

PURSUING A UNITED MEMORY: THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION'S
CONSTRUCTION OF A COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF
THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

AN INTERPRETIVE PLAN IN
History with an emphasis in Public History

Presented to the Faculty of the University of
Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

By
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B.A., Truman State University, 2017

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ABSTRACT

“Pursuing a United Memory: Harry Truman’s Construction of a Collective Memory of the Western Hemisphere” is an interpretive plan for a museum exhibition exploring President Harry Truman’s Latin American foreign policy. This exhibition explores how Harry Truman, on advice from prominent members of his State Department, attempted to form a collective memory of the Western Hemisphere as a “New World” founded on shared beliefs of freedom, democracy, and liberty. “Pursuing a United Memory” analyzes three specific opportunities Harry Truman had to spread a highly selective memory of similar historical experiences in order to emphasize a unity between the United States and the nations of Latin America. First, Truman travelled to Mexico City in March of 1947 during the 100th anniversary of the Mexican-American War. Second, Truman and the U.S. Congress held a ceremonial celebration in April 1948 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Joint Resolution of 1898, which brought the U.S. into the war for Cuban Independence. Finally, on the weekend of July 4th and 5th of 1948, Truman hosted Venezuelan President Rómulo Gallegos on a trip to Bolivar, Missouri, to dedicate a statue of Simón Bolívar—the “Liberator” of South America. Each of these events allowed Harry Truman to emphasize a

shared historical experience and draw commonalities between famous national heroes of Latin America and the United States.

Too often, historians of U.S.-Latin American relations during the Cold War focus on the dichotomous relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Their analyses discuss how U.S. anti-communism prompted direct and covert interventions into Latin American countries to prevent a perceived communist threat. In addition, diplomatic historians often choose to focus on how the United States used military, economic, or direct political influence to shape domestic Latin American policy. When cultural influences are analyzed, historians shed light on racial or gendered constructions, and the concept of national or collective memories are neglected.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a capstone project titled “Pursuing a United Memory: Harry Truman’s Construction of a Collective Memory of the Western Hemisphere,” presented by Justin Gipple, candidate for the Master’s of Arts in History with an emphasis in Public History, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

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This project would not have been possible without the support and advice from my supervisory committee of Dennis Merrill, Sandra Enríquez, and Viviana Grieco. Their direction and support proved invaluable to finding the sources and creating the content for this project. I want to express my appreciation for the staff of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum who directed me to relevant and valuable material in their archives and collections, many of which make up the images for my exhibition. I also want to thank Clay Bauske, the Museum Curator, who took the time to meet with me, review, and provide his feedback on my project. His experience and knowledge of the field and exhibition development helped guide this project to its completion. Finally, I want to extend a special thanks to Heidi for her persistent support and unwavering optimism, without which this project would likely not have been possible.

Humanities Content and Historiography

The Cold War has long been a favored topic by diplomatic historians beginning almost immediately as the era began. Therefore, the historiography of the Cold War has a long and well-documented past. The most popular—and often heated—debates over this contentious era are centered on the origins of the conflict; which ultimately boils down to asking, who was to blame for the rise in tensions between the United States and the U.S.S.R.¹ In the latter years of the conflict, new histories of the Cold War shifted focus from European encounters towards the Far East, then later “periphery” nations in Africa, the Middle East, or Latin America.² However, the Cold War’s dichotomous structure of the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union often remained. Events like the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, or the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s, were framed as “proxy wars” between the United States and Soviet Union rather than local conflicts with very local implications.

¹Generally, this debate breaks down into two categories. First, “orthodox” historians, commonly referred to as consensus, praised the United States’ ability to mediate and contain the overt-aggression of the Soviet Union, most notable in, George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). New Left, or revisionist, historians counter these historians by faulting the United States’ proclivity towards capitalist imperialism as provoking a threatened Soviet Union. See, William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1959); Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967); Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). A third category emerged as a synthesis of these two opposing positions, usually referred to as post-revisionist. Most notably, John Lewis Gaddis represents this category which seeks a “realist” perspective claiming the U.S. was constrained by domestic political fervor for anti-communism and a genuine desire to balance global power dynamics, see: John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); and Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

²One of the most notable works is Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

In the context of Latin America, this structure constrained historians' focus to some of the most popular confrontations such as the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban Missile Crisis, or the Bay of Pigs Invasion. These stories would be generalized across the region to explain the Cold War in Latin America as a whole. To borrow a quote from historian Greg Grandin, "Poets may see the world in a grain of sand... but only diplomatic historians could reduce the Latin American Cold War to a Cuban beach."³ Too often, the Cold War has been seen through the lens of the polarized battle between the United States and the Soviet Union.

However, as Grandin's quote suggests, many historians in the 21st century have begun to remove themselves from the confines of the dichotomous Cold War narrative. Instead, the Cold War in Latin America has been shown as a fight over far different issues than Capitalism versus Communism. Historians Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser brought together historians of U.S.-Latin American historians to explore this new phase in the historiography which sought to re-center the Latin American Cold War on "grassroots dynamics" and the "exercise of power" by the United States within the region.⁴ This era in Latin American history is better represented by confrontations between the hemispheric hegemon, the United States, and its southern neighbors, who more-often-than-not were not as concerned with the global power dynamics between the U.S. and Soviet Russia but with local economic development and political concerns. This new focus on localized movements and

³Greg Grandin, "Off the Beach: The United States, Latin America, and the Cold War," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (New York: Blackwell, 2002), 426-45 (quotation on 426).

⁴Gilbert M. Joseph, "What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies," in *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 19.

power dynamics required the introduction of cultural encounters between the United States and Latin American nations. Again, Gilbert Joseph summarizes these encounters in U.S.-

Latin American relations in an earlier work saying,

U.S. power has been brought to bear unevenly in [Latin America] by diverse agents, in a variety of sites and conjunctures, and through diverse transnational arrangements. Forms of power have thus been multiple and complex: simultaneously arranged through nation-states and more informal regional relationships...⁵

Cultural media like film and radio, tourism and a variety of other cultural exchanges are utilized by historians to reveal the uneven power dynamics with the Western Hemisphere to more fully explain how the Cold War was played out in Latin America.

The introduction of cultural encounters into the study of foreign policy has opened opportunities for historians to explore more varied interpretations of U.S.-Latin American relations. Cultural constructions of gender, stereotypes, metaphors, and race have greatly contributed to the growth of historiography of U.S. diplomacy throughout the world.⁶

However, historians have overlooked how constructions of memory, specifically collective

⁵Gilbert M. Joseph, "Close Encounters: Toward a New Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations" in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 5.

⁶Culture can influence foreign policy in a variety of ways. For aspects of how gender played a role in the formation of United States policy in Latin America see: Emily Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) and Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Although, more traditional in her focus on policy-makers, Martha Cottam looks at how images and stereotypes of Latin Americans as dependents by the U.S. policy-makers predisposed them to intervention during the Cold War in Cottam, *Images and Intervention: U.S. Policies in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994). Louis A. Pérez offers an insightful look into the use of metaphors to shape the United States' imperial impulses in Cuba; Pérez, *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Although not related to U.S.-Latin American foreign relations, Paul A. Kramer provides a thorough analysis in how race shaped U.S. policies in the Philippines; Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

memory, have influenced foreign relations. The concept of collective memory was first defined by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in the early 20th century when he proposed, “the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressures of society,” thus memory is selectively formed by its utility in the present.⁷ In other words, people and society only remember what they find useful in the present. Therefore, as Milan Kundera points out, “remembering is not the negative of forgetting. Remembering is a form of forgetting.”⁸ Kundera claims that memory is never complete recollection of an event, therefore memory is comprised of both remembering and forgetting. If these ideas are applied to national memories and historical experiences, then collective memory is important in forming national identity.

National identity has an important role in influencing foreign policy. To define nationality, historian Benedict Anderson explained, nationality and national identity are “imaginary communities” of people who find “deep, horizontal communion” among others across great geographical space.⁹ If national identities are cultural constructions, Anderson claims they are then malleable and can incorporate vastly different people who ascribe to similar underlying beliefs, or “horizontal communions.” Thus, when applied to international relations, it can be assumed that national identity often influences how different nations interact with each other. Within the Cold War grand narrative, the international communities of the Soviet Union’s eastern bloc and the United States’ Western democracies were

⁷Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 51.

