and many millions of dollars in property damage.¹⁰⁸ The riots represented the boiling point of tensions between Black residents of LA and the LAPD, as well as LA's (and the nation's) significant history in housing

¹⁰³ Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, xi-xvi.

¹⁰⁴ Philip G. Altbach. “The International Student Movement,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 1 (January 1970): 157–159, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259987>.

¹⁰⁵ Altbach, “The International Student Movement,” 163-164.

¹⁰⁶ Altbach, “The International Student Movement,” 169-171.

¹⁰⁷ Altbach, “The International Student Movement,” 173-174.

¹⁰⁸ Stanford University, “Watts Rebellion (Los Angeles),” The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, June 12, 2017, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/watts-rebellion-los-angeles>.

and employment discrimination.¹⁰⁹ Events such as the Watts Rebellion and histories of discrimination were not exceptional in the US, and to a certain degree, these things were worse in other states.

In early 1970s Chicago, a poll was taken regarding “the favorability rating of the police,” with the results showing “a twenty-four-point gap between blacks and whites.”¹¹⁰ As the Second Great Migration resulted in an increasing number of Black Chicagoans, white resistance emerged. White neighborhoods became increasingly diverse, and as a reaction, many white Chicagoans lobbied the police to increase presence and aggression in their neighborhoods—against Black Chicagoans.¹¹¹ As Chicago continued to see increased Black migration, the Chicago police began to change up tactics and methods for policing, but only for certain groups.¹¹² In 1966, Bill Berry, a former executive of the Chicago Urban League, testified to The Citizens’ Committee to Study Police-Community Relations that “law enforcement in Black communities was administered in totally different ways than it was in white ones.”¹¹³ Tension between the CPD and Black Chicagoans was set in stone before the explosion of social unrest and activism in the 1960s and 1970s.

The historian Brandon T. Jett argues in his book, *Race, Crime, and Policing in the Jim Crow South*, that in the South, by 1920, the police emerged “as the foot soldiers in the battle to maintain Black subordination...”¹¹⁴ Methods to enforce said subordination included increasing the use of violence, more frequent and often unjustified arrests, strict enforcement of segregation, and much more.¹¹⁵ Balto concludes his book by providing that major injustices carried out by law enforcement are still a major problem, and in many cases, these injustices persist on a much more extreme level.¹¹⁶ Therefore, in the 1960s and 1970s, the groundwork was already laid to foster conflict between different races and the police, as well as different social movements and police.

In this essay, I aim to combine the separate, explicit historiographies on different groups, actors, and trends of the 1960s and 1970s. The three main historiographies I will combine to supply my argument are the historiographies of the FBI, the Black Power Movement—(specifically the Black Panther Party), and the Weather Underground. For each of these historiographies, there are explicit, separate, in-depth explorations, but that introduces a limitation. Currently, there are scholarships that address the intersection between 1960s and 70s FBI action/tactics against groups different in ideology and demography.

David Cunningham’s *There’s Something Happening Here: The New Left, The Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence* addresses the historiography of the FBI and argues that the structure and

¹⁰⁹ Stanford University, “Watts Rebellion (Los Angeles),”; for more information on the Watts rebellion, its aftermath, and its legacy, see Donna Murch, “The Many Meanings of Watts: Black Power, ‘Wattstax’, and the Carceral State,” *OAHS Magazine of History* 26, no. 1 (January 2012): 37–40.

¹¹⁰ Simon Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 134.

¹¹¹ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 130-131.

¹¹² Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 256.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Brandon T. Jett, *Race, Crime, and Policing in the Jim Crow South: African Americans and Law Enforcement in Birmingham, Memphis, and New Orleans, 1920-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021), 237.

¹¹⁵ Jett, *Race, Crime, and Policing in the Jim Crow South*, 238.

¹¹⁶ Jett, *Race, Crime, and Policing in the Jim Crow South*, 248-249.

culture of the 1960s and 1970s FBI directly influenced against whom and how COINTELPRO operations were deployed.¹¹⁷ Cunningham examines a wide range of social movements, but largely focuses on how the FBI considered and dealt with said range of social movements. Cunningham's work clearly and concisely supplies evidence of FBI tactics and COINTELPRO operations, which I will build on and utilize to compare and demonstrate discrepancies of FBI COINTELPRO operations against the BPP (Black Panther Party) and Weather Underground.¹¹⁸

Jeffrey Haas's *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther*, addresses the historiography of the BPP by arguing that Fred Hampton was a target of the FBI long before his death.¹¹⁹ To supply his argument with context, Haas utilizes his own experience of being the lawyer for many activist groups such as the BPP and SDS. Fred Hampton's murder is one of the most eye-opening pieces of evidence that indicates discrepancies in FBI treatment of the BPP and Weather Underground. In addition to providing ample evidence of the FBI being behind the assassination, Haas gives insight to the BPP's structure, leaders, and activities, all of which are crucial to building my argument.¹²⁰

Dan Berger's *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity*, addresses the historiography of the Weather Underground while arguing that the group was a great example of solidarity and presented a challenge to conventional conceptions of modern activism.¹²¹ Berger examines the Weather Underground group from all angles, including ideologies, actions, members, and important events. Berger combines secondary literature with oral histories from members from Weather Underground to paint a complete picture of the group and their activities.¹²² Though Cunningham, Haas, and Berger all importantly provide in-depth descriptions and arguments of their own respective historiographies, none of them take a comprehensive view of the era. Comparing historical events, actors, and experiences reveals that during the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s, the FBI utilized different, more violent, and more extreme counterintelligence tactics against the Black Panthers and the white terrorist group, Weather Underground. The stark differences in tactics used against the two groups can be directly attributed to a racist culture and structure within the FBI of the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1966, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, coworkers at the North Oakland Poverty Center in California, formed the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). Newton and Seale established a Ten Point Program which acted as the mission statement and core tenants of the BPP. The Ten Points were "1) freedom to determine the destiny of the black community, 2) full employment for blacks, 3) an end to capitalist exploitation of the black community, 4) decent housing, 5) informed education, 6) exemption for black men from military service, 7) an end to police brutality and murder, 8) freedom for black prisoners, 9) black juries for black criminal defendants, and 10) 'Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice, and Peace.'"¹²³ For the

¹¹⁷ David Cunningham, *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, The Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹¹⁸ Cunningham, *There's Something Happening Here*.

¹¹⁹ Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago, United States: Chicago Review Press, 2019).
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdep/detail.action?docID=5894278>.

¹²⁰ Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*.

¹²¹ Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2006).

¹²² Berger, *Outlaws of America*.

¹²³ Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*, 29.

most part, the Ten Point Program called for completely necessary and reasonable change. To outsiders and unsympathetic Americans, however, these reasonable ends didn't justify what they saw as the violent or potentially violent means.

The US was plagued by severe racial discrimination and police brutality. Because one of the tenets of the Panthers was to surveil, record, resist, and end police brutality, Newton and Seale considered it as crucial for BPP members to arm themselves. Police in Oakland were not happy with this, but nonetheless, accounts of police brutality decreased after the Panthers armed themselves and patrolled Black neighborhoods.¹²⁴

In 1967, one year after its founding, the BPP gained national attention. On May 2, 1967, thirty members of the BPP, including Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, carrying firearms, put on a demonstration of their right to self-defense at the California legislature. The main goal of this demonstration was to contest a newly introduced piece of legislation that was designed solely to make it illegal for the BPP to openly carry firearms.¹²⁵ Newton and Seale were arrested, but photos and news coverage of the demonstration circulated across the US. Reactions correlated with race; many white people felt threatened, and many Black people supported the demonstration.¹²⁶ The demonstration in Oakland also caught the attention of a young activist in Chicago named Fred Hampton.¹²⁷

While Seale and Newton were advancing the Panthers' interests in Oakland, Fred Hampton, who had been actively involved with the marches organized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., became dissatisfied with King's nonviolent approach to protest. To Hampton and many other activists involved with King, nonviolence wasn't working; during marches, white counter-protesters would beat up, spit on, and brutalize peaceful protesters.¹²⁸ Fred Hampton's first association with violent protest came after the Maywood Village Board meeting, where police tear gassed people who couldn't fit inside the meeting room. Though Hampton remained inside the building, many attendees angrily left and ran down the street breaking windows and intimidating residents. Not much damage resulted, but Hampton was arrested and spent three days in jail for being the orchestrator of the event. The Maywood Village Board meeting benefitted Hampton in boosting his popularity, but it also resulted in him being constantly harassed by police and emerging as a target of the FBI.¹²⁹

In 1968, Hampton was introduced to the leaders of the Chicago Chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Bobby Rush and Bob Brown, which led to Hampton becoming the chairman of the Illinois Black Panther Party. After hearing Hampton speak, Bobby Rush quickly became fond of the "magnetic" Hampton, remembering even thirty-five years later that "I made up my mind I wanted to work with Fred."¹³⁰ In November of 1968, Bobby Rush—with approval from the Panther Central Committee in Oakland—recruited Hampton and together they established an office for the Illinois Chapter of the BPP.¹³¹ After the office was open, Hampton got to work as the Chairman of the Illinois BPP.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, 30.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, 31.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 30.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, 31-32.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, 38.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, 38-39.

As Chairman, Hampton instituted and oversaw a program that provided free breakfast for children before school; —this program would prove to be one of the most important legacies and impacts of the Black Panther Party.¹³² Hampton went from place to place conveying the BPP’s priority of community assistance, advocating revolution, and communicating the BPP’s original Ten Point Program.¹³³ As time went on, Hampton became more and more committed to building alliances with different street gangs such as the Black Disciples, the Young Lords Organization, and Blackstone Rangers (which was ultimately a failure). Hampton even formed an alliance with a white Southern youth group called the Young Patriots. With alliances in place, Hampton’s BPP, the Young Lords, and the Young Patriots formed a “Rainbow Coalition.”¹³⁴ In 1968, Fred Hampton continued delivering speeches, serving his community, and organizing people of all different races, ethnicities, and ideologies—boosting his notoriety and importance to the broader Black Power movement. Hampton’s exceptional ability to recognize, embrace, and convey common struggle made him and the BPP *the* top target of both the Chicago Police Department and the FBI. For Hampton and the Panthers, the year 1969 was one characterized by ruthless police and FBI violence, harassment, investigation, and abuse of power.¹³⁵

While Hampton was busy serving his community and assembling the Rainbow Coalition, white student radicals were taking part in the fight to end the war in Southeast Asia. The Weathermen (later called Weather Underground—or WUO) was a faction of Students for a Democratic Society, a nationwide student protest organization calling for an end to the Vietnam War. By 1969, SDS was beginning to splinter from intergroup ideological conflict, with one of the sides being the Weathermen.¹³⁶ The ideology of the Weathermen faction included being anti-imperialist, anti-war, anti-racist, pro-Black Power, and militant. The faction was designed to be a young, all-white cadre that would inspire other young whites to join their and many other groups’ fight for revolution. For different groups, revolution meant different things, but for the Weathermen, the important achievements of revolution included the elimination of racism and imperialism.¹³⁷

The ideology and platform of the Black Panthers was a major influence and factor in the formation of the Weathermen faction and their own ideology. Dan Berger has argued that “it would be hard to overstate the importance of the Black freedom movement in the formation of Weather Underground.”¹³⁸ In efforts to advance the revolution and aid the fight for Black freedom, the Weathermen—rather than attempt to join the Black Power Movement—sought to build up solidarity and organize young whites. Though Weathermen collectives were established across the US, and their demographics and ideological platforms were set, it was not until the Midwest National Action conference of 1969 where the group emerged as a national movement instead of a faction.¹³⁹

At the Midwest National Action conference in 1969, Bill Ayers, one of the leaders of the Weathermen, made a speech in which he denounced white supremacy and white Americans’

¹³² *ibid*, 39.

¹³³ *ibid*, 39-41.

¹³⁴ *ibid*, 44-45.

¹³⁵ *ibid*, 41-54.

¹³⁶ Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 95.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, 95-96.

¹³⁸ *ibid*, 96.

¹³⁹ *ibid*, 95-96.

tendency to dismiss revolutions or revolutionary movements in less developed countries. Ayers' speech indicated his and the Weathermen's intentions of fighting for a revolution at home, but also assisting and supporting the revolutions abroad, one of which being in Vietnam. Ayers framed the idea of revolution as a worldwide phenomenon. Ayers's speech represented a turning point in the chronology of the Weathermen movement, as the group soon transitioned into an extended period of militancy and living off the grid.¹⁴⁰

After the conference in 1969, the Weathermen began to utilize militancy as a strategy to increase support and membership. Weathermen collectives across major cities fought against police officers, gangs, and random people considered to be "working class toughs."¹⁴¹ In Boston, Weathermen invaded a Harvard University building, assaulting staff and causing immense property damage.¹⁴² The Weathermen also attempted to free high school students from the supposed oppression of their schools. In Detroit, Weathermen went into a classroom in a community college, "lectured the students on war and racism, and—using karate moves—blocked those who tried to escape."¹⁴³ The inspiration behind these rash militant strategies was the belief that action—any action—was considered good action. This early militancy proved to be a failure; fighting, trespassing, destroying property, and trying to free students from educational settings, all ended up alienating potential sympathizers *and* recruits.¹⁴⁴ These early actions remain important to analyze, however, as it set the militant precedent for the group. In the latter part of 1969 and into the 1970s, the group became much more serious, planning and launching the "Days of Rage."¹⁴⁵

The Days of Rage marked the escalation of the Weathermen's radicalism and use of violence. October 8, 9, 10, and 11 of 1969 were labeled by Chicago newspapers as the "Days of Rage."¹⁴⁶ The Days of Rage was a nickname given to the widespread efforts by SDS, the Weathermen, the BPP, and many other groups to get huge numbers of protesters to show up in Chicago. Though many groups were a part of the Days of Rage, different groups protested in different ways. The Days of Rage illustrated the differences between the Black Panther Party and the Weathermen in the latter part of 1969 and early 1970s.¹⁴⁷ By the end of the decade, WUO members were far more willing to use violence and radical philosophies than BPP members

For the Weathermen, the Days of Rage proved to be days of substantial violence. A poster circulated by the Weathermen group stated, "'we now find the government guilty and sentence it to death in the streets.'"¹⁴⁸ The poster summarized the intentions and actions of the group very well; the plan was to wage a street fight against the police. In the buildup, the Weathermen launched widespread efforts to organize and deploy a mob (thousands) of young, anti-racist whites, in the streets of Chicago, against the police. Though they were confident in having these efforts materialize, only a few hundred willing participants showed up.¹⁴⁹ Regardless of the numbers, the violence of the night of October 8th was not underwhelming.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, 96-97.