⁸Milan Kundera, *Testaments Betrayed: An Essay in Nine Parts* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 128.

⁹Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 6-7.

proclaimed to be communions of nations with similar economic and ideological principles. Therefore, this project seeks to analyze these imagined communities within the context of the Western Hemisphere. More specifically, my project focuses on the attempts to strengthen the community of the Western Hemisphere under the Truman administration in the years immediately following World War II, when the Cold War tensions were rising.

Histories of Harry Truman's administration often do not focus on his Latin American policies. Too often they are constrained by the dichotomous Cold War narrative and highlight the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan's focus on Europe, followed by a shift to a U.S. focus on shifting containment to the Far East with the Korean War. When studies do incorporate Latin America into their analyses, they allow the Cold War binary to reduce their arguments to Truman's attempts to build a national security state leading to hemispheric security pacts and military defense treaties with the Latin American nations. In the end, these histories generally conclude that Latin America took a back-seat in Truman's foreign policy priorities.¹⁰ This theory fails to recognize the important era of turbulence that characterized the U.S.-Latin American relations under the Truman administration. Nor does it mean Truman forgot about Latin America and made no efforts at improving or maintaining relations with these countries.

In the years following World War II, President Truman, advised by an array of State Department and administration officials and in communication with hemispheric media

¹⁰Michael Donoghue dives deeper into the historiography of the Truman administrations' policies towards Latin America, however he recognizes these are the most prominent general arguments made. Michael Donoghue, "Harry S. Truman's Latin American Policy," 390-409, in *A Companion to Harry S. Truman*, edited by Daniel S. Margolies (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

outlets, drew on a body of well-worn historical narratives to advance a carefully crafted collective memory of Inter-American relations.¹¹ The memory project was designed in part to soothe growing tensions in the region where the 1930s Great Depression and 1940s World War had nurtured local aspirations for economic development and participatory democracy. In Guatemala, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, and Peru, grassroots peasant organizations (*campesinos*), labor unions, student activists, and other reformers, not only demanded an expansion of participatory democracy, but also articulated, sometimes in spontaneous or uneven fashion, a sharp critique of the long history of U.S. political, military, and economic domination of the region. Even in states led by secure pro-U.S. regimes, the exploits of the Guggenheim mining empire, the Boston based United Fruit Company, and Standard Oil of New Jersey registered as common knowledge. These companies' dominance of Latin American resources, and the United States' frequent military interventions, led Greg Grandin to characterize Latin America as the "empire's workshop."¹²

The social and political ferment was accompanied by governmental demands for the United States to follow up on its wartime promises of economic assistance. Advanced at early postwar inter-American conferences by Latin American conservative as well as

¹¹State Department officials who recommended Harry Truman to emphasize a shared historical experience include ambassadors John Cooper Wiley (Colombia) and Walter Clarence Thurston (Mexico). However, their views were widely held in the State Department as evidence of general memoranda on the region of Latin America adopted similar recommendations, see: Richard D McKinzie, "Oral History Interview with Merwin L. Bohan," June 15, 1974, HSTL, accessed March 14, 2019. <https://trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/bohanm.htm>; U.S. State Department, "Memoranda on Latin America," ca. 1946, PSF; Foreign Affairs File; Truman Papers, HSTL; and John C. Wiley, "Memoranda to Truman," November 8, 1945, PSF; Foreign Affairs File; Truman Papers; HSTL.

¹²Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2007).

progressive regimes, U.S. economic assistance would help to spur the region's industrialization and combat its widespread poverty. These aspirations also moved the Truman administration's effort to reach out to its southern neighbors through its memory project. Having already determined to invest billions of dollars in European economic recovery through the Marshall Plan and to rebuild Japan, both considered to be Cold War priorities, Washington officials pedaled the benefits of private trade and investment to Latin America's leaders. To ease disappointments over U.S. priorities, the Truman administration's collective memory sought to amend the historical record and selectively elevate shared ideals, common values, and moments of inter-American cooperation.

The collective hemispheric memory that the Truman administration hoped to popularize was founded on three foundational beliefs—or myths—of the history of the United States and the Western Hemisphere more generally. First, this memory perpetuated the belief of the Western Hemisphere as the “New World” founded on ideas of liberty, self-determination, and democracy. According to Eldon Kenworthy, this belief was based on four “founding myths” of the Western Hemisphere:

1. The Western Hemisphere is the geographical *tabula rasa* on which God (Providence, History) demonstrates civilization's advance.
2. The content of this advance is freedom and progress.
3. The United States of America is where this project first began and where it still excels.
4. Such an advance in civilization provokes enmity from an old world that clings to ways that are the antithesis of the new ways described in (2). The new world may be endangered by the old.¹³

¹³Eldon Kenworthy, *America/Américas: Myth in the Making of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1995), 18.

These myths echo the sentiments of the Monroe Doctrine (1823) which proposed the United States as the guardian against European interference in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. As the U.S. assumed the role as the world's preeminent superpower and leader of democracy and freedom, and the Cold War intensified the global bifurcation, this became a growing concern in the years following World War II.

Second, this Cold War era collective memory would evoke an idealistic faith in Pan Americanism. A concept borne during the First International Conference of American States in 1890, to the United States, Pan Americanism was an ideal meant to help form the hemisphere into a more cooperative body, led by the United States. However, many Latin Americans saw this ideal as the "friendly face of U.S. dominance in the hemisphere."¹⁴ This divergence in what they saw as the purposes of Pan Americanism would cause misunderstandings and tensions in how Truman's collective memory would be received in Latin America.

Finally, President Truman added his own flourishes to the memory construct by evoking memories of the most famous men in the history of the Western Hemisphere. As a child, Truman's mother gifted him the set of Charles F. Horne's *Great Men and Famous Women*, which imbued within him a belief that "it takes men to make history, or there would be no history."¹⁵ Famous Latin American liberators like Simón Bolívar (in Central America and northern South America, 1783-1830), Miguel Hidalgo (Mexican Independence Leader,

¹⁴David Sheinin, *Beyond the Ideal: Pan Americanism in Inter-American Affairs* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 1.

¹⁵Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13-14.

1753-1811), and José de San Martín (in the Southern Cone, 1778-1850) were compared to North American national heroes like George Washington (1732-1799) or Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). These historical figures were remembered as the “fathers” of their countries, and men who fought for the shared ideals of democracy, self-governance, and freedom. Comparison between these national heroes centered them as protagonists in Harry Truman’s attempts to construct a collective memory for the Western Hemisphere.

This exhibition will focus on three separate occasions where Truman took advantage of timely events to incorporate Latin American countries’ histories into a shared memory with the United States. Truman understood that these events would be widely covered by Latin American mass media, and his ability to utilize this media coverage would help to spread his selectively constructed memory. First, Truman travelled to Mexico in 1947, where he became the first sitting U.S. president to visit Mexico City, the nation’s capital. This trip happened to fall during the one-hundredth anniversary of the Mexican-American War, thereby shaping the conversations and events of his visit. This trip to Mexico is a prime example to begin this memory project because the Truman administration believed Mexico was “window thru [*sic*] which Latin America sees the United States.”¹⁶ Mexico has long had a special priority in U.S. foreign relations, but this quote here also establishes its importance as a “middle-man” to the rest of Latin America.

Second, Truman and the United States Congress passed a joint-resolution in 1948 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the ending of the Spanish-American War, and Cuba’s

¹⁶U.S. State Department, “Memoranda on Latin America,” ca. 1946, PSF; Foreign Affairs File; Truman Papers, HSTL.

national independence. Due to its proximity and long history with the United States, Cuba again serves as a special opportunity for the Truman administration to spread this collective memory. Having fought with the Cuban rebels during the Spanish-American War in 1898, the Truman administration believed this event could be used to exemplify a special unity between the U.S. and Cuba as an example for the rest of the hemisphere.

Finally, in July of 1948, Truman hosted the president of Venezuela to the United States, Rómulo Gallegos—believed to be the first cleanly elected president in Venezuelan history. While in the U.S., Truman and Gallegos travelled to Bolivar, Missouri (in Southwest Missouri) for the dedication of a statue of Simón Bolívar—*El Libertador* (“the Liberator”) of South America. Gallegos’ visit represented a chance for the Truman administration to both spread the reach of his collective memory to South America, and seek to strengthen ties to one of the more liberal reform movements in Latin America. Gallegos was the President from the *Acción Democrática* (Democratic Action, or AD) which had led the *coup d’état* in 1945 to bring more liberal social reforms to Venezuela.

Each of these events presented an opportunity for Harry Truman and his administration to construct a collective memory of Latin Americans’ history to incorporate them into a feeling of communion within the Western Hemisphere. The perceived leadership role Mexico played in Latin America, the cooperation between Cuban rebels and the United States in 1898, and the AD reform movement in Venezuela each gave these nations a special priority in the Truman administration’s memory project. The historical character of these events also gave Truman an opportunity to create a positive image of the United States as the

“friendly neighbor” within Latin America, to ensure hemispheric solidarity and Latin American cooperation.

Project Description

“Pursuing a United Memory” is a temporary exhibition designed to be displayed at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum in Independence, Missouri. Much of the research, sources, and objects to be displayed are owned and housed by the Truman Library and Museum, therefore the display would fall under the ownership of the Truman Library and Museum at the conclusion of its showing. Supplementary materials are cited to give attribution to the institution which owns the images or artifacts. The Truman Library and Museum will be undergoing a major renovation of its exhibition spaces in May of 2019, which will include adding a new 900-square-foot temporary exhibition space. This exhibition is designed to be displayed in this new space.

The exhibition will cover four thematic sections: U.S.-Latin American relations during Franklin Roosevelt’s administration and World War II; Truman’s trip to Mexico City in March of 1947; the celebrations of fifty years of Cuban independence in April of 1948; and Truman’s hosting of Venezuelan President, Rómulo Gallegos, and the dedication of the Simón Bolívar statue in Bolivar, Missouri in July 1948. Each of these three events presents visitors with an opportunity to explore how Harry Truman’s collective memory was employed to improve relations with Latin America and strengthen hemispheric unity. This theme allows visitors to see how Truman’s own memory of America’s historical experience and his belief in America’s foundational values of democracy, freedom, and liberty shaped his interactions with Latin American countries. These themes are chosen to prompt visitors to question their own understanding of American mythology and how their own world views shape how they see other countries and cultures.

Each section will consist of content panels with interpretive text to explain how Harry Truman sought to use these events to spread his collective memory of the Western Hemisphere. The Truman Library and Museum has many photographs, material culture artifacts, art, and primary sources in their collections to help visualize, add diversity to these content panels, and tell the stories of these events. Facsimiles of policy papers, letters and hand-written notes from Harry Truman, as well as 3D material such as honorary medals, keys, and other memorabilia from these travels and celebrations will be included to help connect the audience to these events and explain Truman's collective memory of the hemisphere. By utilizing a variety of sources and materials, this exhibition can include interesting stories and anecdotes for a wide and diverse audience.

Currently, the Truman Library and Museum's visitors consist of typical museum goers like students on class trips or people who are self-described "history buffs" with more interest in history. The permanent exhibitions at the library typically cater to these audiences with a focus on the more familiar Cold War narratives of the United States versus the Soviet Union. The existing exhibitions at the library currently do not provided much discussion about U.S.-Latin American relations. This lacks appeal for some segments of the population, most notably the Latino community. Thus, "Pursuing a United Memory" is designed to reach out to this new audience for the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. By focusing on Harry Truman's attempts to continue Good Neighbor Policies through his collective memory—particularly in a time when U.S. priorities were shifting to more global initiatives—this exhibition can help explain a crucial period of transformation in U.S.-Latin

American relations. Focusing on U.S. foreign relations with Latin America may appeal more broadly to the Latino community and prompt greater attendance to the Truman Library.

Outreach Plan

Advertising for the exhibition will be done through a variety of means. The Harry S. Truman Presidential Library always announces new exhibitions that are displayed on their website. They also have the non-profit organization the Truman Library Institute which has a large mailing list for email blasts and direct mail fliers to their constituents. Both organizations also regularly update their social media platforms of Twitter and Facebook with new exhibition displays. These forms will cover advertisement for a wide audience.

As noted, the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum will be undergoing a renovation of their exhibition spaces. Whenever major museum institution undergoes such updating, they usually experience an impressive increase in audience attendance following their reopening. This can help to bring both new audiences, and many returning visitors who seek to see the new renovations. With greater museum attendance, this exhibition can have an opportunity to utilize the increased foot traffic.

However, it is also important to reach out to the new audiences “Pursuing a United Memory” is designed to target. The Truman Library can host multiple programs and events in conjunction with the exhibition in order to appeal to the Latino Community in the greater Kansas City area. These may include popular speakers, such as Latin American historians, or co-sponsored events with local Latino community organizations like the Guadalupe Centers Inc. in Kansas City. Events like these can help bring more people to the museum for unique opportunities and can help to engage attendees with diverse perspectives on the exhibition, and the topic of U.S.-Latin American relations more broadly.

Project Script

Panel 1: Memory Uniting an “American Family of Republics”

In the years following World War II, Harry Truman and his administration were confronted with three unique opportunities to create a shared historical memory for the Western Hemisphere. By capitalizing on historic anniversaries and selectively emphasizing the similarities in the histories of the United States and Latin American countries, the Truman administration sought to create a shared, or “collective memory.” By emphasizing the memories of brave Mexican soldiers in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), or the similarities in United States’ and Latin American revolutions for independence, Truman tried to promote a unity of memory to create an “American family of republics.”

Image:

[“President Truman addressing the Pan American Union.” Photograph. April 15, 1946.]

Quote:

“If a realistic view of the world takes full account of the differences that separate nations, it must also take full account of the common beliefs that united nations. Nowhere is this element of unity—unity of heart and mind—more evident than in the neighborly community of the American republics. All our peoples have a common belief which we call democracy.”

– Harry S. Truman, March 3, 1947

Panel 2: United States' Interventions in Latin America

With the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States had begun a nearly 40-year era of imperialist, military interventions. Theodore Roosevelt's advice to "speak softly and carry a big stick" had been used justified many military occupations of Latin American countries. Along with these interventions, William Howard Taft implemented the "dollar diplomacy" which promoted U.S. economic intervention through private investment and financial control over many Latin American nations. By the 1930s, the United States had established its dominance over Latin America's natural resources and politics through private companies such as United Fruit Company and John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil company.

Image Caption:

The "Roosevelt Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine expanded United States role in the hemisphere from just "protecting" Latin America from European intervention, to direct intervention by the U.S. into the domestic affairs of Latin American. "Big stick diplomacy" became the characterization of his aggressive policies.

The World's Constable, 1905

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

[Dalrymple, Louis. "The World's Constable," Jan. 14, 1905.]

Image:

["U.S. Activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1895-1930s," by Maps.com, accessed March 14, 2019.]

Panel 3: Truman Inherits Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy

When Franklin Roosevelt (Theodore's fifth cousin) became president in 1933, he tried to reverse the broken relationships caused by the many U.S. interventions. His "Good Neighbor Policy" promised to end military interventions. However, this policy included providing support for Latin American dictators like Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic or Anastasio Somoza García in Nicaragua in return for friendly treatment of U.S. businesses operating in their countries.

When World War II began, Franklin Roosevelt used the Good Neighbor policy to ensure Latin America would support the Allied cause. When Roosevelt died April 12, 1945, and Truman assumed the presidency, all Latin American nations had either severed relations with, or declared war on, the Axis powers.

Image:

Strengthen good neighbor policy, 1935-1943

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

[“Strengthen good neighbor policy,” Works Progress Administration, 1935-1943.]

Panel 4: The Latin American Experience in WWII

While the Latin American countries did not see much fighting, they did supply large quantities of strategic and natural resources to the Allied powers. During the war both Roosevelt and Truman demanded that Latin American countries remove any Axis influence by seizing German and Japanese owned businesses and properties suspected of being NAZI sympathizers. In return, both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman promised to provide economic aid and cooperation to Latin Americans after the war.