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, 99.

¹⁴² *ibid*, 100.

¹⁴³ *ibid*, 101.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, 101-102.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, 108.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, 107.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, 107-109.

After 10PM, the violence began, with a mob moving to the Drake Hotel, where Judge Julius Hoffman—judge in the infamous Trial of the Chicago 7—lived. The police, unprepared for the mob’s attack on the hotel, recovered, went after the mob, and the fight began.¹⁵⁰ Weathermen in the fight wore “helmets and steel boots,” and “carried makeshift weapons—rocks, lead pipes, baseball bats...”¹⁵¹ People were beaten, arrested, hit in the face with rocks and clubs, shot, left for dead, or permanently injured. Windows were smashed, buildings and streets were wrecked, and chaos was unleashed.¹⁵² To the Weathermen, they achieved what they wanted, which was violence against the police. To Fred Hampton and the BPP, the actions of the group were deplorable.

Before the night of October 8, 1969, Fred Hampton denounced the plans of Weathermen and made efforts to reduce the potential violence. Hampton had a meeting with the Weather Bureau in which an agreement was reached, where Hampton would not publicly denounce Weathermen, and Weathermen would tone down their planned violence.¹⁵³ The agreement was not honored by either side—the violence unfolded, and Hampton labeled Weathermen and their actions as ““anarchistic, opportunistic, individualistic, chauvinistic, and Custeristic.””¹⁵⁴ Hampton’s plan for the four-day stretch was not to orchestrate violence, but instead organize different groups such as RYM II and the Young Lords to take part in marches and rallies that did not revolve around street fights with the police.¹⁵⁵ Along with that, Hampton and the Illinois BPP continued to administer free breakfast for children before school.¹⁵⁶

The actions of Weathermen and the Illinois BPP during the days of October 8-11, 1969, illuminate the fact that between the two groups, the more radical and violent one was the Weathermen. Consequently, one would assume a much more extreme effort by law enforcement to destroy the more radical and violent group. However, based on the actions of the FBI and the Chicago Police, this was not the case. The stark contrast between levels of violence and radicalism of each group continued past the days of Rage, but discrepancies in FBI tactics and responses only became more glaring and extreme.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the FBI unleashed thousands of COINTELPRO operations against any number of social groups and movements. In comparing the types and severity of COINTELPRO operations against the Black Panther Party and Weather Underground, major discrepancies can be found. Against the BPP, in comparison to Weather Underground, the FBI used more, and more extreme violence, smeared reputations, humiliated activists, and manufactured intergroup conflict and violence.

In 1968, J. Edgar Hoover attributed “whole problem of violence in American society” to Black extremists, which, in the context of FBI COINTELPRO, meant Black Panthers.¹⁵⁷ On

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, 110.

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, 109.

¹⁵² *ibid*, 110-111.

¹⁵³ *ibid*, 108.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*, 107.

¹⁵⁶ David Thompson, "Panthers Find a \$1,000 Gift in Deerfield: Defense Fund Aided by 400 Residents," Chicago Tribune (1963-1996), Dec 15, 1969, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/panthers-find-1-000-gift-deerfield/docview/168997620/se-2?accountid=14696>.

¹⁵⁷ US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions,” 09/18/1968, 879.

February 29, 1968, FBI official G. C. Moore noted in a memo—in which he requested more field divisions for the COINTELPRO operation against Black nationalists—that one of the main purposes of COINTELPRO was to “prevent violence on [Black nationalists’] part.”¹⁵⁸ From Hoover and Moore’s words, it could be concluded that a prime objective of COINTELPRO operations against Black nationalists was indeed to prevent violence. However, this was the opposite of what happened.

In January of 1968, the FBI anonymously sent a letter to Jeff Fort, the leader of the Blackstone Rangers, containing a false warning that the Black Panthers had ordered a hit out on Fort.¹⁵⁹ During the Church Committee hearings, Senator Philip Hart cited a different memo from the FBI Chicago Office which, in referencing the false warning, said “it is believed that the above may intensify the degree of animosity between the two groups and occasion Fort to take retaliatory actions which could disrupt the BPP.”¹⁶⁰ Senator Hart then asked the witness Mr. Adams, “how can you reach any conclusion other than a purpose was to generate the kind of friction that would induce the killing?”¹⁶¹ A crucial strategy to the FBI’s COINTELPRO tactics was indeed manufacturing such extreme animosity that violence would be the end result. How else besides violent retaliation would a street gang respond to a hit on their leader’s head? This strategy was not an isolated one, either—it was common.

According to testimony from Curtis Smothers, counsel for the Church Committee, when the FBI “couldn’t find a rival group [to the BPP]...they simply worked on the local police as a means of taking them out of existence.”¹⁶² Manufacturing street and gang violence was an indirect way for the Bureau to destroy the BPP. Though this practice presented legal and constitutional violations, the FBI went even farther than mere indirect violence.

On the night of December 3, 1969, Fred Hampton was assassinated in a raid organized and coordinated by the FBI and the Chicago Police Department. The night of the raid, William O’Neal, an undercover FBI informant who was the Chicago BPP’s head of security, gave FBI Agent Roy Mitchell a floor plan of Fred Hampton’s apartment.¹⁶³ Before the raid, Hampton was drugged with barbiturates—assumed to have been done by O’Neal—ensuring that during the raid, Hampton would remain asleep.¹⁶⁴ Armed with machine guns, a team of police entered Hampton’s apartment at 4AM, opened fire, killed Fred Hampton and Mark Clark (the head of the Peoria BPP chapter), and wounded many other Panthers in the townhome. In total, the police fired ninety-eight shots during the raid, while Mark Clark was (possibly) the only one to fire back, in the form of a single round.¹⁶⁵ In the days following the raid, the Chicago Police

¹⁵⁸ US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions,” 02/29/1968, 107.

¹⁵⁹ US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions,” 09/18/1975, 76.

¹⁶⁰ US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions,” 09/18/1975, 76; On page 76, Senator Hart referenced a letter obtained by the Church Committee, which falsely warned Jeff Fort, the leader of the Blackstone Rangers, of a hit ordered on him by the BPP. The letter was approved by the Bureau HQ in Washington and was subsequently drafted and sent by the Chicago Office. The letter was intended by both the Chicago Office and the Bureau HQ to cause violent conflict between the Blackstone Rangers and the BPP.

¹⁶¹ US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions,” 09/18/1975, 76.

¹⁶² US Senate. “Intelligence Related Commissions,” 09/18/1975, 52.

¹⁶³ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI’s Secret Wars Against Domestic Dissent* (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1990), 139.

¹⁶⁴ Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*, 92.

¹⁶⁵ Churchill and Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers*, 140.

Department and FBI attempted to cover up the deliberate assassination, but their efforts would fail.

Independent ballistics reports and autopsies disproved the narrative told by the CPD, and even resulted in multiple indictments (which were later dropped), but for the FBI cover up, the truth proved more difficult to uncover.¹⁶⁶ Richard G. Held was brought in by the Bureau to oversee the coverup, but FBI documents released (years) later under the Freedom of Information Act proved it was the FBI's witness who supplied the floor plan and the rest of the information for the raid. The use of an FBI informant to supply information for an assassination against a Panther leader was not an isolated event, either. Another BPP head of security, named Melvin Smith, supplied the FBI with a floorplan of a BPP building. Just as in Chicago, a police team raided the BPP building and attempted to assassinate a sleeping Panther leader, Geronimo Pratt. Pratt survived the assassination attempt, but only because of his decision to sleep on the floor that one night.¹⁶⁷

Though the FBI considered violence an apt strategy in combating the BPP, they also utilized alternative, unconventional tactics to destroy the reputations of activists. An unconventional tactic of FBI COINTELPRO operations used against Black activists was the weaponization of homophobia, something that Jared Leighton categorizes under “character assassinations.”¹⁶⁸ Before providing examples of this tactic, it is important to explain 1960s and 1970s American attitudes toward homosexuality. Gillian Frank's article, “Discophobia: Antigay Prejudice and the 1979 Backlash against Disco,”¹⁶⁹ provides a glimpse into the widespread hatred, fear, and stigma of homosexuality in the 1960s and 1970s. Frank argues that in the late 1970s, an anti-disco movement emerged that was fueled by homophobia and hatred of gay culture. During the 70s, disco exploded in popularity; all different types of people danced and enjoyed the genre. Though it was popular among a wide range of audiences, disco was closely associated with gay culture and gay nightlife. These associations were visible and understood, but for a time, this didn't matter. However, over a short period of time, a radio host named Steve Dahl unleashed a vicious campaign against disco, which was just masked homophobia.¹⁷⁰ Dahl would end up being successful, and in fact, the genre never regained its “gay connotations.”¹⁷¹ An entire genre of music being suppressed just because of its association with homosexuality is quite indicative of the prominence of homophobia in 1960s and 1970s America—this was understood by the FBI.

Whether they outed homosexual activists or attempted spread false rumors about an activist being homosexual, FBI agents exposed and destroyed many different activists' personal

¹⁶⁶ Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*, 92; Churchill and Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers*, 141-142.

¹⁶⁷ Churchill and Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers*, 141-142; for more information on the assassination of Fred Hampton, see Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton*; Churchill and Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers*, 138-142.

¹⁶⁸ Jared Leighton, “‘Character Assassins’: How the FBI Used the Issue of Homosexuality Against the Black Freedom Struggle,” *Journal of Civil and Human Rights* 2, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2016): 152, <https://doi.org/10.5406/jcivihumarigh.2.2.0151>.

¹⁶⁹ Gillian Frank, “Discophobia: Antigay Prejudice and the 1979 Backlash Against Disco,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (May, 2007): 276-306, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30114235>.

¹⁷⁰ Frank, “Discophobia,” 276-306; see Frank, “Discophobia,” 284; though much of the hatred for disco music can be linked to homophobia, the genre was disproportionately popular in Black and Latino communities, indicating racism as another motivation for the hatred of disco.

¹⁷¹ Frank, “Discophobia,” 306.

and professional lives. Huey Newton, the cofounder of the BPP, was a target of the FBI's weaponization of homophobia. The FBI offices of Detroit, Washington D.C., and Baltimore, all "submitted general proposals for anonymous communications...to exploit alleged homosexual background of Newton..."¹⁷² The FBI's anonymous letters stating that Newton was homosexual also called into question his overall masculinity and ability to lead. These assaults added onto the pre existing efforts to discredit activists and cause intergroup conflict.¹⁷³

Newton was not the only high-ranking Panther smeared as a homosexual by the FBI. Another victim of the FBI's weaponization of homophobia was the Boston Black Panther member Christopher Carambo.¹⁷⁴ When Carambo was deemed a target by Hoover, the FBI investigated his military records, discovering that a Navy Reserve doctor had diagnosed Carambo as "an overt homosexual."¹⁷⁵ After this information was acquired, it was shared with informants who were told to share it with other members of the Boston BPP. The information was also shared with the Republic of New Afrika to manufacture animosity between them and the BPP. The FBI's strategy worked, as a letter was mailed by an anonymous Republic of New Afrika member to the Boston BPP containing the line, "anyone who is a faggot and homosexual does not deserve a position of leadership."¹⁷⁶

Regardless of how beneficial and revolutionary the BPP Breakfast for Children Program was, it too became a target of FBI COINTELPRO operations. In a memo to the San Francisco FBI office, J. Edgar Hoover wrote, "you state that the Bureau under the CIP should not attack programs of community interest such as the BPP [breakfast program]...you have obviously missed the point."¹⁷⁷ Hoover went on to order William Sullivan to ensure the San Francisco Office's attack on the BPP breakfast program.¹⁷⁸ The FBI also went after non-BPP affiliated supporters of the breakfast program. They mailed copies of a fake, racist BPP coloring book to companies like Safeway and the Jack-In-The-Box Corporation in order to get them to stop their support of the program.¹⁷⁹ The FBI also facilitated through anonymous letters the relocation of a priest who had been letting the BPP use his church as a place to serve breakfast.¹⁸⁰ Actions like these fit a pattern of the FBI's broader assault on the BPP—it didn't matter if someone got hurt, whether something was right or wrong, or whether lives would be ruined.

Though Weather Underground was not treated as a small threat, the COINTELPRO operations and consequences against the group did not approach anywhere the extremity and severity of that against the BPP. On March 6, 1970, three members of the Weathermen were killed in an accidental explosion in a New York townhouse.¹⁸¹ In the basement of the townhouse, WUO had created a bomb-building operation, which later was found to contain "enough explosives to level half the block."¹⁸² The townhouse explosion brought major attention to the group and marked the transition of the group into the underground. Now called Weather

¹⁷² Leighton, "Character Assassins," 167.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, 168-169.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 164.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 164-165.

¹⁷⁷ Churchill and Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers*, 145.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 146.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 159.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 128.

¹⁸² *ibid.*

Underground, the group spent the rest of the 1970s adopting militant efforts to aid the Black liberation movement.¹⁸³ In the span of a few months, the group bombed the NYC police HQ, an MP station in San Francisco, a Bank of America in NYC, and many other sites. The group also broke counterculture icon Timothy Leary out of prison.¹⁸⁴ The group's tactics were explicitly violent and disruptive, and continued to be so, yet, in pursuit, the FBI lacked the ferocity it had against the Panthers.

FBI use of extreme violence against Weather Underground was practically nonexistent. No members, family members, or friends of Weather Underground were assassinated or executed by police or local FBI. Bernadine Dohrn, who was a prominent leader of the Weather Underground and top-wanted fugitive by the FBI, recognized this difference in FBI pursuit of her group versus FBI pursuit of minority groups like the BPP. Dohrn said, “‘obviously they didn't murder people to get to us, and that's everything about white privilege,’” and that “‘they did have a white version of their strategies to harass, [use] dirty tricks, plant false information to link us to international terrorists.’”¹⁸⁵ Violence against Weather Underground only rarely went to the extent of their friends and family members being “‘physically [assaulted].”¹⁸⁶ Needless to say, being physically assaulted by police due to participation or association in different social groups in the 60s and 70s was commonplace.