The U.S. also established the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) under Nelson Rockefeller to conduct propaganda campaigns to build support for the Allied cause. The FBI was also tasked with covert surveillance of the Axis influence throughout Latin America.

Image:

Americans All: Let's Fight for Victory, 1943

Courtesy of the University of North Texas

[Helguera, Leon. "Americans All: Let's Fight for Victory," Office of War Information, Washington D.C., 1943.]

Image Caption:

Brazil was the only nation to send an expedition force to fight in the European theater. The Força Expedicionária Brasileira, FEB (the Brazilian Expeditionary Force), consisted of about 25,000 men and fought in Italy from 1944 until the end of the war in Europe.

Soldados da Força Expedicionária Brasileira, 1944

Courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional do Brasil

["Soldados da Força Expedicionária Brasileira," Sept. 7, 1944, Arquivo Nacional.]

Panel 5: Latin America's "democratic spring"

World War II ideals of freedom and democracy versus fascism and dictatorship along with the United States' wartime demands fueled many leftist-nationalist, social movements throughout Latin America. Between 1944-1946, many of these movements among the Latin American working classes and peasant farmers (*campesinos*) wrested power from military dictators which had dominated many countries' politics since the independence wars in the early 19th-century.

The United States saw some of the reforms for more participatory democracy throughout Latin America as positive liberal policies. However, they were more hesitant to support these social movements' calls for nationalization of extractive industries such as the oil industry in Venezuela. Redistributionist policies like this threatened many of the U.S. private business interests which had established themselves in the oil fields of Venezuela, the banana plantations in Guatemala, or the sugar fields of Cuba. The Truman administration began looking for a way to express their approval for Latin America's democratization, while moderating the more left-leaning populist reforms that threatened U.S. businesses.

Image Caption:

This is a mural painted of former Guatemalan President, Jacobo Árbenz. From 1944 to 1954, Guatemala experienced the longest social revolution under the two presidents, José Arévalo and Jacobo Árbenz. Árbenz was overthrown by a U.S. back coup d'état in 1954.

Mural of Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, 2004.

[“Mural of President Jacobo Arbenz,” Guatemala.]

Panel 6: Creating a Memory of the “New World”

Latin America’s democratic spring was accompanied by governmental demands that the United States follow through on its wartime promises of economic assistance to spur the region’s industrialization and combat its widespread poverty. Taken together, these political and economic aspirations created a dilemma for the United States. President Truman and his advisors understood Latin America’s desires for change but concluded that the mounting costs of the Marshall Plan in Europe, along with economic reconstruction in Japan, made significant economic aid to Latin America impractical. They also worried that social reforms in the region might generate instability and threaten the economic and strategic interests of the U.S. Rather than a “Marshall Plan for Latin America,” the Truman administration hoped that the promotion of a shared memory of a common, cooperative, inter-American historical experience might satisfy Latin American demands. This memory promoted the Western Hemisphere as a “New World” where democracy, freedom, and prosperity could best be achieved through common, moderated efforts.

Image:

Food will win the war, 1917

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

[Chambers, Charles Edward, “Food will win the war,” Rusling Wood, Litho., 1917.]

Panel 7: Truman Travels to Mexico City

On March 3, 1947, Harry Truman became the first sitting president to visit the Mexico's capital, Mexico City. Importantly, his trip fell on the 100th anniversary of the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), in which the United States acquired roughly half of Mexico's land, including all, or parts of, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Texas, and the southwest corner of Wyoming.

The memory of this war would become an important theme for Truman's visit. When Truman arrived, both he and Mexican President Miguel Alemán Valdés gave speeches about how this visit was a chance to heal the negative memories from lost territories and war.

Quotes:

“[History's] greatness does not lie in the will to make the past live forever, but, on the contrary, in the aptitude to transform the past into an active present and to lay firmly... a better and more solid future.”

– Miguel Alemán Valdés, March 3, 1947

“Many people emphasize the disagreements that separate nations and forget the large areas of agreement that bring nations together in mutual understanding...I refuse to be discouraged by apparent difficulties. Difficulties are a challenge to men of determination.”

– Harry S. Truman, March 3, 1947

Image:

[“President Truman in Mexico,” March 3, 1947.]

[“A Returning Traveler Exhibits a Rare Jewel,” James T. Berryman ca. 1947]

Panel 8: Truman Remembers the Spiritual Foundations of Democracy and Freedom

A speech alone would not work to heal the memories of the Mexican-American War or later interventions into Mexico during their revolution from 1910-1920. While in Mexico City, Truman visited two historic monuments to draw connections between the U.S. and Mexico and remember each nation's historical foundations in democratic principles and their bravery to fight for their freedom. The first was *El Ángel* (or The Angel of Independence), located on the *Paseo de la Reforma* running through the heart of Mexico City. Truman emphasized how *El Ángel* was a symbol of the similarities in each nation's revolutionary wars for self-government against European, colonial rulers.

Quote:

“All our peoples have a common belief which we call democracy. Democracy has a spiritual foundation because it is based upon the brotherhood of man.”

– Harry S. Truman, March 3, 1947

Image:

El Ángel was constructed in 1910 under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz to commemorate the centennial of Mexico's War for Independence against Spanish colonial rule. In 1925, the monument became the home for the remains of prominent Mexican revolutionaries such as Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, Padre José María Morelos y Pavón, and Guadalupe Victoria. Truman's visit to this monument showed his respect for Mexico's revolutionary heroes.

El Ángel, Mexico City

Courtesy of SmugMug, 2019

[“President Harry S. Truman at the ‘Angel of Independence’ Monument in Mexico City,” March 4, 1947.]

Panel 9: Remembering the Bravery of *Los Niños Héroes*

Truman also visited the monument *Los Niños Héroes* (“The Boy Heroes”) at Chapultepec Castle. Built in 1881, this monument commemorates the Battle of Chapultepec (September 13, 1847) during the Mexican-American War. Outnumbered, the Mexican Army was ordered to retreat, but six Mexican cadets (aging from 13 to 19 years old) fought heroically to the death. According to legend, one of the cadets, Juan Escutia, wrapped himself in the Mexican flag and jumped from the castle walls rather than surrender. Truman’s unexpected visit to *Los Niños Héroes* was both a recognition of the cadet’s bravery and a symbolic apology for the tragedies of Mexican-American War.

Quote:

“Brave men don’t belong to any one country. I respect bravery wherever I see it.”

– Harry S. Truman, 1947.

“President Truman, by rendering homage to the immortal glory of the boy heroes, in a gesture worthy of a gentleman and a friend, spans an abyss of the past by another bridge into the future.”

– Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexican Foreign Minister, March 4, 1947.

Image:

[“President Harry S. Truman at the Monument to the ‘Heroes of Chapultepec’ in Mexico”
March 4, 1947.]

Panel 10: Celebrating a Shared Anniversary of Cuban Independence

On April 19, 1948 the United States Congress and President Truman celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Joint Resolution of 1898 that brought the United States into the war for Cuban independence. The 50th anniversary gave Truman another opportunity to shape the hemispheric memory of the Spanish-American War.

Memories of the war were divided. Some believed that the United States fought the war out of benevolent purpose to free Cuba from Spanish colonialism. Others believe the U.S. joined to preserve their private business and security interests on the island or in hopes of eventually annexing Cuba into the United States. Truman chose to remember the war as a reflection of unity between the United States and Cuba.

Quote:

“From the first, the fight for liberation by the Cuban patriots evoked sympathy of the people of the United States. Americans watched with admiration the beginning of the final struggle for independence.” – Harry S. Truman, April 19, 1948

Image Caption:

Truman’s speech emphasized the brotherhood of the national heroes who fought together to free Cuba from Spain. To Truman, the war brought “the names of [William Rufus] Shafter, [Theodore] Roosevelt, [and Richmond P.] Hobson...joined with those of [Máximo] Gómez, [Antonio] Maceo, and [Calixto] Garcia.” Joining the names of American and Cuban war heroes reflected Truman’s desire to promote a shared memory of the war.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

[Rockwood, George Gardner. “Colonel Theodore Roosevelt in uniform,” ca. 1898]

[“Cuba’s heroes and their flag,” ca 1896.]

Panel 11: A White-Washed Memory: U.S-Cuban Relations After the War

Truman's recollection of history ignored the instances of U.S. interventions in Cuba. Truman chose not to mention the Platt Amendment (1902) which allowed the U.S. to veto Cuba's treaties with other powers and gave the U.S. the military base, Guantanamo Bay. Truman also left out the military occupations of Cuba under Leonard Wood (1899-1902) and the Second Occupation of Cuba (1906-1909), as well as the U.S. dominance of Cuba's sugar industry through companies like Hershey's or Henry Osborne Havemeyer's American Sugar Refining Company.

Truman's address focused on the unity and friendship between the U.S. and Cuba as a result of the war. He recalled the efforts benevolence of American soldiers in fighting alongside Cuba for their freedom. Truman also remembered the Yellow Fever Commission headed by Walter Reed and Aristides Agramonte which helped reduce Yellow Fever in Cuba (1900-1902).

Quote:

"We assisted the Cubans in repairing the ravages of war and overcoming problems of health and sanitation."

– Harry S. Truman, April 19, 1948.

"This relationship provides living proof of the ability of nations great and small to live in peace and enjoy the full benefits of commercial and cultural exchange."

– Harry S. Truman, April 19, 1948

Image

The Yellow Fever Commission was conducted by the United States Army to combat the epidemic of Yellow Fever throughout the Caribbean. This commission is credited with discovering Yellow Fever was spread through mosquitoes rather than poor sanitation, leading to the virtual eradication of the disease by 1902 in Cuba.

By Robert Thom, ca. 1952

Courtesy of University of Michigan Health System, gifted by Pfizer Inc.

Panel 12: U.S. Sailors Insult the Memory of José Martí

José Martí was an advocate for Cuban independence throughout his life, and he became a leader of the revolution in 1895. He became a martyr for Cuban freedom and is remembered as a national hero.

On March 11, 1949 a group of U.S. Navy sailors desecrated the statue of José Martí in Havana, Cuba. Fights between the sailors and Cubans ensued until the sailors were taken into custody by Cuban police. Riots continued through the next day and the U.S. embassy was stoned. U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, Robert Butler, issued an official apology and laid flowers at the statue the following day. This incident worsened many Cuban's opinions of the United States. This event hurt Truman's efforts at creating a united memory between the U.S. and Cuba during the 50th anniversary celebrations a year ago.

Images:

Courtesy of El Caimán Barbudo

[US Sailors Desecrate Statue of José Martí – 2 photos]

Image Caption:

José Martí was a leader of the Cuban War for Independence. Exiled in the United States since 1881, Martí rallied support for his cause among Cuban ex-patriots and lobbied against annexation of Cuba by the United States. He returned to Cuba when the war began and was killed at the Battle of Dos Rios on May 19, 1895. He became remembered as a national hero and martyr for the cause of liberty.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

[José Martí Statue]

Panel 13: *El Trienio Adecó: Venezuela's Acción Democrática*

Up to this point, Truman's efforts to spread his collective memory had been limited to Central America and the Caribbean nations. In order to effectively unite the entire Western Hemisphere, Truman needed to incorporate an event with a South American country. Events in Venezuela gave Truman one of his last opportunities utilize a collective memory to promote democratic ideals and unify the U.S. and Latin America.

In 1945, a coup d'état led by Rómulo Betancourt and his political party, *Acción Democrática* (Democratic Action), ousted Venezuelan president Isaías Medina Angarita. Between 1945 and December 1948, Venezuela adopted a series of social and political reforms, including agrarian reforms to break up concentrated land ownership and revised agreements that mandated a 50-50 split of oil profits between the government and private companies. These three years became known as *El Trienio Adecó*, the three years of *Adecó* ("*Adecó*" was a term for Democratic Action party members). In December 1947, Rómulo Gallegos, as the Democratic Action candidate, became the first popularly elected president in Venezuelan history.

Image Caption:

Rómulo Betancourt is often referred to as the "Father of Venezuelan Democracy" and was the leader of the *Acción Democrática*. After the *coup d'état* in 1948, Betancourt was exiled in Cuba until 1958 when he returned to Venezuela and was elected President in 1959.

Portrait of Rómulo Betancourt

Courtesy of VenezuelaTuya

[“Portrait of Rómulo Betancourt,” by Francisco Maduro]

Panel 14: The End of *El Trienio Adecó*

In December 1948, Gallegos and the Democratic Action was overthrown by right-wing *coup d'état*, led by military leaders like Carlos Delgado Chaulbaud and Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Chaulbaud and Jiménez were both participants in the 1945 coup. However, their hunger for power and concern that Venezuela was becoming a one-party state, led them to overthrow the Gallegos presidency. Despite the friendship between Truman and Gallegos, the United States almost immediately recognized this military junta government. This recognition showed the strains under which the Truman administration had to choose between stability and democratic practices.

Image Caption:

After serving as leader of the Venezuelan military, and a key orchestrator of the *coup d'état* in both 1945 and 1948, Marcos Pérez Jiménez would eventually become President of Venezuela in 1952.

Portrait of Marcos Pérez Jiménez

Courtesy of VenezuelaTuya

[“Portrait of Marcos Pérez Jiménez,” by Francisco Maduro]

Panel 15: A Shared Independence Day Celebration

Following the election of Rómulo Gallegos, and in the midst of *El Trienio Adecó*, the Truman administration saw an opportunity to extend its collective memory into South America. This opportunity provided Truman a chance to complete the united memory for the Western Hemisphere.

The weekend of July 4th and 5th 1948 became a shared celebration of the United States' and Venezuela's national independence days. Harry Truman hosted President Gallegos to the small town of Bolivar, Missouri. They planned to dedicate a statue of Simón Bolívar, the South American Liberator. Arriving on July 5th (Venezuela's own Independence Day), the town welcomed the two presidents with a parade through town to the square where the statue was to be unveiled.

Image:

[“Presidents Harry S. Truman and Romulo Gallegos at a Ceremony in Bolivar.” July 5, 1948]
[“Covered Wagon at Simón Bolívar Statue Dedication,” July 5, 1948]

Image Caption:

The night before the arrival of Truman and Gallegos, Bolivar residents celebrated shared Independence Days with festivities including picnics in the park and dances through the evening. A parade through the town square greeted the two presidents on their arrival.
[“Young Couple dances at celebration in Bolivar, MO,” July 4, 1948]

Panel 16: Simón Bolívar and George Washington: Remembering the Founding Fathers

After the parade through Bolivar, Missouri, Harry Truman spoke to the crowd gathered in the town square. He recalled the heroics of Simón Bolívar in his fight to free South America from Spanish colonial rule. He then compared these heroics to the United States' own founding father, George Washington. This comparison was meant to draw commonality between Americans' memories of Washington and Venezuelans' memories of their own "founding father," Simón Bolívar.

Quote:

"Simón Bolívar's memory is part of the spirit of freedom and independence in North and South America alike... in honoring his memory, we are in a very real sense honoring those principles of liberty, unity, and friendship which guide the American nations today." – Harry S. Truman, July 5, 1948.

Image Caption:

Truman was gifted a bust of Simón Bolívar by the Venezuelan delegation in 1946. Pictured left to right: Dr. Don Francisco Alvarez-Chacin, Dr. Don M.A. Falcon-Briceno, Harry Truman, Señor Arturo Briceno

Image Caption:

The portraits of Simón Bolívar and George Washington were hung next to each other in Truman's Oval Office. This is symbolic of Truman's interest the great men of history and his belief in their historical similarities.

["The Oval Office fireplace"]

Panel 17: The “Father of Pan Americanism:” Simón Bolívar

Harry Truman recalled Simón Bolívar’s legacy as the “father” of the Pan American spirit. Bolívar had called the first Pan American Congress in Panama in 1826 as a way for the newly independent Latin American nations to combine their strength to resist any effort by Spain to recolonize the region and to pre-empt attempts by other conservative European monarchs to quash Latin America’s revolutionary movements. Bolivar also suspicious of the growing power of the newly established United States. However, Truman chose to only remember Simón Bolívar’s desires for equality among the entire “American family of republics.”