Like the level of violence, unconventional tactics used by the FBI against Weather Underground were also less extreme than those against the BPP. Historian Dan Berger categorizes the nonviolent tactics used against Weather Underground into three different actions: burglaries, mail opening, and phone tapping.¹⁸⁷ Homes and offices of Weathermen, their families, and their friends were broken into and searched by the FBI. Colleges that Weathermen previously attended were also broken into and searched by the FBI. Phones were tapped and monitored, and mail was illegally intercepted and opened.¹⁸⁸ Many of these tactics were illegal and in violation of civil rights, but do not compare to the extreme tactics against the BPP.

Even when the FBI had an informant inside the WUO, the results were very different from the results from informants in the BPP. The FBI's use of informants inside the BPP resulted in death; the FBI's use of an informant in Weather Underground resulted in the arrests of two low-level Weather Underground members, and insight into the group's inner workings.¹⁸⁹ After the accidental townhouse explosion in NY, Weather Underground member's became top priorities of the FBI. Larry Grathwohl, an informant directly inside of the group, was ordered by FBI leaders to give them any member that he could at the time. The WUO leadership had already fled, and Grathwohl's cover was blown as a result of him giving up other members, but the FBI (Hoover) wanted an arrest.¹⁹⁰ What resulted was a set-up operation in which two rather unimportant Weather Underground members, Linda Evans and Dianne Donghi, were arrested

¹⁸³ *ibid*, 131-136.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, 136-138.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, 159.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, 160.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ Bryan Burrough, *Days of Rage: America's Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 131.

¹⁹⁰ Burrough, *Days of Rage*, 130-131.

along with Grathwohl.¹⁹¹ Evans and Donghi went on to serve short jail terms, and Grathwohl no longer had access to inside information.¹⁹²

It could be argued that Hoover and the FBI wanted to save face and put names to a crime, but Grathwohl had been an informant before the townhouse explosion. The FBI's use of Grathwohl as an informant differs greatly from its use of an informant like William O'Neal. It wasn't until the townhouse explosion when Grathwohl was utilized to provide information for arrests. Grathwohl didn't supply a floor plan to the FBI, and neither did he drug any of the leaders of Weather Underground, even though he could have. Larry Grathwohl was an important member of the group, even being involved in "a plan to bomb a power station in Niagra Falls."¹⁹³ The FBI's use of informants against the BPP and Weather Underground was yet another example of a major discrepancy in the treatment of each group. These differences present a question: why was the FBI's treatment of the BPP different and more extreme in tactics used than it was against Weather Underground?

Though there were different influencing factors, the major discrepancy in FBI COINTELPRO tactics against the BPP and Weather Underground can be attributed to a racist culture and structure within the FBI of the 1960s and 1970s. The main influence on this racist culture was J. Edgar Hoover. In 1969, he claimed that the "Black Panther Party, without question, represents the greatest threat to the internal security of the country."¹⁹⁴ A quick comparison of the actions of Weather Underground and the BPP in 1969 immediately introduces a counterargument, but it remains subjective. Nonetheless, Hoover's claim was indicative of his racist ideology.

Civil Rights legend Martin Luther King Jr., colleague of King and activist attorney Chauncey Eskridge, NAACP aide Rudy Shields, civil rights worker Monroe Sharp, and chief legal counsel to the Church Committee, Curtis Smothers, all seemed to recognize Hoover's racism.¹⁹⁵ After Martin Luther King, Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize, Hoover attacked King's "integrity."¹⁹⁶ In response, King called out the FBI's activity in the South, where the agency had been failing to protect Black people.¹⁹⁷ Chauncey Eskridge stated that the FBI's overall failure to protect Blacks in the South were possibly a "reflection of its leader."¹⁹⁸ Rudy Shields once said that "from [Hoover's] statements throughout the history of the civil rights revolution, particularly this one, Hoover himself appears to be somewhat of a racist."¹⁹⁹ Monroe Sharp noted how when Black activists are attacked by white supremacist mobs, "[FBI agents] sit there

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, 130.

¹⁹⁴ "Hoover Calls Panthers Top Threat to Security," *The Washington Post, Times Herald* (1959-1973), Jul 16, 1969, A3,

<https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/hover-calls-panthers-top-threat-security/docview/147638465/se-2?accountid=14696>.

¹⁹⁵ "Leaders Blast Hoover: What Leaders Say About FBI Director Hoover," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition)* (1921-1967), November 21, 1964, 1; John Lewis, "Black Prober Sees Racism in FBI Role," *Afro-American* (1893-), November 29, 1975, 1.

¹⁹⁶ "Leaders Blast Hoover," 1.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*

as neutral observers...’’²⁰⁰ Curtis Smothers, one of only three total Black attorneys on for the Church Committee, went on record saying “no one wants to examine the racism of former FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover.’’²⁰¹ To put it simply, respected Black figures, civil rights activists, and leaders widely acknowledged the racism of Hoover and the FBI, and they weren’t wrong.

In his book, *There’s Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence*, David Cunningham confirms the above claims of figures like Chauncey Eskridge and Monroe Sharp.²⁰² On May 14, 1961, in Birmingham, Alabama, a mob of white supremacists, including members of the KKK, attacked a bus of Freedom Riders, ending up in many of the victims being hospitalized. Before the attack, Thomas Rowe, an FBI informant, warned his designated agent about the plan of the mob. Because Hoover’s convenient policy was for the Bureau to act solely as investigators (until minds were changed), the agent then alerted Detective Tom Cook, a known ally and friend of the KKK.²⁰³ There are two issues with this; for one, Hoover’s policy was a way for agents and officials to selectively aid or investigate certain groups, and two, the warning was given to a person who obviously would do the opposite of protect the Freedom Riders. Events such as this one in Birmingham are results of Hoover’s significant racist influence on the FBI.

Hoover was quoted in 1965 saying, “‘colored people’’ were “‘quite ignorant, mostly uneducated, and I doubt if they would seek an education if they had an opportunity.’’’²⁰⁴ Hoover also doubted that Black people would use their right to vote and opposed interracial marriages and integrated schooling.²⁰⁵ Most signs point to J. Edgar Hoover being a racist, and he shaped the FBI’s power and policies around his racism. This was evident among the rest of the FBI. One agent involved in the 1960s FBI went on record saying “‘in about 90% of the situations in which Bureau personnel referred to Negroes, the word ‘nigger’ was used an always in a derogatory manner.’’’²⁰⁶ There was racism towards Black agents as well, as few as there were. One such agent, Donald Rochon, was censured after he objected that other agents “[pasting] a photo of an ape over his son in a family portrait and drowned a black doll in effigy.’’²⁰⁷ Only one of the perpetrators was suspended without pay for two weeks, but his fellow agents raised funds to cover his suspension.²⁰⁸

The racist culture of the FBI led to a racist structure, which led to the FBI using more violent, more extreme, and different tactics against the BPP in comparison to Weather Underground. In a letter sent anonymously from the San Francisco FBI office to a BPP newspaper which intended to foster conflict between the BPP and SDS, incorrect grammar and spelling errors were used because “‘the editors of the newspaper will accept this letter as being legitimate and from one of their own kind.’’’²⁰⁹ In this single event, a racist FBI culture (notions of intellectual inferiority), a racist FBI structure (racist explanations being deemed as adequate

²⁰⁰ “Leaders Blast Hoover,” 2.

²⁰¹ Lewis, “Black Prober Sees Racism in FBI Role,” 1.

²⁰² Cunningham, *There’s Something Happening Here*; “Leaders Blast Hoover,” 1-2.

²⁰³ Cunningham, *There’s Something Happening Here*, 109.

²⁰⁴ *ibid*, 114.

²⁰⁵ *ibid*, 114.

²⁰⁶ *ibid*, 114.

²⁰⁷ *ibid*, 115.

²⁰⁸ *ibid*.

²⁰⁹ *ibid*, 116.

for action), and a different FBI tactic (false narratives and manufacturing conflict) were all apparent.

To put it mildly, the FBI of the 1960s and 1970s was out of control. COINTELPRO tactics against the Black Panthers and Weather Underground differed greatly. In comparison to its behavior regarding the Weather Underground, the FBI adopted more violent and more extreme positions in its interactions with the BPP. Overall, the agency was more committed to the destruction of the Black Panther Party. This happened and was allowed to happen because of a racist culture and structure within the FBI, much of which is attributed to the power of J. Edgar Hoover. We'd like to think of how far we've come since the 60s and 70s, but discrepancies in law enforcement against certain groups and systemic racism continue to plague our society.

At both the federal and local level, problems persist that help uphold systemic racism and discrepancies in law enforcement. At the federal level of law enforcement, minority representation is shrinking. In 1991, 5.3% of the total FBI agents were Black, and in 2018, 4.4% of FBI agents were Black.²¹⁰ At the local level, mindless killings of Black people at the hands of police continue to take place, as “the recent killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Keith Lamont Scott, Terence Crutcher, Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks have illustrated to the wider American public that there continue to be systemic, racial problems in policing and criminal justice in the United States.”²¹¹ On both federal and local levels of policing, reform needs to be instituted. It is fair to say that progress has been made since the 1960s and 1960s, but there is a crisis in our nation's policing system. At the moment, our modern policing system does not look as good as we'd like to think it does in comparison to the extremely repressive one of the 1960s and 1970s.

²¹⁰ Sana Sekkarie, “The FBI Has a Racism Problem and it Hurts Our National Security,” *Georgetown Security Studies Review* (August 19, 2020), <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2020/08/19/the-fbi-has-a-racism-problem-and-it-hurts-our-national-security/>.

²¹¹ Jett, *Race, Crime, and Policing in the Jim Crow South*, 249.

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Break the Chain: Incarcerated Women Fight for Prisoners' Rights in the 1970s By Layla Hernandez

Introduction

In 1975, women incarcerated in the North Carolina Correctional Center launched a peaceful sit-in to draw attention to the unsafe working conditions and to push for improvements in staffing and living conditions. At the heart of this protest was an attempt to challenge the exposure to hazardous materials in the prison laundry facilities. They refused to continue working in the laundries until safety measures could be put in place and they demanded that they be allowed to organize a labor union. The protesters knew their actions put them at risk of retaliation from prison guards but they felt they must act.

This protest—which drew scant attention even in the state—was part of a wave of activism organized by prisoners in the 1960s and 1970s. The prisoners' rights movement has drawn relatively less attention than other movements for social justice in this era. Yet, the work of these activists was critical in changing the day-to-day experiences of incarcerated people and to expanding the legal rights of prisoners. These activists were often connected to other movements; sometimes, they had allies outside prison walls in the Black freedom struggle or the women's movement. At other times, they drew on experiences of activism in other movements as they organized behind bars.

What histories do exist of the prisoners' rights movement are often limited in scope and in perspective. In some ways, the limitations of the scholarship reflect the difficulties of accessing records for incarcerated Americans. But more broadly, historians have confined their consideration of activist prison movements to male institutions, such as the notorious Atticus incident. The few scholars who have investigated female activists have not fully considered their work as part of a larger prisoners' rights movement focused on constitutional rights and living conditions. Instead, these scholars have tended to discuss women's activism only in regard to maternal rights or health care. What the North Carolina labor strike reveals is a largely untold story of female prisoners working to advance the rights of the incarcerated, regardless of gender.

The 1960s and 1970s was a moment of great transition in the history of incarceration. For thousands of years, punishment that transgressed social moral codes resulted in death, slavery, maiming, or the payment of fines.²¹² It was not until the eighteenth century that Americans wanted to use “new science” penology, which attempts to eradicate evil human behavior and cleanse the soul of sin.²¹³ Penologists worked to improve the poorly constructed prisons by first separating the sexes within the same institution. By the 19th century, men were held in individual cells and all the incarcerated women held in a penitentiary would be confined in one large room.²¹⁴ A Chaplain from Auburn State Prison in New York stated that “to be a male convict in

²¹² Larry E. Sullivan, *The Prison Reform Movement: Forlorn Hope*. (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 4.

²¹³ With the influence of the Enlightenment period in Europe, Americans were focusing on reforming society by trying to uplift those who had fallen. *The Prison Reform Movement: Forlorn Hope*, 4.

²¹⁴ Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Prisons for Women*. (Crime and Justice 5, 1983), 125.

this prison would be quite tolerable to be a female convict, for any protracted period, would be death.”²¹⁵

By the late 1830s women received the privilege of having their own individual cells and would later get their own correctional housing in the 1870s. Convicted women would continue to be subjected to worse mistreatment than their male counterparts because of the social stigma placed on them during the Antebellum era. A female criminal has a much more negative impact on society than a male criminal, since they are sinning and by removing the moral constraints on men.²¹⁶ The female deviant went against what women are supposed to stand for (purity and morale), which gives justification for inflicting harsher punishment on these women. However, some reformers during the progressive era tried to rehabilitate prisoners back into society, which also meant the reintegration of convicted women into society. With women being the figure of innate purity, psychologists believed that in order to rehabilitate female convicts, they need to do so under the supervision of other women. If rehabilitation were successful, women were able to reintegrate back into society and represent the stereotype that had been placed on them since birth. However, with overcrowding and the changes in penal institution and model, the prison reform movement lost its momentum.²¹⁷ Because of the decline in prison reform many projects were abandoned and unfinished.

With incarcerated women still under the control of a male dominated penal system, women struggled with the same social stigma given to them in the 18th and 19th century. By the 1960s women were still being treated more harshly than men, with litigation centered on laws that allowed states to hold women longer than men convicted of similar crimes.²¹⁸ The trend of protest that happened during the 1960s and the 1970s included the topic of prisoners’ rights. Even though men were treated better than women in the prison system, men also suffered from the abusive prison system in the U.S. All prisoners around the U.S. during this time had little to no protection from the first, fourth, and thirteenth amendment. Therefore, we start to see many prisoners around the country fighting for their rights in the 1960s and the 1970s. Looking at the prisoners’ rights movement, there have been many scholarly works looking at men’s contribution to the movement. There are many reasons as to why women are usually overlooked when talking about prisoners’ rights. One of the reasons being is that the population of incarcerated women is significantly smaller than men. The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that the incarceration rate for men was about 200 and for women it was about 8 between the 1960s to the 1970s.²¹⁹ Because incarcerated men dominate the prison population, the act of committing crimes is almost always associated with masculinity, “masculine criminality had always been deemed more ‘normal’ than feminine criminality.”²²⁰ This disparity may be one reason why women have not received much attention when talking about the prisoners’ rights movement.