Quote:

“Pan Americanism means equality of all nations, and sympathetic and effective cooperation among them. And there isn’t a single American Republic afraid of an invasion from its great neighbor on the North.” – Harry S. Truman, July 5, 1948.

Image:

[“President Truman giving speech in Bolivar, Missouri,” July 5, 1948].

Image Caption:

The temperature in Bolivar, Missouri was said to have reached 106 degrees that day. Eben A. Ayers, a press officer, recalled, “I studiously avoided getting up on that platform because it was so darn hot! I know Mrs. Truman and Margaret were sitting there and Margaret looked down at me and nothing was said, but I felt sorry for her and Mrs. Truman.”

Oral history interview with Eben. A. Ayers, 1967, HSTL

[“Bess and Margaret Truman and Others in Bolivar, Missouri,” July 5, 1948]

Panel 18: A Permanent Reminder of Pan-American Unity

Today, the statue of Simón Bolívar remains in Bolivar, Missouri's town square as a reminder of Harry Truman's efforts to unify the Western Hemisphere around a shared historical experience. Hosting Rómulo Gallegos on the weekend of both the United States' and Venezuela's national independence days was a symbolic gesture to show the rest of Latin America that Truman sought to promote commonalities between the North and South Americas. The statue of Simón Bolívar was meant to commemorate an international hero, within the United States, who represented the New World as the beacon of liberty, democracy, and freedom.

Images:

[“Simón Bolívar Statue is Unveiled in Bolivar, MO,” July 5, 1948]

[“Statue of Simón Bolívar at Bolivar, MO,” July 5, 1948]

Panel 19: Remembering a More Unified Era

Harry Truman's efforts to continue the Good Neighbor Policy by remembering a selective history of shared experiences occurred during a period of increasing global polarization rising hemispheric tension. Over the next 15 years, the relations between the United States and Latin America would deteriorate. Violence between right-wing anti-communists and left-wing nationalists in many Latin American nations would prompt both direct and covert intervention by the United States into nations such as Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961-1962), the Dominican Republic (1965), and Nicaragua (1979-1990). The Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro in 1959, and the attempt to overthrow his new regime with the Bay of Pigs invasion (1961), would lead to a still greater hemispheric divide. For Latin America, the Cold War would become anything but "cold" and the Truman administration's efforts to unify the hemisphere would be left as a memory itself.

Images:

[“Truman Stands with Gallegos at a Dedication Ceremony in Bolivar,” July 5, 1948]

Image Caption:

In 1979 the Nicaraguan Revolution successfully ousted long-standing dictator, Anastasio Somoza Debayle. This led to a civil war throughout the 1980s. On one side were the Sandinistas (FSLN), a leftist, socialist coalition, led by now-President Daniel Ortega; and on the other side was the U.S.-backed Contras, a right-wing coalition of counter-revolutionaries.

Photo by: Alain Keler, 1982

Courtesy of the United States Foreign Policy History & Resource Guide

[“Salvadoran Army unit on coastal road,” Feb. 8, 1982.]

Image Caption:

This is a photo of Guatemalan counter-revolutionary soldiers being trained at a covert CIA base in Honduras. In 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower ordered Operation PBSUCCESS which provided CIA support to overthrow Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz.

Guatemalan counter-revolutionaries, 1954

Courtesy of the United States Foreign Policy History & Resource Guide

[“Guatemalan counter-revolutionaries.” ca. 1954]

Material Culture & Label Scripts

Ambassador John C. Wiley's Memorandum

With the defeat of the Axis powers, the Soviet Union became the main adversary of the United States. The U.S. State Department worried that communism would replace fascist sentiment in Latin America. This memorandum advises Harry Truman that the United States must fill the void of Axis influence with “American penetration” with “cultural diplomacy abound.”

*Wiley, John C., “Memorandum to Truman,” November 8, 1945
Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library*

[Facsimile of: Wiley, John C., “Memorandum to Truman,” November 8, 1945.]

[This artifact will be placed near the panels titled, “Latin America’s “Democratic Spring” and “Creating a Memory of the “New World.”]

Letter from Harry to Bess while in Mexico City with Honorary Medal Given to Truman

Truman described a crowd of 10,000 Mexican citizens who greeted him upon his arrival and were present at the festivities held in the Zócalo, the main square in Mexico City. In honor of being the first U.S. president to visit the capital, Truman was presented with this gold medal depicting areas of Mexico City on one side, and an Aztec calendar on the other.

*Letter from Harry Truman to Bess Truman, March 4, 1947
Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library*

[Honorary gold medal and scroll gifted to Truman by President Miguel Alemán]

[Facsimile of Letter from Harry Truman to Bess Truman, March 4, 1947.]

[Photograph: President Truman receiving medal and scroll in Mexico, March 3, 1947.]

[Photograph: Mexican Performance in Mexico City, March 3, 1947.]

[These artifacts will be placed near the panel titled, “Truman Travels to Mexico City” and near the painting of Truman and Alemán meeting.]

Painting of Truman and Alemán Meeting

This painting was offered to the Harry S. Truman Library as a gift from the Miguel Alemán Foundation in Mexico City. The painting depicts the meeting of Presidents Harry Truman and Miguel Alemán during Truman’s visit in 1947. The Statue of Liberty and Mexico’s *El Ángel* are pictured with the allegorical men hugging in friendly embrace. This painting represents the shared values of liberty and freedom as the foundation of friendship between North and Central America.

“Painting of Presidents Truman and Alemán Shaking Hands,” ca. March 1947
Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library
[“Painting of Presidents Truman and Aléman Shaking Hands,” ca. March 1947]

[This artifact will be placed near the panel titled, “Truman Travels to Mexico City” and near the honorary gold medal and letters to Bess Truman.]

Mexican Battle Flags Returned by Truman

In the aftermath of his visit to Mexico City, Truman began the process of returning Mexican battle flags that were captured by the U.S. Army during the war. First, 3 flags were returned on June 27, 1947, and later the remaining 69 flags were returned to Mexico on September 13, 1950—the 103rd anniversary of the battle of Chapultepec. Truman’s return of battle flags, like these, was the culmination of his efforts at mending the divided memories of the Mexican-American War.

Mexican Guerrilla Flag
Courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico
Tampico Battalion Battle Flag
Courtesy of the Museo Nacional de Historia, Mexico

[Mexican Guerrilla Flag and Flag of the Tampico Battalion]

[These artifacts will be placed after the panel titled, “Remembering the Bravery of *Los Niños Héroes*.”]

Invitation to Ceremonial Joint Session of Congress

The invitation to the ceremonial joint session of Congress was sent to Truman and the Cuban Ambassador to the United States, Guillermo Belt. While the U.S. Congress held its celebration, Cuban President Raul Grau San Martín hosted its own commemoration with U.S. Ambassador, R. Henry Norweb, and representatives of both U.S. and Cuban veterans’ organizations in attendance.

[Facsimile of: Invitation to Congressional Celebration, 1948]

[This artifact will be placed near the panel titled, “Celebrating a Shared Anniversary of Cuban Independence.”]

Clifford’s drafts of Truman’s Speech at the Joint Session of Congress

Some historians criticize the American-centric remembrance of the Spanish-American War. Cuban rebels began the war in 1895, but often the beginning of the war is only remembered with American involvement in 1898. This is reflected by its popular name, the *Spanish-*

American War, which leaves out Cubans rebels as participants. Challenges to this popular memory were not lost on Truman’s speech-writer, Clark Clifford, whose early draft of the speech referenced the war as the “Spanish-Cuban-American War.” This reference was quickly removed because it conflicted with its popular remembrance as solely the Spanish-American War.

[Facsimile of: Clifford, “Third Draft of Remarks of the President at the Joint Session of Congress.”]

[This artifact will be placed near the panel titled, “A White-Washed Memory: U.S.-Cuban Relations After the War.”]

Key to the City of Bolivar, Missouri

Harry Truman and Rómulo Gallegos were given ceremonial keys to the city by Dr. Doyle C. McCraw (middle), the Mayor of Bolivar, Missouri. This is the key given to Harry Truman.

[Photograph: “President Harry S. Truman and Rómulo Gallegos with Keys,” July 5, 1948]
[Ceremonial Key to the city of Bolivar, Missouri]

[These artifacts will be placed near the panel titled, “A Shared Independence Day Celebration.”]