²¹⁵ Walter David Lewis, *From Newgate to Dannemora: The Rise of the Penitentiary in New York, 1796-1848*. (New York: Ithaca, 1965), 123.

²¹⁶ Estelle B. Freedman, *Their Sisters’ Keepers: An Historical Perspective on Female Correctional Institutions in the United States: 1870-1900* (Feminist Studies Inc. 1974), 78.

²¹⁷ Larry E. Sullivan, *The Prison Reform Movement: Forlorn Hope* (Boston: Twayne, 1990), 32.

²¹⁸ Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Even in Prison, Women are Second-Class Citizens* (American Bar Association 1987), 30.

²¹⁹ Stephanie Minor-Harper, *State and Federal Prisoners, 1925-85*. (U.S. Department of Justice, and Bureau of Justice Statistics. 1986).

²²⁰ Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press. 2003), 66.

Incarcerated women have pleaded for equal rights, not because they are women, but because they are human beings. Women from Bedford Hills correctional facility for women had a prison newspaper called *Voices From Within* that consisted of poems and other literary work created by the inmates. The women in the prison pleaded for help, “We need advice, support, direction. For more than a year now, we have been sending correspondence to legislators, other influential individuals, and groups, requesting assistance and support. We ask you to help us into the community of which you are a member. We are not sitting around in here planning crimes to be committed upon our release. We are really not so different from you. Each of us is a human being who has done something wrong, and is being punished for it, and is trying to rebuild her own life and to help each other do so. We anticipate being free one day, free to be with our families and to enjoy the simple things in life like going to a movie, or hugging a child, or just walking in the rain.”²²¹ In another prisoner newspaper from North Carolina Correctional Institution for women called *Break de Chains of Legalized U.S. Slavery*, an inmate named Shirley Herlth would explicitly expressed grievances about the prison system. Herlth compared the “Korrectional Center for Women” to Auchswitz, Germany’s “Koncentration Kamp.”²²² These women would eventually take action in their fight for rights.

Despite women’s efforts in their fight for prisoners’ rights, scholars today still fail to mention their contribution to the movement. Experts like Heather Anne Thompson and Robert Chase focus on activism done by male prisoners. Scholars mention activism done by incarcerated men and how they shaped the Prisoners’ Rights movement. When experts do talk about women’s contributions to the movement, they mainly talk about issues only concerning women. One of the main topics that gets associated with women’s contributions to the movement is health care and maternity rights. Eileen B. Leonard describes prison reforms that were caused by the actions of women prisoners. One example of women fighting for prisoners’ right litigation was healthcare. She explained how women had more trouble than men in getting better healthcare, an example of this would be in Bedford Hills. In the case of *Todaro v. Ward*, women would be denied treatment for any issues relating to women’s reproductive organs. Leonard also talks about how incarcerated women also tried to fight for maternity rights in the 1970s. Leonard is one of many scholars that discuss the impact women made on prisoners’ rights litigation, but also talk about their involvement on issues only related to women. Doing so, emphasizes the connection of masculinity and the Prison system. What we should be focusing on is the work done by women who fought for all prisoners’ rights. Examples of this is in Bedford hills, North Carolina Correctional institution for women, and the Santa Cruz Project.

Historical Context on the Prisoners’ Rights Movement

The 1960s and 1970s in the United States saw an array of protests and movements, from the Antiwar movement to the Civil Rights movement. Many of these movements gained a great deal of media attention. One of the movements that did not receive much attention is the Prison Rights Movement. This movement did not start in the 1960s and 1970s; the fight for basic rights for prisoners started as late as the late 19th century. After the American Civil War, the U.S. Constitution was amended to include the 13th amendment, which states “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly

²²¹ Ann McGovern, *Voices From Within* (Weston: Magic Circle Press.1975), 7.

²²² Shirley Herlth, “Open Letter to Amerikkka” from *Break de Chains of Legalized U.S. Slavery*, (North Carolina Women’s Prison Book Project, 1975), 8.

convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."²²³The South responded with the “Black codes,” which were restriction laws aimed towards African Americans. If African Americans were caught breaking these laws, they would be subject to punishment and arrest. On top of that, majority of the Southern States instituted the convict leasing system²²⁴, which allowed southern states to lease their prisoners to private businesses, thereby incentivizing incarceration. In the South, state government used the prison system as a legal way to re-install a kind of pseudo-slavery. Northern states, too, adopted penal labor in their prisons, particularly in the fast-growing industrial cities.²²⁵

When reformers of the Progressive era discovered the exploitation of state prisoners and the noncompetitive nature of prison labor, they called for immediate change. The working-class people struggled to find jobs in factories because of the reliant use of free prison labor. Gradually, states passed laws that restricted the use of free labor of convicts. The federal government passed the Hawes Cooper Act in 1929, which banned domestic shipments of goods produced by prisoners. In addition, the government forbade transportation companies to move any prison-made goods into any state that is in violation of the laws of that state. Eventually, every state has put some sort of regulation or restriction on prison-made goods in the open market.²²⁶

With the decline of prison labor, reformers' next goal was to emphasize rehabilitation (rather than just punishment) in the U.S. prison system. Under George Wickersham, the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement argued that rehabilitation was the only solution to the problem of crime.²²⁷ However, with the decline of state prison profits after the massive regulation of prison labor, prisons have lacked adequate financial support. It was hard to gain attention and support for the lack of funds, considering the prison population was heavily racialized with African Americans being the majority. By the 1950s, prisons across the U.S. experienced revolts and protests. With the shift in penal order, low funding, and the growing size of the prison population came the dismantling of an old order but the new structure could not be set in place.²²⁸ However, the shock of prison riots in the 50s did not last long. Prisoners had extremely limited access to media, which made it hard for them to voice the mistreatment of the failing institutions. In addition, prison officials would routinely blame prisoners’ mental health or behavioral issues in their official reports following an unrest.²²⁹

The Nation of Islam (sometimes called Black Muslims by outsiders) believed in Black nationalism and followed Islamic tenets. NOI leaders would use prisons to recruit new members and to share their philosophy. A swarm of Nation of Islam’s members filed lawsuit fighting for their right to practice their religion in prison. Prisoners were denied access to the Quran and

²²³ US Constitution, amend. 13, sec. 1

²²⁴ Kim Gilmore, *Slavery and Prison — Understanding the Connections*. (Social Justice 27, no. 3, Critical Resistance to the Prison-Industrial Complex, 2000), 199.

²²⁵ Northern prisons were also racialized, with the prison population being African Americans fleeing from the South and European immigrants. Dan Berger and Toussaint Losier, *Rethinking the American Prison Movement*. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 7.

²²⁶ Sullivan, *The Prison Reform Movement*, 37.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* In order to have an efficient rehabilitation system for prisoners, Wickersham suggested classification and segregation.

²²⁸ Charles Bright, *Power that Punish: Prison and Politics in the Era of the “Big House,” 1920-1955*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 281.

²²⁹ Berger and Losier, *Rethinking the American Prison Movement*, 47.

spiritual guidance by a Nation of Islam minister. Members bombarded the courts with lawsuits, until they gained attention from the Supreme Court. Black Muslims prisoners would be the reason for the court's final decision claiming that prisoners do have constitutional rights. With this revolutionary decision, this would give prisoners the ability to sue state institutions and limit prison officials' authority over the prisoners. Moreover, prisoners would use this decision in helping with their fight for prisoners' rights. In the 1960s and 1970s convicts from across the U.S. protested to gain recognition for their rights.

Recourse through lawsuits was not always reliable in the prisoners' rights movement. That was because many of the prisoners' complaints would range from the treatment and conditions of the correctional facility to physical and sexual abuse. It was hard for prisoners to settle these matters in court because many prisons limited access to legal representation. In addition, because of the hands-off doctrine many courts try to settle disputes quickly and not gain attention from the Supreme Court. Prisoners wanted their concerns to be heard, so they tried to gain attention through other means like protest and riots. The most notorious rebellion was the prison riot at Attica in 1971, which left over 40 people dead, including correctional officers and civilians. The prisoners' demands called for improvement in living conditions, ending mail censorship, and expanding religious freedom. Another prison protest, Ellis Prison in Texas featured a prisoners' strike in order to give attention to the struggle of state violence, coerced labor, and an internal labor division that privileged some prisoners, particularly white prisoners, while castigating others to the bottom ranks of hard field labor.²³⁰

Much of the scholarship on this history has considered the prisoners' right movement from the perspective of incarcerated men but few historians have shed light on incarcerated women's contribution to the prisoners' rights movement. This scholarship rightly highlights the significant contributions made by male prisoners. However, women also made significant contributions as well, but they, yet, received far less recognition. This is partly due to it being seen as a masculine movement, as the struggles that received the most media attention featured incarcerated men who picked fights with the government. Incarcerated women on the other hand, were generally seen as lost souls in the 19th century.

The omission of women from this scholarship can be attributed to two factors. First, the perception of women and their role in society often led scholars to study them in the domestic sphere. Women were supposed to be the figure of morality in society, providing motherly love to their children.²³¹ Second, the few studies of women in the prisoner's rights movement concentrate largely on struggles for maternity rights or health care. Few scholars consider incarcerated women fighting for due process, unions in prison, or education. The failure to recognize the efforts women put in the prisoners' right movement leads to the belief that the movement was a masculine movement which portrays it to be misogynistic.

Prison Activism in Men's Institutions

Before considering the contributions of incarcerated women to the prisoners' rights movement, it is important to examine the work men have put into the movement. There can be no denying that men were the forerunners of the movement. With the *Cooper v. Pate*, inmates

²³⁰ Robert T. Chase, *We are Not Slaves: State Violence, Coerced Labor, and Prisoners' Rights in Postwar America*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2022), 3.

²³¹ Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Prisons for Women, 1790-1980*. (Crime and Justice 5, 1983), 150.

gained the legal ability to sue the state correctional facility in which they served time. In addition, the Nation of Islam pushed for the recognition of rights promised to every U.S. citizen to apply to prisoners as well. By the 1970s, the fight for prisoners' rights was underway. In 1971 in New York's Attica Correctional Facility, thousands of inmates took over a section of the facility called D Yard and held prison workers hostage. The riot was instigated by an altercation between an inmate, Leroy Dewer, and a correctional officer, Richard Maroney. The next day, prisoners were on edge after what happened to their fellow prisoner, and some took it upon themselves to start a riot. The prisoners' demands included the ending of prison labor, better living conditions, ending censorship in media, more visitation time, a better rehabilitation program in the prison, foreign asylum, etc.

The Attica riots attracted a great deal of media attention, raising the profile of the prisoners' rights movement. Attica also led to tangible reforms in the state's institutions. After the state gained control of Attica, Governor Rockefeller decided to increase prison funding from \$90 million to \$128 million. In addition, available federal funds increased from \$125,000 in 1970 to over \$6 million in 1973. Much of this money was spent on personnel, who's presence brought nothing more than increasing tension between prisoners and prison officials. There were 2,329 more people working in the state prison system in 1974 than there were three years prior.²³² More money for the prison did not mean better programs or decreased the amount of returning offenders.²³³

Another example of a men's prison rebellion happened in Texas at Ellis Prison. In 1978, hundreds of prisoners initiated a strike against the working conditions. It started off with only a handful of prisoners sitting down and refusing to work, but by the afternoon, over 400 prisoners joined the protest.²³⁴ A testimony from one of the prisoners in Texas prison explained how horrible and fatiguing the work environment was. Guards would make degrading and racist remarks when commanding prisoners to do a task. In addition, they would carry wooden clubs and leather reins to beat any prisoner that they felt deserved it. The guards were ruthless and would not think twice to hit a prisoner's head with a club or rein.²³⁵ News of the prison rebellion spread across the state. A couple days later 1500 inmates at the Canfield prison locked themselves in their cell and refused to work.

The fight for the end of prison labor in Texas did not start with this strike. Problems with prison labor had been an issue for about a century by this point. In 1972, an inmate, David Ruiz filed a lawsuit alleging that Texas's prison system used cruel and unusual punishment. He also asked for redress for the problem of overcrowding, and for easier inmate access to attorneys. As the case started to convene, the strike in Ellis prison took place; prisoners described their protest as a way to show their support for Ruiz's case. The peaceful strike lasted for about two weeks and because of the massive media attention it received, the prisoners did not suffer excessive physical punishment. And by 1980, the court ruled in favor of the prisoners of Texas and concluded that the conditions in the Texas Prison System were unconstitutional.

²³² Gerald Benjamin and Stephen P. Rappaport, *Attica and Prison Reform*. (the Academy of Political Science 31, 1974), 200.

²³³ New York's State Governor, Nelson Rockefeller enforced new drug laws and increased average length of sentences resulted in an increase in the prison population.

²³⁴ Chase, *We are Not Slaves*, 165.

²³⁵ *Ibid*, 277.

Both of these prison protests were important in their own way. Attica revealed the long anger and suppression New York prisoners had endured. The excessive use of punishment and the horrible treatment prisoners faced on a daily basis triggered a revolt against the prisoner system. Although their method was violent and put innocent people's lives on the line, the prisoners were just asking for decent living conditions and to be treated as human beings. Texas prisoners were different; they knew what the effects of a prison riot might be after the entire country watched how Attica's prison riot came to an end. David Ruiz used words to appeal to the court for change in the prison system in his state. On top of the lawsuit, Ruiz wrote a lengthy petition on the Texas prison system describing what he and others had endured. The Texas court ultimately recognized the maltreatment of prisoners and worked to make changes. Both the New York and Texas cases raised concerns regarding prisoners' rights and both have been the subject of extensive scholarly research. Experts in the Prisoners' rights movement fail to bring attention to women's contribution to the movement. Some have done research on women's participation as a whole, but few have done in-depth research on one specific case study.

Women on the Frontlines

Women in the prisoners' rights movement sought to expand the legal rights of incarcerated people, to improve the conditions under which they labored, and to ensure access to adequate education and healthcare. These were goals that were shared by incarcerated men but, because of the gender segregation of prisoners, women and men organized separately. Across the country, in state and federal prisons, women launched lawsuits, organized protests, and wrote accounts of their experiences. Much of this history can be reconstructed through the prison newsletters written by women themselves.

One of the most significant examples of incarcerated women pushing to change the conditions of prison life took place not too far from Attica, at a facility called Bedford Hills. On February 3, 1974, when an inmate in the facility, Carol Crooks, requested medical attention for a headache, the officer said Crooks could not get treatment because there were no nurses available at the time. Crooks then pushed the guard aside to find a guard that could help her. The guard pushed her back and asked for back-up because an inmate assaulted her. When Crooks fought off five guards, the warden called for back-up from a men's prison. Shortly after, an armed force of male guards came to Bedford and beat Crooks unduly and dragged her by her neck to solitary confinement and stripped her naked before leaving her in the cell.²³⁶ Crooks' fellow inmate got Crooks a legal representative who was able to secure her release from solitary confinement. Crook would then file the class action lawsuit, *Crooks v. Warne*. The case called for the address of procedural deficits in the state's disciplinary proceedings and the use of solitary confinement.²³⁷ As the circuit courts look over the case, Crooks was informed by the court that officials must give a notice of allegation against her. Months later, Crooks was believed to have hit an inmate and as officers were about to take her into solitary confinement, she refused and demanded the charges against her. Her request was denied and taken away. Eleven officers that night then showed up in her cell and started to beat her; Crooks was thrown into a car where

²³⁶ Women Against Prison, *Dykes Behind Bars*, DYKE, 1975

<https://www.dykequarterly.com/2010/09/dyke-a-quarterly-no-1-dykes-behind-bars.html#more>

²³⁷ Juanita Diaz-Cotto, *Gender, Ethnicity, and the State: Latina and Latino Prison Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 330.

officers continued to beat her, then dropped her off in her cell where they stripped her again.²³⁸ Her fellow inmates asked the warden to release her because they found that the accused inmate was lying, the warden promised to get back to them but never did. Upset, the women started to fight with the guards, and the fight lasted all night. The women were able to fight off the guards for such an extended amount of time because they acquired some tear gas and kerosene when fighting off guards. State troopers and Guards from the neighboring men's prison came and subdue the prisoners. After the riot ended, the women who participated in the prison would be locked in their cells until further notice. However, nine prisoners (including Crooks) were sent to an insane asylum because they were assumed to be "slow learners." Carol Crooks along with three other women filed a lawsuit, arguing that they should not be transferred to an insane asylum with no clear evidence of a mental illness. With the help of her peers and her attorney, Steven Latimer, the court agreed that moving the prisoners to an insane asylum is a procedural violation. So, Crooks and her peers were sent back to Bedford Hills.

Prisoners at Bedford Hills realized that the effects of the *Crooks v. Warne* case that required Crooks to be presented with a charge before throwing her into solitary confinement was only limited to her. The prisoners of Bedford Hills came together and asked Latimer to help file the *Powell v. Ward* lawsuit. The case focused on the nature of due process violations in disciplinary decisions at the prison, just as the *Crooks v. Warne* case did. During this time, *Wolff v. McDonnell* ended where the court decided that there needs to be some sort of due process when making disciplinary decisions on a prisoner.²³⁹ Latimer would use this case to strengthen his argument in proving the state's violation of due process protection. The court agreed with the prisoners and required all prisons to provide a notice 24 hours in advance of disciplinary charges before a hearing. The lawsuit also rewarded the women of \$127,000 that could be invested on programs.²⁴⁰

The victory at Bedford Hills allowed a huge change in prison policies. This entire fight at Bedford Hills was a problem for all prisoners in the U.S., not just women prisoners. What happened to Carol Crooks could have happened to any inmate, man or woman. The clear violation of due process that was present in Bedford Hills reveals problems of state prisons at that time. Prisons have a delicate hierarchy; prison officials will always try to over-represent their dominance towards inmates. The struggle for women in the 20th centuries extends way farther than prisoners' rights.

In addition to fighting for the end of cruel disciplinary proceedings, women in other institutions were struggling with working conditions. The 1975 protest at the North Carolina Correctional Center for Women was one such example. The prisoners of the facility were responsible for doing the laundry of the hospital near the prison. In the course of this work, they were exposed to bacteria and body waste and were not given any protection when doing so. Better working conditions, elimination of racist staff, investigation of drug use by staff and overall improvement of treatment and medical care were the demands these women were calling for. On the first day of the strike police from the male maximum security section approached the

²³⁸ Women Against Prison, *Dykes Behind Bars*, DYKE, 1975.

<https://www.dykequarterly.com/2010/09/dyke-a-quarterly-no-1-dykes-behind-bars.html#more>

²³⁹ The *Wolff v. McDonnell* case involved a male prisoner from Nebraska state prison claiming that prison disciplinary proceedings violated the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

²⁴⁰ Amber Baylor, *Centering Women in Prisoners' Rights Litigation*. (Michigan Journal of Gender & Law, 2018), 109.

protesters and asked them to go to the gym. Supporters outside the prison told them to “Lie Down. Don’t resist.”²⁴¹ Once a good number of women were in the gym, officers started to beat women who did not comply. This led to a fight between the women and officers with the women coming on top and the officers ordered to retreat.²⁴² Women from Action for Forgotten Women (AFW) had two representatives go inside the prisoner to negotiate and to check if anyone needed medical aid after the altercation. The State Director of Prisons, Ralph Edwards, negotiated with some of the women and could only agree to shutting down the laundry. The one demand that he absolutely refused to comply with was appointing Morris Kea as acting director of the Women prisons. Kea had shown genuine concern for the inmates and wanted to improve the conditions for the women, but Edwards informed them that it would be impossible because he would receive a \$5,000 pay cut which would result in Edwards receiving a \$5,000 pay cut.²⁴³ A couple of days into the women’s boycott, Edward sent out a response to their demands. He stated that the laundry would be stopped soon, but in case of an “emergency” the laundry needed to be reopened. With the response from Edwards, prisoners still refuse to comply in the case of an emergency laundry situation. Edwards, now frustrated, came back to prison with police and more prison guards in order to finally subdue the women’s protest.

The media blamed supporters of the protest for instigating the violence that happened on the grounds of the facility. The debate of whether or not prisoners have the right to unionize or organize came to light, with the Director of Social Rehabilitation and Social Control, David Jones on the opposing side. Jones told the North Carolina Corrections Board that “when a person has committed a crime...he doesn’t have the right to organize.”²⁴⁴ Union leaders in North Carolina try to get prisoners’ the right to organize. In the case of *Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners Labor Union*, the district and circuit courts ruled in favor of North Carolina Prisoners Labor Union. The court stated that “there [was] not one scintilla of evidence” that suggests the act of unionizing would pose a danger to North Carolina’s prison system. Jones stated that having prisoners organized could encourage illicit activities and cause trouble within prisons. In 1977, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Jones. The court believed that recognizing the prisoners’ First Amendment rights for the inmates would be a threat to prison security. This decision was a huge setback in the prisoners’ right movement.

Education for prisoners was one of the methods reformers tried to implement a form of rehabilitation. However, with the struggles to reshape curriculum and alter teachers’ working conditions in the public school system, schooling in prison was not included in the discussion.²⁴⁵ Prison education is separated from public education, there is no teachers’ union or association able to defend working conditions.²⁴⁶ While both men and women struggle to gain access for education, women have a much harder time receiving education. Because women make up a

²⁴¹ Frances Chapman, “prisons news,” *Off Our Backs*, March 1975. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28041822>.

²⁴² Three women were injured badly and required medical assistance, none of the guards were injured enough to seek medical attention. Frances Chapman, “prisons news,” *Off Our Backs*, March 1975. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28041822>.

²⁴³ Mecca Reliance, Marsha Segerberg, Anne Williams, “Raleigh Women Lose” *Off Our Backs*, July 1975.

²⁴⁴ Paul Horvitz, “18 Injured Here in Prison Riot,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 17, 1975.

²⁴⁵ Howard S. Davidson, *Schooling in a “Total Institution”: Critical perspective on Prison Education* (Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey), xiv.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

small portion of the prison population (as compared to men), it was costly for a smaller institution to provide a range of activities.²⁴⁷

Activists in California fought to expand incarcerated women's access to education. The Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project (housed in a California institution for Women) focused on rehabilitating prisoners by providing them with an educational course and allowing them to express themselves through art. Led by Karlene Faith, a Canadian scholar who believed in the rehabilitation of prisoners, the program directors insisted that education in prison was the prerequisite for empowerment and liberation. The purpose of the program was to extend women's benefit of higher education and the empowerment that accrues from gaining political knowledge, recognizing constructive life choices and acquiring skills to act on them.²⁴⁸ Tension between the prison guards and the volunteers of the program arose. Guards believed that prisoners have no right to receive free college education, while normal people who committed no crimes, must pay. Also, guards were suspicious that the classes really were a façade, allowing prisoners to organize and commit illicit activities. Prison officials would also try to censor the content of the lesson given by the volunteers. The courses that they provided were mainly arts and humanities courses, they would have courses that taught about politics, psychology, and creative writing.²⁴⁹ When officials glance over any materials that relate to radical ideologies, the volunteer teacher could not be permitted inside the prison with the book. So, volunteer teachers would just rip the covers of books, so guards would not get a good idea on what those books would be about. Prison guards have convinced the warden of the California Institution for Women to suspend the program multiple times. However, Faith's tenacious spirit would push through and give the underrepresented women in the prison population a chance to experience the value of learning and to promote different forms of activism.²⁵⁰ Even though Faith was responsible for the production of this program, much of the credit must be given to the women who not only helped themselves but also showed what incarcerated women are capable of. Women would share their work with other prisoners and encourage them to talk about their experience in the system.²⁵¹ Another example of incarcerated women making a voice for themselves is the Action Conference of Women Against Repression and Prison. It was organized by activist and female prisoners which focus on issues of specific concern to women in prison and are committed to providing means for former prisoners to attend.²⁵²

What makes this case study unique is the fact that these incarcerated women, with the help of outside activists, performed their activism through art and conferences. With time and

²⁴⁷ Rafter, *Even in Prison, Women are Second-Class Citizens*, 28.

²⁴⁸ Karlene Faith, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance*. (New York: Seven Stories, 2011), 301.

²⁴⁹ Karlene Faith, *The Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project* in Howard S. Davidson, *Schooling in a "Total Institution": Critical perspective on Prison Education* (Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey), 183.

²⁵⁰ Faith's belief in giving all incarcerated women a chance at rehabilitation had no bounds. The notorious Manson girls, Susan Atkins, Patricia Krenwinkel, and Leslie Van Houten were held at California Institution for Women when the Santa Cruz Prison Project started. Faith would keep a low profile on her work with the women. Susan Atkins would give extensive thanks to Faith and the work she has done for incarcerated women.

²⁵¹ An ex-convict, Diane Ramsay worked with Faith to share her poems at the California Institution for Women. Faith, *Reflections on Inside/Out Organizing*, 159-160.

²⁵² ACTION CONFERENCE OF WOMEN AGAINST REPRESSION AND PRISON schedule, October 14-16, 1977.

http://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC70_scans/70.SCWPP.ActionConference.Schedule.1977.pdf

organization, they were able to reveal the humane side of these prisoners. Such work sought to challenge the stigma of social deviance attributed to convicted women for centuries.

Conclusion

Throughout history, women have always been the group overlooked when it came to prison reform and prisoners' rights. Even though they had been victims of years of abuse and neglect, incarcerated women still fight for prisoners' rights. To limit understanding of women's contributions to the prisoner's right movement to just maternity rights and healthcare skews the important constitution and labor battles they waged. Having to reside in an institution that was built around having to house convicted men, women have been neglected and misunderstood. In the 1970s incarcerated women from across the country fought for the rights of prisoners. Women from Bedford Hills correctional facility, North Carolina Correctional center for Women, and California Institution for Women, challenged the U.S. prison system in re-evaluating the rights prisoners may or may not have. Carol Crooks and the women at Bedford Hills demanded the end of mistreatment of disciplinary decisions and the requirement of due process. The women in North Carolina Center for Women challenged the working conditions in their prison's laundry room. Their fight would then lead to the debate whether or not prisoners have the right to unionize. And lastly, the women at California Institution for Women, with the help of Karlene Faith and the Santa Cruz Prison project, gave incarcerated women an outlet to share their struggles in prison. Incarcerated women in the 1960s-the 1970s had many factors against them in their fight for prisoners' rights. However, the women in the case studies took up the challenge, even though they are misrepresented and only make up a small percent of the prison population.

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Historians, Truth, and the Past: Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial By Paulina Leder

In his 1949 essay “Cultural Criticism and Society,” Theodor W. Adorno, a famous German philosopher and sociologist, stated that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.” In writing this, Adorno did not mean that poetry, or any writing for that matter, should never be written after Auschwitz, nor did he intend to criticize poetry as a writing style. In fact, Adorno intended to suggest that the styles and themes of poetry, as well as the ideals and attitudes, before Auschwitz and the Holocaust were no longer compatible with the present and future that came after. This led to questions of how to cope with the Holocaust, not only among the Jews who had survived, but also in German memory and within the world at large. The Holocaust and the past had to be examined to make sense of the future. Writing about Auschwitz and the Holocaust had indeed become “barbaric,” requiring a thorough analysis and an exploration of what had occurred to keep the memory and implications of the Holocaust alive for future generations. Nevertheless, despite the documentation and eyewitness accounts surrounding the Holocaust, deniers of the Holocaust soon followed.