Image Puzzle: Freedom United Washington and Simón Bolívar

[Interactive puzzle to piece together the painting by Tomas]

This allegorical painting depicts Simón Bolívar and George Washington meeting and shaking hands symbolizing Pan-American unity between Latin America and the United States. The Pan-American ideal began with the First International Conference of American States in 1889 with the encouragement of U.S. Secretary of States James G. Blaine. To the U.S., Pan-Americanism was meant to build a feeling of solidarity among the nations of the Western Hemisphere, however many Latin Americans felt it was merely a way to disguise U.S. imperial ambitions.

Freedom United Washington and Simón Bolívar, 1952

By: *Benito L. Tomas*

[Image: Tomas, Benito L., “Freedom United Washington and Simón Bolívar,” painting, 1952.]

[This artifact will be placed near the panel titled, “Simón Bolívar and George Washington: Remembering the Founding Fathers.”]

Simón Bolívar Memorial Foundation Pamphlet

This pamphlet was a biography of Simón Bolívar and his fight for independence in South America. Its depiction of Simón Bolívar emphasizes the influence the United States' Revolutionary War had on Bolívar himself. More than 100,000 copies of this pamphlet from the Simón Bolívar Memorial Foundation were distributed to grade schools across Missouri after the ceremonies in Bolivar.

[John Crane, "Simón Bolívar: The Great South American Liberator", pamphlet, 1948]


[This artifact will be placed near the panel titled, "The "Father of Pan Americanism:" Simón Bolívar."]

Content Panel Mock-Ups

The following images are 50% design elevations

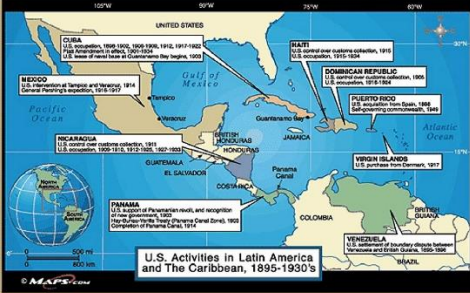
Memory Uniting an “American Family of Republics”

“If a realistic view of the world takes full account of the differences that separate nations, it must also take full account of the common beliefs that united nations. Nowhere is this element of unity—unity of heart and mind—more evident than in the neighborly community of the American republics. All our peoples have a common belief which we call democracy.”
— Harry S. Truman, March 3, 1947



In the years following World War II, Harry Truman and his administration were confronted with three unique opportunities to create a shared historical memory for the Western Hemisphere. By capitalizing on historic anniversaries and selectively emphasizing the similarities in the histories of the United States and Latin American countries, the Truman administration sought to create a shared, or “collective memory.” By emphasizing the memories of brave Mexican soldiers in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), or the similarities in United States’ and Latin American revolutions for independence, Truman tried to promote a unity of memory to create an “American family of republics.”


United States’ Interventions in Latin America



With the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States had begun a nearly 40-year era of imperialist, military interventions. Theodore Roosevelt’s advice to “speak softly and carry a big stick” had been used justified many military occupations of Latin American countries. Along with these interventions, William Howard Taft implemented the “dollar diplomacy” which promoted U.S. economic intervention through private investment and financial control over many Latin American nations. By the 1930s, the United States had established its dominance over Latin America’s natural resources and politics through private companies such as United Fruit Company and John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil company.

Roosevelt Corollary

The “Roosevelt Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine expanded United States role in the hemisphere from just “protecting” Latin America from European intervention, to direct intervention by the U.S. into the domestic affairs of Latin American. “Big stick diplomacy” became the characterization of his aggressive policies.

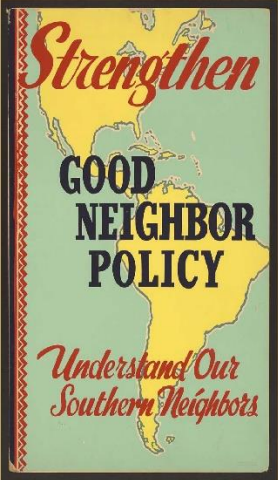


The World's Crucible, 1903
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Truman Inherits Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy

When Franklin Roosevelt (Theodore’s fifth cousin) became president in 1933, he tried to reverse the broken relationships caused by the many U.S. interventions. His “Good Neighbor Policy” promised to end military interventions. However, this policy included providing support for Latin American dictators like Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic or Anastasio Somoza Garcia in Nicaragua in return for friendly treatment of U.S. businesses operating in their countries.

When World War II began, Franklin Roosevelt used the Good Neighbor policy to ensure Latin America would support the Allied cause. When Roosevelt died April 12, 1945, and Truman assumed the presidency, all Latin American nations had either severed relations with, or declared war on, the Axis powers.




Strengthen good neighbor policy, 1933-1934
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

The Latin American Experience in WWII

While the Latin American countries did not see much fighting, they did supply large quantities of strategic and natural resources to the Allied powers. During the war both Roosevelt and Truman demanded that Latin American countries remove any Axis influence by seizing German and Japanese owned businesses and properties suspected of being Nazi sympathizers. In return, both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman promised to provide economic aid and cooperation to Latin Americans after the war.


The U.S. also established the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) under Nelson Rockefeller to conduct propaganda campaigns to build support for the Allied cause. The FBI was also tasked with covert surveillance of the Axis influence throughout Latin America.



Americanos All Fight for Victory, 1942
Courtesy of the University of North Carolina

Brazil Expeditionary Force

Brazil was the only nation to send an expedition force to fight in the European theater. The Força Expedicionária Brasileira, FEB (the Brazilian Expeditionary Force), consisted of about 25,000 men and fought in Italy from 1944 until the end of the war in Europe.



Soldados da Força Expedicionária Brasileira, 1944
Courtesy of the American Historical Society

Latin America's "Democratic Spring"

World War II ideals of freedom and democracy versus fascism and dictatorship along with the United States' wartime demands fueled many leftist-nationalist, social movements throughout Latin America. Between 1944-1946, many of these movements among the Latin American working classes and peasant farmers (campesinos) wrested power from military dictators which had dominated many countries' politics since the independence wars in the early 19th-century.



The United States saw some of the reforms for more participatory democracy throughout Latin America as positive liberal policies. However, they were more hesitant to support these social movements' calls for nationalization of extractive industries such as the oil industry in Venezuela. Redistributivist policies like this threatened many of the U.S. private business interests which had established themselves in the oil fields of Venezuela, the banana plantations in Guatemala, or the sugar fields of Cuba. The Truman administration began looking for a way to express their approval for Latin America's democratization, while moderating the more left-leaning populist reforms that threatened U.S. businesses.

This is a mural painted of former Guatemalan President, Jacobo Árbenz. From 1944 to 1954, Guatemala experienced the longest social revolution under the two presidents, José Arévalo and Jacobo Árbenz. Árbenz was overthrown by a U.S. back coup d'état in 1954.

Mural of Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, 2009

Creating a Memory of the "New World"



Look with us the way, 1917

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Latin America's democratic spring was accompanied by governmental demands that the United States follow through on its wartime promises of economic assistance to spur the region's industrialization and combat its widespread poverty. Taken together, these political and economic aspirations created a dilemma for the United States. President Truman and his advisors understood Latin America's desires for change but concluded that the mounting costs of the Marshall Plan in Europe, along with economic reconstruction in Japan, made significant economic aid to Latin America impractical. They also worried that social reforms in the region might generate instability and threaten the economic and strategic interests of the U.S. Rather than a "Marshall Plan for Latin America," the Truman administration hoped that the promotion of a shared memory of a common, cooperative, inter-American historical experience might satisfy Latin American demands. This memory promoted the Western Hemisphere as a "New World" where democracy, freedom, and prosperity could best be achieved through common, moderated efforts.

Truman Travels to Mexico City

"[History's] greatness does not lie in the will to make the past live forever, but, on the contrary, in the aptitude to transform the past into an active present and to lay firmly... a better and more solid future."