Holocaust denial is an attempt to negate and water down the actions of the Nazis towards the Jews, acting on the belief that the Holocaust did not happen or was exaggerated. Of course, different forms of Holocaust denial exist, including “revisionism,” which seeks to “revise” and “reread” the history and documents surrounding the Holocaust. However, according to Deborah Lipstadt, identifying “revisionists” and others as “deniers” is more appropriate since their “selection of the name *revisionist* to describe themselves is indicative of their basic strategy of deceit and distortion and of their attempt to portray themselves as legitimate historians engaged in the traditional practice of illuminating the past.”²⁵³ In other words, Holocaust deniers seek to gain relevance as historians to offer what they describe as an alternative portrayal of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the Holocaust is part of public and collective memory, and Holocaust deniers seem to want to erase this significant part of memory, preferring to believe that it never existed, or revise history so that memory surrounding the Holocaust becomes blurry when it should be clearly acknowledged. According to Lipstadt, “the central assertion for the deniers is that Jews are not victims but victimizers. They ‘stole’ billions in reparations, destroyed Germany’s good name by spreading the ‘myth’ of the Holocaust, and won international sympathy because of what they claimed had been done to them.”²⁵⁴ Although Holocaust deniers like David Irving and Robert Faurisson did not describe themselves as antisemites, their attempts at discrediting evidence and records surrounding the Holocaust heavily implicates the Jews, who are a primary source of testimony to the Holocaust, depicting them as “victimizers” instead of “victims.” The testimony and concerns of Jews are obscured by emphasizing sympathy for Nazi “victim” testimony. In doing so, the Jews are implicated in a long tradition of antisemitism as being untrustworthy “victimizers” and aggressors towards innocents. In this paper I intend to demonstrate this by examining works by David Irving and Robert Faurisson, while also looking at texts written by historians in response to Irving, Faurisson, and Holocaust denial.

²⁵³ Deborah E. Lipstadt. *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 20.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

David Irving is an English author and Holocaust denier who has written a great deal about Nazi Germany and World War II. Though he professed himself to be “an untrained historian,” he nevertheless feels that “his work demonstrated that he had now become a ‘reputable historian.’”²⁵⁵ Irving is also well-known for his libel suit against Deborah Lipstadt in the Lipstadt-Irving Trial, the judgment of which was presented in 2000 in Lipstadt’s favor. One of Irving’s well-known works that was also examined for the Lipstadt-Irving Trial is *Hitler’s War*, which discusses Hitler’s life and experiences during the war years, ending with his suicide in the bunker. In the book’s introduction, Irving addresses his examination of the Holocaust and the Final Solution in the following manner:

My analysis of this controversial issue serves to highlight two broad conclusions: that in wartime [...] the dictator himself, however alert, is unable to oversee all the functions of his executives... and that in this particular case, the burden of guilt for the bloody and mindless massacre of the Jews rests on a large number of Germans, many of them alive today, and not just on one ‘mad dictator,’ whose order had to be obeyed without question.²⁵⁶

In this case, Irving characterizes the Holocaust as a “controversial issue,” casting doubt on the Holocaust itself, suggests that the study and existence of this event should be debated, the evidence and testimony called into question. Furthermore, Irving places blame for the Holocaust on everyone but Hitler: Hitler is “unable to oversee all the functions of his executives,” meaning that he was unaware of the existence of the Holocaust, reinforcing the idea that the Holocaust is “controversial” because it contradicts the fact that Hitler was aware of the Holocaust. The “burden of guilt” rests on a “large number of Germans” rather than on Hitler himself. According to Robert Jan van Pelt, “the murder of six million Jews between 1939 and 1945 had been commonly understood as a state-sponsored genocide.”²⁵⁷ However, if the murder of Jews happened “behind the back of the seemingly all-powerful head of this state and against his explicit instructions [...] then the destruction of the Jews would cease to be a genocide and become a series of ordinary crimes.”²⁵⁸ In other words, with Hitler, the “all-powerful head of state,” unaware of the existence of the Holocaust, the massacre of Jews becomes a series of unintentional, accidental crimes committed by Hitler’s supposedly loyal henchmen. This, in turn discredits the genocide itself, dismissing the experiences of Jews who were, in fact, victims of state-sponsored murder. Instead, Irving claims that it would have been impossible for Hitler to have been aware, and for him to have been a “‘mad dictator,’” offering sympathy for Hitler instead because he has been characterized as such. Irving’s use of quotation marks around “‘mad dictator’” further serves to discredit the history of the Holocaust and the intentions behind it. He offers sympathy for Hitler, depicting him as a “victim” instead of a “victimizer,” implying that anyone, especially Jews who testified against Hitler and the extermination faced during the Final Solution are the “victimizers,” the traditional untruthful Jews who act as aggressors towards the innocent.

²⁵⁵ Richard J. Evans. *Lying About Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 5.

²⁵⁶ David Irving. “Introduction,” in *Hitler’s War* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), xiii.

²⁵⁷ Robert Jan van Pelt. “Ex Malo Bono: Does this Latin Proverb apply to Holocaust Denial? The Cunning of Reason,” in *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust: Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, edited by Anthony McElligott and Jeffrey Herf (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 356.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 356.

Furthermore, Irving states that when questions about Hitler's role in the Final Solution are asked, that "bald statements were made, legends were created, blame was laid, without a shadow of historical evidence in support... our knowledge of Hitler's part in the atrocity has rested on inter-historian incest."²⁵⁹ Here, Irving suggests that testimony surrounding the Holocaust, as well as its historical study, created "legends," stories that were far-fetched and untrue, without using a "shadow of historical evidence" to reinforce these "legends." Instead, Hitler's role in the Final Solution is a "legend" created by "inter-historian incest." According to Richard J. Evans, a historian hired to review Irving's work, including *Hitler's War*, for the Lipstadt-Irving Trial states the following in response to Irving's disregard for historiography surrounding documents about Hitler and World War II: "Historians also had to rely on each other's work. There was nothing wrong with this, where the work relied on conformed to the accepted canons of scholarly research..."²⁶⁰ Evans found Irving's "refusal to consult the work of other historians [...] disturbing," especially because historians rely on each other and the truthfulness and research of others to go through the vast amount of historical sources available.²⁶¹ In this case, Irving is dismissing previous historical writings, a great deal of which rely on the testimony of Jews, attributing them to untruthful "inter-historian incest" instead while his own statements are entirely pure and authentic. Although Irving does not state it outright, many "statements" that were made that contributed to the "legends" about the Holocaust were made by Jews who survived or lost family members in the Holocaust. Irving attacks historians for believing the "legends" that were created, namely by Jews, and for creating untruth through "inter-historian incest" because questions about these "legends" were not asked. In this way, Irving discredits the Jews, hinting that their testimonies were "legends" and rejecting historians who support the propagation of these "legends," supporting a traditional antisemitic notion that Jews are untrustworthy and only serve to "blame." Irving demonstrates sympathy for Hitler instead, discrediting the Jews and historians who believe them, seeking to obscure existing narratives. Jews who contend this become untrustworthy "victimizers" part of the "inter-historian incest."

David Irving continues a delegitimization of the Holocaust in his book *Nuremberg: The Last Battle*, in which he discusses the Nuremberg Trials and the evidence surrounding the Holocaust in great detail. One thing that Irving addresses is the figure of six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. In his book, Irving discusses the moment when Justice Robert H. Jackson receives the figure of six million Jews from Dr. Jacob Robinson, stating that "his figure was somewhere between a hopeful estimate and an educated guess."²⁶² Furthermore, he states that "by sad but extraordinary coincidence, the American Jewish community had raised a similar outcry about a 'holocaust' a quarter of a century earlier, after World War I... Martin Glynn had claimed that 'six million' Jews were being exterminated."²⁶³ Here, not only is the genocide itself belittled by attributing the number to a "hopeful estimate and an educated guess," but the origins of six million Jews is traced back to an American Jewish community that had also "claimed that 'six million' Jews were being exterminated." Irving seeks to discredit the number

²⁵⁹ Irving, "Introduction," xiii.

²⁶⁰ Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, 18.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁶² David Irving, *Nuremberg: The Last Battle* (London: Focal Point Publication, 1996), 100.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 100.

of six million, describing it as an “estimate” and a “guess” while also implicating the Jewish community for having raised this “outcry” in the past. The fact that this “claim” and “outcry” occurred in the past because of a Jewish community suggests that the Jewish origins of “six million” is the same for the Nuremberg Trials, thereby discrediting the number and the Jews in the trial itself. Furthermore, the Jewish origins of “six million” depicts the Jews as untrustworthy for having continued this “claim,” supporting the traditional antisemitic depiction of Jews as untrustworthy “victimizers” who inflate numbers to assign blame where none is warranted. By depicting the Jews as untrustworthy and supporting these antisemitic notions, Irving is also obscuring and discrediting any testimony made by Jews in support of this number during the trial, since untrustworthy Jews made this “claim” in the first place and should therefore not be believed.

Irving then remarks that the delegation was concerned that the “Allies would choose the less onerous course, of merely prosecuting the Nazis for lesser offences. These men wanted a decision based on the persecution of the Jews.”²⁶⁴ This “decision based on the persecution of the Jews” would be based on the figure of six million Jews, a figure that Irving describes as a “guess.” Through this, Irving offers sympathy with the Nazis who would otherwise have been prosecuted for “lesser offences” but now will face the “guess” of six million Jews. In this way, Irving further discredits the Holocaust by discrediting the number of six million Jews who died, and by offering sympathy for Nazis. The Jews, meanwhile, are further implicated for being involved in a “guess” and “claim” of a number to further the conviction of Nazis, thereby expressing antisemitic notions that the Jews are not to be trusted, as well as evil for pushing an untrue number when Nazis really had “lesser offences.”

In his book on Nuremberg, Irving also questions the existence of gas chambers and the effectiveness of the extermination camps, which both added to the number of six million Jews dead. For instance, he denies the existence of a gas chamber at Dachau, stating that historians agree, and that gas chambers had been used to fumigate prisoner’s clothing to kill “typhus-bearing lice.”²⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Eichmann, who was responsible for the deportations of Jews to extermination camps where victims were gassed, was testified against by Höttl whose testimony, according to Irving, needs to be examined “in the light of his attempt to secure an early release from American confinement.”²⁶⁶ Not only is the use of gas chambers for the murder of Jews denied, but those responsible for the deportation of Jews and their extermination in gas chambers are sympathized with. Rather than questioning Eichmann’s testimony and his involvement in the Final Solution, Irving questions the testimony of Höttl who testified against him, suggesting that his remarks against Eichmann be attributed to an attempt to “secure an early release.” This implies that testimony like that of Höttl’s was flawed because people were saying things to “secure an early release,” meaning that the existence of the gas chambers and their use in extermination camps is just as questionable. This, in turn, means that the figure of six million Jews murdered is impossible because gas chambers and the presence of extermination camps would have made this number possible. In this case, Irving sympathizes with the Nazis that were originally responsible for the Final Solution, attributing the falsification of testimony to “secure an early release,” while Jews are “victimizers” connected with the lie of six million killed.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 100.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 342.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 344.

Irving further discredits the number of six million, the gas chambers, and the extermination camps by criticizing the witness statement of Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier, a thirty-four-year-old former member of the French National Assembly who was arrested and sent to Auschwitz in 1943.²⁶⁷ Irving quotes Vaillant-Couturier's testimony, yet rather than examine the role of the extermination camp and the gas chambers, he puts his own questions in parentheses: "(Why was a hospital needed at an 'extermination camp'?)"²⁶⁸ Furthermore, he finds that "some of her story was evidently based on hearsay" and that Francis Biddle, a judge at the trial, "noted his own skepticism," stating that Vaillant-Couturier was drawing from personal experience in quotation marks, "which implied that he assessed that quite a lot were not."²⁶⁹ Reflecting on the Irving-Lipstadt Trial, Richard Evans discusses Vaillant-Couturier's testimony, including Biddle's following parenthetical note concerning Vaillant-Couturier's testimony: "(This I doubt.)"²⁷⁰ However, in Irving's book, he "removed the brackets and rewrote it as: 'All this I doubt.' In this way, he made it refer to the entirety of Vaillant-Couturier's testimony, which of course included evidence of the gas chambers."²⁷¹ In contrast to the sympathy expressed towards Eichmann and his testimony, Irving seeks to discredit the testimony of Vaillant-Couturier, a Holocaust survivor. As Evans demonstrates, Irving manipulated the evidence to support his own claims, negating the existence of the gas chambers. In addition to this, Irving questions the need of a hospital at an extermination camp, placing the latter in quotation marks to indicate that he does not believe this to be true. Although Vaillant-Couturier was most likely not Jewish, Irving demonstrates his discrediting approach to other testimonies, most of which came from Jewish survivors of concentration camps during the Holocaust. Irving indicates that these testimonies are flawed and untruthful, based on "personal experience" while neglecting to note that Eichmann was also writing from "personal experience," sympathizing more with the Nazis on trial.

According to Evans, during the Lipstadt-Irving Trial itself, Irving continued this pattern of casting doubt on Nazi testimony in favor of the Nazis. For instance, when reviewing Walter Brun's report during the trial, Irving suggested that Brun "had sought to exculpate himself before his hidden British listeners by blaming Hitler."²⁷² In this case, Irving discredits all testimony that proves the existence of the gas chambers and the extermination camps because they support the figure of six million Jews dead, resorting to such tactics as falsifying evidence and offering sympathy and legitimacy to Nazi testimony. This figure, as well as testimony given in its support, originate from the Jews, the discrediting of which reinforces the antisemitic notion that Jews are untruthful, and that their lies against Nazis like Eichmann to support an untrue number of dead only makes them "victimizers," guilty of accusing the innocent.

Robert Faurisson was a French academic who, like David Irving, was a Holocaust denier who never declared himself an antisemite. In 1978 and 1979, Faurisson sent three letters to the French newspaper *Le Monde*, arguing that the gas chambers used in the Holocaust did not exist. This started what became known as the "Faurisson affair," especially after the publication of

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 346-347.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 347.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 347-348.

²⁷⁰ Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, 220.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 220.

²⁷² Ibid., 213.

Faurisson's book *Mémoire en défense* in 1980 with an introduction by Noam Chomsky, that defended Faurisson's rights to publish his opinions on the grounds of free speech. Like Irving, Faurisson denied the existence of the gas chambers and offered sympathy for the Nazis who testified. For instance, in his 1978 letter to *Le Monde* titled "'The Problem of the Gas Chambers' or 'The Rumor of Auschwitz,'" Faurisson writes that, "the heads of Ravensbrück camp [...] had admitted the existence of a 'gas chamber' whose functioning they had even, in a vague manner, described... After the deaths of the condemned men, it was discovered that those gassings had never taken place. Flimsiness of testimonies and confessions!"²⁷³ In this case, Faurisson defends Nazis who testified their knowledge of the gas chambers, hinting this was because of the "British or French judicial bodies" before which they appeared.²⁷⁴ This suggests that "the heads of Ravensbrück camp" and other Nazis only admitted to the existence of the gas chambers because they were put under pressure by the British and French "judicial bodies," thereby rendering their testimony "flimsy" and their case sympathetic.

Faurisson continues this defense of Nazi testimony when he finds that "the diary of physician Johann Paul Kremer must be cited correctly," or that the confession of Rudolf Höss "is not worth any more" because of "the matter of this 'confession,' drafted under the surveillance of his Polish and Soviet jailers."²⁷⁵ Faurisson continuously attributes the "confessions" of Höss and others to outside pressure on the part of the Allies, thereby rendering their testimony void because they only said what was expected of them. According to Pierre Vidal-Naquet, one of the historians who responded to Faurisson's letters in *Le Monde* during the "Faurisson affair," regarding the Kremer diary, "Georges Wellers has observed that Faurisson made use of Kremer's confession in 1947 to interpret the notations in his diary for October 18, 1942 as though they referred to only three executions, but that he pretended to be unaware that on the same day in 1947 Kremer spoke of the gas chambers at Auschwitz."²⁷⁶ Faurisson responded "that he retained from Kremer's confession only what was credible, and not what was not."²⁷⁷ Like Irving, Faurisson chose to "interpret the notations" of a piece of evidence in a certain way that proved his point about the existence of the gas chambers, while "pretending to be unaware" that the same evidence pointed out the existence of the gas chambers. Faurisson himself stated that he only "retained" what he felt was "credible," thereby only selecting evidence to further his own claim and offer credibility and sympathy to Nazis like Kremer.

Nevertheless, this defense of Nazi testimony and selection of evidence completely obscures Jewish testimony. Faurisson remarks on the "flimsiness of testimonies and confessions," referring to the "flimsiness" of Nazi testimony," while also implying that the testimonies and confessions provided by Jews about the existence of the gas chambers are "flimsy" as well. However, Jews do not share the suggested fact that the Nazis were pressured into confessing by the Allies. Instead, Jews collaborated with the Allies and provided testimony that "condemned" these men and led to their subsequent deaths. Rather than being portrayed as victims, the Jews become obscured by Faurisson's sympathy and defense of the Nazis, instead

²⁷³ "Robert Faurisson's Three Letters to Le Monde (1978-1979)." www.ihr.org.
http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v19/v19n3p40_Faurisson.html.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Pierre Vidal-Naquet. *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 48.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 49.

becoming implied “victimizers.” In “A Letter from Mr. Faurisson,” he states that he has found “much false evidence, worthy of the witchcraft trials, dishonoring the judges who have admitted it.”²⁷⁸ In his letter “One Proof... One Single Proof,” Faurisson finds that “the witchcraft trials, like the witch-hunts, never proved anything.”²⁷⁹ The imagery of the “witchcraft trials” depicts the Nazis as the falsely accused “witches” who are rounded up in “witch-hunts” fueled by “much false evidence,” most of which was provided by the Jews or supposedly forced from the Nazis themselves, thereby “dishonoring the judges” who believed the false testimony provided by Jews and condemning the Nazis. Once again, the Jews are obscured by sympathy for Nazi testimony while the Nazis become victims of “witch-hunts” at the hands of Jewish aggressors.

Nevertheless, Faurisson’s antisemitic notions about the untrustworthiness of Jews and their role as “victimizers” becomes clearer in Vidal-Naquet’s analysis thereof. According to Vidal-Naquet, Faurisson discusses a “declaration of war” which, “Faurisson specifies, was the consequence of the economic boycott of Nazi Germany decided on by ‘the international Jewish community in retaliation for the anti-Semitic measures taken by Hitler.’”²⁸⁰ Furthermore, Faurisson validated measures taken by Hitler by finding that “‘Hitler was perhaps less concerned with the Jewish question than with ensuring the safety of German soldiers.’ Many Jews spoke German and were suspected of practicing ‘espionage, terrorism, black market operations, and of arms trafficking.’”²⁸¹ Although Faurisson did not describe himself as an antisemite, and did not deny the existence of the Holocaust, only its brutality and the truth of its extermination, he nevertheless suggests the existence of an “international Jewish community,” an international Jewish conspiracy, that sought to undermine Hitler and Nazi Germany. Faurisson also suggests that Hitler was concerned with the “safety of German soldiers” when he implemented the Final Solution, rather than on racist views towards Jews. With this, Faurisson depicts the Jews as the true aggressors in Nazi Germany and that they were even responsible for Hitler’s implementation of the Final Solution because they were engaged in illicit activity that threatened Germany. In contrast, Faurisson depicts the Nazis in a sympathetic manner, showing them as wrongly accused in “witch-hunts” that were instigated by Jews in Germany and an “international Jewish community” in the first place. In this way, Faurisson delegitimizes Jewish testimony in the face of the Holocaust, instead depicting them in the traditional antisemitic notion of Jews as untruthful “victimizers” and aggressors.

Both Irving and Faurisson knew each other, with Irving praising Faurisson in 1991 as being a “‘very distinguished intellectual in my mind, a very brave man indeed.’”²⁸² Furthermore, Irving used an article by Faurisson published in the *Journal of Historical Review*, a journal published by the Institute of Historical Review that promotes the advancement of Holocaust denial, in his book on Nuremberg.²⁸³ Neither David Irving nor Robert Faurisson described themselves as antisemites or Holocaust deniers, yet their attempts at discrediting evidence and records surrounding the Holocaust heavily implicates the Jews, depicting them as aggressors and “victimizers” rather than victims. Furthermore, Irving and Faurisson emphasized sympathy for

²⁷⁸ “Robert Faurisson’s Three Letters to Le Monde (1978-1979).” www.ihr.org.
http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v19/v19n3p40_Faurisson.html.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, 40.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 40.

²⁸² Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, 145.

²⁸³ Ibid., 145.

Nazi “victim” testimony, thereby portraying Jews as being part of a longer tradition of antisemitism in which Jews are untrustworthy “victimizers” and aggressors towards innocents, marking Holocaust denial as belonging in this tradition of antisemitism as well.

To historians like Richard Evans, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Deborah Lipstadt, and Robert Jan van Pelt, Holocaust denial was not only important because of what it meant to deny the existence of a horrible genocide, and to dismiss the trauma of millions of Jews, but also because of what it meant to the study of history itself. Evans describes the role of the historian in the following manner:

Reputable and professional historians do not suppress parts of quotations from documents that go against their own case, but take them into account and if necessary amend their own case accordingly. They do not present as genuine documents those that they know to be forged just because these forgeries happen to back up what they are saying. They do not invent ingenious but implausible and utterly unsupported reasons for distrusting genuine documents because these documents run counter to their arguments... At least, they do not do any of these things if they wish to retain any kind of reputable status as historians... The true historian’s primary concern, however, is with the past.²⁸⁴

In other words, historians should not seek to deny the existence of evidence, or alter quotes and citations to further their own cause, as in the case of Holocaust denial. Instead, historians should “amend their own case accordingly” and take all evidence supporting the existence of the Holocaust into account. A historian should be concerned “with the past,” and examining and presenting the past in a truthful manner rather than verifying one’s own ideals. However, Holocaust deniers like Irving and Faurisson cast a shadow over the history profession because, by calling themselves historians, they attempt to validate their claims denying the Holocaust while continuing to obscure the truth and evidence about the past. Although instances like the Lipstadt-Irving Trial that resulted in Lipstadt’s favor, represent victories “for history, for historical truth and historical scholarship,” Holocaust denial should not be considered lightly and by no means vanquished.²⁸⁵ After the trial, Lipstadt described the danger of Holocaust denial: “As long as there are survivors [...] the danger is mitigated... I don’t see deniers as a clear and present danger, I see them as a clear and future danger.”²⁸⁶ This is prevalent in the continuous global existence of Holocaust denial today, particularly in the Middle East with the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel, something that was not discussed in this paper but warrants further research in the study of Holocaust denial. Holocaust denial as a “future danger” is also important to consider in the emergence of technology and the easy access and sharing of information online. Regardless of the present and “future danger” of Holocaust denial, it is important to recognize it and to support historians who aspire to the truth to allow future generations to continue learning, keeping the memory of the Holocaust and its true victims alive.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 250-251.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 265.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 264.

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Orientalism: An Examination of American Military Perspectives in Iraq

By Paulina Leder

In March 2003, the United States invaded Iraq, thus entering the first stage of the Iraq War. Iraq was militarily occupied, the United States intending for the occupation to last for at least a year.²⁸⁷ However, the United States and allied forces remained in Iraq until 2011, much longer than initially intended and believed, bringing out trends in Iraqi politics and culture for the Americans, and emphasizing American politics and culture for the Iraqis. One element of American attitudes in Iraq was orientalism, essentially a distinction between the “West” and the “East” as being different from each other, a way of dividing the world and categorizing the understanding of Islam.²⁸⁸ This meant that the Middle East, of which Iraq was a part, was perceived as distinct from America and the rest of the “West,” encompassing a tradition perceived as so different that it would affect the American military’s involvement in Iraq. For instance, when U.S. combat forces deployed to Iraq, there was no doctrinal publication to prepare them for counterinsurgency operations in Iraq until the publication of Field Manual 3-24 in 2006, and they received no real cultural and language training or readings, aside from what some soldiers assigned to themselves or their units. The oral histories of Iraq War veterans examined in this paper were conducted in 2005 and 2006, meaning that they had experienced their tours in Iraq before the publication of the field manual, and before the initiation of culture courses in universities for soldiers in 2005. In these oral histories, although cultural awareness and the value of Iraqi aid in the war is often praised, the veterans also discuss confusions surrounding the understanding of Iraqi culture, thereby reflecting American orientalist elements embedded in the military regarding sectarianism, societal and government structure, as well as the Iraqi perspective.

Sectarianism

Sectarianism, the attachment to a particular religion or political party, was prevalent in post-2003 Iraq, often leading to conflicts. After the American military occupied Iraq, the White House and Pentagon established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), led by retired general Jay Garner.²⁸⁹ ORHA was meant to focus on the question of post-war Iraq, hitherto greatly ignored by the American government. However, ORHA was dissolved and replaced by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), headed by Paul Bremer. However, in an attempt to create a representative Iraqi governing body, “the CPA divided the [Iraqi Governing Council’s (IGC)] membership along communal identities based on what was believed to be the demographic weight of each communal group.”²⁹⁰ In other words, the CPA attempted to create a democratic governing body in Iraq that was representative of all ethnic groups, based on the American government and its emphasis on equal representation, as well as the American government’s understanding of sectarianism within Iraq. This effort of equal representation within the Iraqi government, as well as a disregard for the Iraqi culture and

²⁸⁷ Charles Tripp. *A History of Iraq* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 277.

²⁸⁸ Zachary Lockman. *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

²⁸⁹ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 279.

²⁹⁰ Fanar Haddad. *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 150.

attitudes surrounding sectarianism, was also reflected in the American military's effort to train the Iraqi Army.

Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Farrell was one such person to experience the effectiveness of the Iraqi Army and Iraqi security forces first-hand. In discussing the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade of the Iraqi Intervention Force (IIF), he states that they were “predominantly Shi’a, but not exclusively. They had Christian members and, more importantly, Sunni members. They saw themselves as defenders of Iraq, and didn’t identify themselves with a region within Iraq.”²⁹¹ Farrell feels it is “important” that the IIF was not “exclusively” Shi’a, but also had Sunni members. He attributes their success to the fact that they didn’t “identify” with any one region, later comparing Iraqi units and attributing the effectiveness of the IIF over others to the fact that their “national character” was not “tied to any specific region,” and because Farrell’s unit treated them as equals.²⁹² In this case, Farrell made an effort to create an egalitarian unit that supported the diversity in Iraq. However, the Americans, Farrell included, set up these units, emphasizing diversity, and did not always get good results. Farrell not only attributes this to the “American mentality,” but also to the fact that many Iraqi units had members who came from “narrow geographical regions, were composed of militia gang members, and their officers frequently got their positions because of political connections.”²⁹³ Even the IIF, although praised, had a “degree of that,” though it was “much closer to what we would accept and tolerate as Americans.”²⁹⁴ In this case, Farrell is very optimistic regarding the IIF, attributing their success to representation and their treatment at the hands of Americans. However, these same sources of success seem to be the same sources of failure in the other Iraqi units, who are also made up of, somewhat less diverse, troops and also being treated by the Americans in a certain way. According to Fanar Haddad, Faleh Abdul Jabbar has argued against using the terms “Shi’a” and “Sunni” for sociological categories because they form “a loose cultural designation, which may differentiate a certain group from another in religious terms but never specifies social, cultural (not to mention political) differentiated aspects within the group itself.”²⁹⁵ In other words, although groups can be designated as Shi’a or Sunni, there are distinctions and traditions within these groups, creating multiple sub-groups, making it impossible to use “Shi’a” or “Sunni” as the only categories. Farrell uses “Shi’a” and “Sunni” as categories in the Iraqi units to explain diversity, relying on “a loose cultural designation” rather than being aware of sub-groups and different cultural traditions and values. He thereby demonstrates a lack of awareness of Iraqi culture and sectarianism. Instead, Farrell decides what is “acceptable” and normal behavior, attempting to compare American military traditions to the Iraqi units, demonstrating a sense of “otherness” he attributes to the Iraqis in depicting the American military as the ultimate authority on what is acceptable in Iraq, a culture he has no experience with. Furthermore, the IIF also has a “degree” of the narrow geographical elements, militia gang members, and nepotism that the other Iraqi units have. The decision of whether or not the IIF and other Iraqis are perceived as successful depends purely on Farrell and other Americans, who decide whether or not their actions are “acceptable and tolerable” according to standards set for American troops with an American culture, without

²⁹¹ Interv, John McCool, with Lt Col Kevin Farrell, Commander, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 11 April 2006, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 5.

²⁹² Ibid., 6.

²⁹³ Ibid., 6.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 7.

²⁹⁵ Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq*, 8.

regard for Iraqi culture. Farrell seems to both value and condemn diversity in the Iraqi Army, demonstrating a lack of knowledge for the workings of sectarianism within Iraq.

Unlike Lt. Col. Farrell's optimistic point of view regarding the resolution of sectarianism in the Iraqi Army, Major Michael Monti had a more pessimistic view. Monti was in Iraq as part of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marines. To Monti, there was a "tribal aspect to this that's not even an insurgency. It's just revenge and factions of people who belong to different tribes and seeing that piece. It's a smuggler's [area of operations (AO)]."²⁹⁶ Although Monti was describing the Iraqis in general, this description is still relevant when considering the Iraqi Army. For Monti, sectarianism in Iraq is narrowed down to "revenge" and "factions of people," implying that Monti is not aware of the differences between tribal groups and that all are only motivated by "revenge" rather than complex inter-tribal or inner group workings. To him, it's a "smuggler's AO," where the Iraqis are reduced to smuggling individuals who have no complex cultural and sectarian motivations. When considering the Iraqi Army, Monti felt that they were "totally inept. They didn't want to train. We couldn't get a hundred people together on a good day."²⁹⁷ Not only were the Iraqis in general motivated by "revenge" and divided amongst themselves, but the Iraqi Army was also "inept" and incompetent, without the chance of getting "a hundred people together." Unlike Farrell who showed a lack of understanding for sectarianism in Iraq by brushing over sectarian distinctions within the Iraqi military and upholding an American standard of diversity, Monti demonstrates a lack of understanding for sectarianism by describing the Iraqis as belonging to "factions of people," not even attempting to distinguish between the different groups, emphasizing a sense of "otherness" when compared to the American military. Furthermore, he finds the Iraqi Army "inept," suggesting that their different groups and culture do not have the same potential as the American military in terms of success and understanding, or that their different groups have multiple and distinct motivations that do not align with standard American military training.

Both Lt. Col. Farrell and Maj. Monti share their individual opinions concerning sectarianism in Iraq, yet they also represent the orientalist attitudes towards sectarianism on the part of the American military. For instance, both Farrell and Monti were interviewed by John McCool from the Combat Studies Institute, which seeks to provide a "wide range of military historical and educational support to the Combined Arms Center, Training and Doctrine Command, and the United States Army."²⁹⁸ This includes projects like the "Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism," in order to allow students and faculty in the military to learn from past operational experiences. This means that the interviews that Farrell and Monti underwent were designed for a specific purpose, namely to gain specific answers about operational experiences in Iraq. This, in turn, means that answers regarding sectarianism in Iraq were expected and required by the American military to better learn from past experiences. Farrell and Monti both expressed their lack of understanding of sectarianism in Iraq and the Iraqi Army units they encountered or trained, thereby transferring this lack of understanding to the Combined Arms Center, furthering a misinterpretation of sectarianism in

²⁹⁶ Interv, John McCool, with Maj Michael Monti, Operations Officer, 1st Battalion, 23rd Marines, 3 Nov. 2005, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 10.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁸ "Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library: Combat Studies Institute." [cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org. https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16040coll3.](https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16040coll3)

Iraq within the army itself. This means that perceiving sections within Iraq as “other,” as well as the need to reinforce the “better” American military system regarding diversity without considering the complexity of sectarianism, is propagated and reinforced by the military itself. It should also be noted that not including testimonies by Farrell and Monti would also deprive the army of a chance to learn from this lack of understanding of sectarianism, thereby preventing the changing of doctrines and attitudes to better understand sectarianism, and to better prepare the next generation of soldiers for sectarianism in Iraq instead of reinforcing the notion of Iraq as the “other” in the American military.

Societal and Government Structure

While the CPA attempted to create a democratic governing body in Iraq, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) was created as a concession on the part of America due to the “increasingly vocal demands by Iraqis for some say in the process by which they were to be governed.”²⁹⁹ This inclusion of the Iraqis in the governing of the country was because, by the summer of 2003, violent resistance was on the rise, including attacks on American and allied forces, indicating that ruling Iraq would not be straightforward or easy.³⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the actions of the CPA and the IGC to create a stable, democratic governing body in Iraq despite rising violence meant an attempt at changing existing societal and government structures within Iraq, something that the American military had to contend with while training the Iraqi military and dealing with locals.

Major Jeffrey Allen was part of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT), serving as senior advisor to the 18th battalion, New Iraqi Army, and team leader of the Advisor Support Team. Later on, he went to the 3rd Brigade, New Iraqi Army. In his interview, Allen states that, as part of an advisory support team, what they were to do “was to coach and mentor the leadership on all aspects of being a modern military, from how to organize staff, how to prepare for and conduct training, how to take care of soldiers...”³⁰¹ He recognizes that “a true democracy that’s totally secular in Iraq” is not possible, instead focusing on the “modern military model of the professional military corps, decentralized decision-making.”³⁰² Allen also states the following: “Of course, I’m speaking from the context of the U.S. Army and Major Jeff Allen that our model was better than the way they do it... But I certainly think we were very successful at least in planting that seed...”³⁰³ Although Allen was primarily discussing changing the Iraqi military structure, he hopes that changing the army will inspire the Iraqis to continue this change and alter their situation within the structures of Iraq. He emphasizes the need to reinforce the “aspects of being a modern military” in order to reinforce “decentralized decision-making” within a state that can never truly be secular, with the hopes that a “seed” can be planted to perhaps decentralize leadership within the military, and change the Iraqi government in the future. However, Allen himself trained for this mission with “mostly a lot of reading,” with “self-preparation on both how to train basic training as well as melding that with the Iraqi

²⁹⁹ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 284.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.

³⁰¹ Interv, John McCool and Don Wright, with Maj Jeffrey Allen, Senior Advisor, 18th Battalion, New Iraqi Army, Deputy Team Leader, 3rd Brigade, New Iraqi Army, 5 Dec. 2005, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 6.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 11.

factor.”³⁰⁴ Furthermore, Allen does not speak Arabic, and had to find a workaround.³⁰⁵ With no training about Iraqi culture other than what he gave himself to read through “self-preparation,” as well as no knowledge of Arabic, Allen most likely did not know a great deal about the societal and government structures in Iraq, yet continued to reinforce the American military model and system as superior to that of the Iraqis. He recognizes the “context” he was speaking from as an American in the U.S. Army, yet still feels that “our model was better,” hoping to “plant that seed” of American democracy and government structure through American military training. In this way, Allen follows orientalist notions, dismissing previous societal and government structures, favoring the establishment of an American system instead.

This idea of a “better model” is reinforced by Major Robert Dixon, who discusses the possibility of a system of democracy in Iraq. Maj. Dixon was part of an Advisor Support Team (AST) under CMATT, training the 7th Motorized Infantry Battalion, 7th Iraqi Battalion. According to him, “this whole idea of democracy is so new to [the Iraqis], they don’t know what it is. How does that translate into what we’re doing?”³⁰⁶ According to Zachary Lockman’s book on orientalism, there is a presumption that the West and Islam each have their own “unique and unchanging essence or character,” primarily attributing democracy as part of the evolution of Western civilization, whereas Islam remains an “essentially unchanging entity.”³⁰⁷ Dixon is a good example of this, feeling that democracy is an unknown concept in Iraq, supporting the orientalist idea that democracy is only a part of the West while Iraq remains “unchanging” and ignorant. Similarly, Lt. Col. Paul Ciesinski, assigned to the Army Reserve’s 80th Division and later the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division, stated the following: “My perspective of the Arabs and Kurds is that they’re not a systems people; they’re a relationship people. They don’t view systems as natural while we in the West do. We view systemization as important because of the efficiencies it brings.”³⁰⁸ Although Ciesinski does not refer to the system of democracy like Dixon, to Ciesinski, a “natural” system would most likely include a democratic one. In his statement, Ciesinski emphasizes a distinction between the West and Iraq: unlike the West, Iraq does not even have systems to speak of because they are a “relationship people.” Furthermore, because “systemization” brings “efficiencies,” including democracy, this implies that Iraq’s societal and governmental systems, or lack thereof, are inefficient and chaotic, incapable of understanding a “natural” democratic system. Like Dixon, Ciesinski expresses the orientalist notion that the West is democratic, or has “systems,” whereas Iraq has none. Therefore, the reinforcement of Western systems within Iraq would be beneficial, whereas Iraqi systems need to be replaced.

Both Ciesinski and Dixon demonstrate the fact that they do not know about Iraq culture, much less the societal and governmental structures within Iraq. For instance, Ciesinski felt that the training he received for Iraq was insufficient, requiring his troops to read *The Arab Mind*, by Raphael Patai, to prepare, yet “when [he] started dealing with it, it was much more of an issue

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 4.

³⁰⁶ Interv, John McCool and Bob Ramsey, with Maj Robert Dixon, 7th Iraqi Army Battalion, 4 Oct. 2006, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 7-8.

³⁰⁷ Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, 11.

³⁰⁸ Interv, Chris Ives, with Lt Col Paul Ciesinski, Military Transition Team (MiTT) Leader, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Iraqi Army Division, 13 Oct. 2006, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 13.

than [he] thought.”³⁰⁹ For Dixon, training was “some language, some medical and a lot of shooting.”³¹⁰ With this insufficient training that consisted of reading and “some language,” it would have been impossible for Ciesinski and Dixon to understand the functioning of societal and government structures within Iraq, yet both still assumed that Western structures were superior, thereby reinforcing orientalist notions.

Once again, although Maj. Allen, Lt. Col. Ciesinski, and Maj. Dixon expressed their individual opinions, their statements were a reflection of the American military at large. Being interviewed by the Combat Studies Institute, these veterans were being asked specific questions for the purpose of educating future soldiers about past military actions, which meant that Allen’s, Ciesinski’s, and Dixon’s orientalist notions concerning societal and governmental structures in Iraq have the potential to be integrated into official military doctrine. Overlooking interviews by Allen, Ciesinski, and Dixon would also reinforce orientalist notions in military doctrine because without addressing the lessons learned, as well as the attitudes expressed, no progress can be made in rectifying these orientalist attitudes. Furthermore, the lack of training all of them received is also a reflection of the U.S. military’s lack of information concerning structures in Iraq, or possibly the military’s notion that the necessary is being instructed, thereby deeming training concerning information on structures within Iraq as less important, or that the information is taken for granted. Addressing Iraqi government and societal structures in training would offer more valuable takeaways, whereas glossing over this would only continue a lack of training and information.

The Iraqi Perspective

As the creation of the IGC by the CPA indicated, Iraq continued to be occupied by American forces until an Interim Iraqi Government could be selected to oversee elections for an assembly that would draft a constitution to be put to a national referendum in 2005.³¹¹ Even afterwards, the American presence was prevalent in Iraq, obscuring Iraqi perspectives while focusing on gaining the upper hand on the increasing violence created by insurgents.

In the oral histories of veterans of the Iraq War, it is not so much the evaluation of Iraqi narratives and perspectives on the part of the veterans, but rather the absence thereof that is significant. For instance, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Yingling, the effects coordinator for the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, is one of the few in the oral histories examined who refers to two specific Iraqis by name: “I will say, though, that with the help of very effective Iraqi leaders – Najim Abdullah Abid al-Jibouri, the mayor of Tall Afar, and Major General Khorsheed Saleem al-Dosekey, commander of the 3rd Iraqi Army Division – we were able to establish the security conditions...”³¹² Maj. Robert Dixon, although he does not mention a name, praises an Iraqi battalion commander who was accidentally killed, characterizing him as being a “firm

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 16.

³¹⁰ Interv, John McCool and Bob Ramsey, with Maj Robert Dixon, 7th Iraqi Army Battalion, 4 Oct. 2006, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 4.

³¹¹ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 286.

³¹² Interv, John McCool and Ricardo A. Herrera, with Lt Col Paul Yingling, Deputy Commander, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, 22 Sep 2006, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 6.

individual” with a “strong command presence.”³¹³ Individual Iraqis are seldom named, mostly referred to as Iraqis, the “enemy,” “insurgents,” and occasionally “Sunnis” and “Shi’a.” In referring to Iraqis mainly as a group, the veterans are applying stereotypes, or particular attitudes and mentalities expressed by one individual or group to the whole of Iraq, thereby characterizing Iraq as an unchanging “other.” This is reinforced by the format of the oral histories themselves because, as future sources of learning for a next generation of soldiers, the Iraqis appear as a large group with no individuals, aside from the two named by Yingling, and nameless, as in the case of Dixon. In this way, perceiving the Iraqis as a group as different and collectivist characterizes Iraq as the “other” within the American military, without any examples of individuals to contradict this notion.

Conclusion

In these oral histories, the veterans reflected orientalist elements present in the American military surrounding such topics as sectarianism, societal and government structures, and the Iraqi perspective. After these interviews, most of which were taken in 2006, the violence in Iraq escalated, the war ending in 2011. Nevertheless, the “Islamic State - also known as ISIS, ISIL, or DAESH – emerged from the remnants of al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI),” taking advantage of instability and Iraq and Syria, finally reemerging in 2014.³¹⁴ The rise of ISIS led to a collapse of what the American occupation in Iraq had sought to accomplish, namely establishing a stable, democratic government within Iraq. This, in turn, meant that all of the hopes for a stable Iraq that followed an American model and system, expressed by the veterans in these oral histories were dashed, most likely confirming for some Iraq’s inability to change, furthering orientalist attitudes. However, American military attitudes during and after the Iraq War reveal a great deal about the perception of Iraq and the Middle East in the military and the United States itself, but also suggest Western orientalist notions in the world at large. It demonstrates the need to further study orientalism to better understand current events, like the case of Afghanistan, and international relationships.

³¹³ Interv, John McCool and Bob Ramsey, with Maj Robert Dixon, 7th Iraqi Army Battalion, 4 Oct. 2006, Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS. 12.

³¹⁴ Cameron Glenn, Mattisan Rowan, John Caves, and Garrett Nada. “Timeline: The Rise, Spread and Fall of the Islamic State.” Wilson Center, October 28, 2019.

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