Miguel Alemán Valdés, March 3, 1947



Courtesy of the National Archives

On March 3, 1947, Harry Truman became the first sitting president to visit the Mexico's capital, Mexico City. Importantly, his trip fell on the 100th anniversary of the Mexican American War (1846-1848), in which the United States acquired roughly half of Mexico's land, including all, or parts of, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Texas and the southwest corner of Wyoming.

The memory of this war would become an important theme for Truman's visit. When Truman arrived, both he and Mexican President Miguel Alemán Valdés gave speeches about how this visit was a chance to heal the negative memories from lost territories and war.

Unity and Good Will

"Many people emphasize the disagreements that separate nations and forget the large areas of agreement that bring nations together in mutual understanding... I refuse to be discouraged by apparent difficulties. Difficulties are a challenge to men of determination."

—Harry S. Truman, March 3, 1947



Truman Remembers the Spiritual Foundations of Democracy and Freedom

A speech alone would not work to heal the memories of the Mexican-American War or later interventions into Mexico during their revolution from 1910-1920. While in Mexico City, Truman visited two historic monuments to draw connections between the U.S. and Mexico and remember each nation's historical foundations in democratic principles and their bravery to fight for their freedom. The first was El Ángel (or The Angel of Independence), located on the Paseo de la Reforma running through the heart of Mexico City. Truman emphasized how El Ángel was a symbol of the similarities in each nation's revolutionary wars for self-government against European, colonial rulers.



"All our peoples have a common belief which we call democracy. Democracy has a spiritual foundation because it is based upon the brotherhood of man."

—Harry S. Truman, March 3, 1947

Memorial to Mexican Independence

El Ángel was constructed in 1910 under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz to commemorate the centennial of Mexico's War for Independence against Spanish colonial rule. In 1925, the monument became the home for the remains of prominent Mexican revolutionaries such as Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, Padre José María Morelos y Pavón, and Guadalupe Victoria. Truman's visit to this monument showed his respect for Mexico's revolutionary heroes.



El Ángel, Mexico City
Courtesy of Shutterstock, 2019

Remembering the Bravery of Los Niños Héros

"Brave men don't belong to any one country. I respect bravery wherever I see it."
 Harry S. Truman, 1947.



Truman also visited the monument Los Niños Héros ("The Boy Heroes") at Chapultepec Castle. Built in 1881, this monument commemorates the Battle of Chapultepec (September 13, 1847) during the Mexican-American War. Outnumbered, the Mexican Army was ordered to retreat, but six Mexican cadets (aging from 13 to 19 years old) fought heroically to the death. According to legend, one of the cadets, Juan Escutia, wrapped himself in the Mexican flag and jumped from the castle walls rather than surrender. Truman's unexpected visit to Los Niños Héros was both a recognition of the cadet's bravery and a symbolic apology for the tragedies of Mexican-American War.

"President Truman, by rendering homage to the immortal glory of the boy heroes, in a gesture worthy of a gentleman and a friend, spans an abyss of the past by another bridge into the future."
 - Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexican Foreign Minister, March 4, 1947.

Celebrating a Shared Anniversary of Cuban Independence

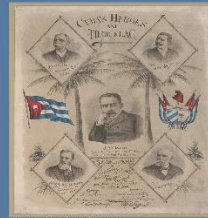
"From the first, the fight for liberation by the Cuban patriots evoked sympathy of the people of the United States. Americans watched with admiration the beginning of the final struggle for independence."
 Harry S. Truman, April 19, 1948



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

On April 19, 1948 the United States Congress and President Truman celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Joint Resolution of 1898 that brought the United States into the war for Cuban independence. The 50th anniversary gave Truman another opportunity to shape the hemispheric memory of the Spanish-American War.

Memories of the war were divided. Some believed that the United States fought the war out of benevolent purpose to free Cuba from Spanish colonialism. Others believe the U.S. joined to preserve their private business and security interests on the island or in hopes of eventually annexing Cuba into the United States. Truman chose to remember the war as a reflection of unity between the United States and Cuba.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Truman's speech emphasized the brotherhood of the national heroes who fought together to free Cuba from Spain. To Truman, the war brought "the names of [William Rufus] Shafter, [Theodore] Roosevelt, and [Richmond P.] Hobson... joined with those of [Máximo] Gómez, [Antonio] Maceo, and [Calisto] García," joining the names of American and Cuban war heroes reflected Truman's desire to promote a shared memory of the war.

A White-Washed Memory: U.S-Cuban Relations After the War.

"We assisted the Cubans in repairing the ravages of war and overcoming problems of health and sanitation."
 Harry S. Truman, April 19, 1948.

Truman's recollection of history ignored the instances of U.S. interventions in Cuba. Truman chose not to mention the Platt Amendment (1902) which allowed the U.S. to veto Cuba's treaties with other powers and gave the U.S. the military base, Guantanamo Bay. Truman also left out the military occupations of Cuba under Leonard Wood (1899-1902) and the Second Occupation of Cuba (1906-1909), as well as the U.S. dominance of Cuba's sugar industry through companies like Hershey's or Henry Osborne Havemeyer's American Sugar Refining Company.

Truman's address focused on the unity and friendship between the U.S. and Cuba as a result of the war. He recalled the efforts benevolence of American soldiers in fighting alongside Cuba for their freedom. Truman also remembered the Yellow Fever Commission headed by Walter Reed and Aristides Agramonte which helped reduce Yellow Fever in Cuba (1900-1902).

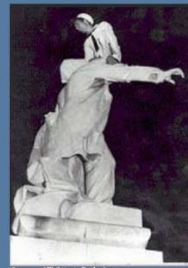
The Yellow Fever Commission was conducted by the United States Army to combat the epidemic of Yellow Fever throughout the Caribbean. This commission is credited with discovering Yellow Fever was spread through mosquitoes rather than poor sanitation, leading to the virtual eradication of the disease by 1902 in Cuba.



Dr. Walter Reed, 1902
 Courtesy of University of Michigan Herbaria, Spain, gifted by Dr. C. H. Peck

"This relationship provides living proof of the ability of nations great and small to live in peace and enjoy the full benefits of commercial and cultural exchange."
 - Harry S. Truman, April 19, 1948

U.S. Sailors Insult the Memory of José Martí



Courtesy of El Caribe Barbaño



Courtesy of El Caribe Barbaño

José Martí was an advocate for Cuban independence throughout his life, and he became a leader of the revolution in 1895. He became a martyr for Cuban freedom and is remembered as a national hero.

On March 11, 1949 a group of U.S. Navy sailors desecrated the statue of José Martí in Havana, Cuba. Fights between the sailors and Cubans ensued until the sailors were taken into custody by Cuban police. Riots continued through the next day and the U.S. embassy was stoned. U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, Robert Butler, issued an official apology and laid flowers at the statue the following day. This incident worsened many Cuban's opinions of the United States. This event hurt Truman's efforts at creating a united memory between the U.S. and Cuba during the 50th anniversary celebrations a year ago.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

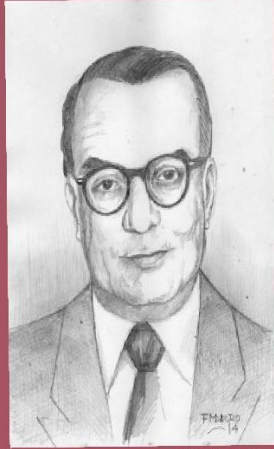
José Martí: Hero and Martyr for Liberty

José Martí was a leader of the Cuban War for Independence. Exiled in the United States since 1881, Martí rallied support for his cause among Cuban ex-patriots and lobbied against annexation of Cuba by the United States. He returned to Cuba when the war began and was killed at the Battle of Dos Rios on May 19, 1895. He became remembered as a national hero and martyr for the cause of liberty.

El Trienio Adeco: Venezuela's *Acción Democrática*

Up to this point, Truman's efforts to spread his collective memory had been limited to Central America and the Caribbean nations. In order to effectively unite the entire Western Hemisphere, Truman needed to incorporate an event with a South American country. Events in Venezuela gave Truman one of his last opportunities to utilize a collective memory to promote democratic ideals and unify the U.S. and Latin America.

In 1945, a coup d'état led by Rómulo Betancourt and his political party, *Acción Democrática* (Democratic Action), ousted Venezuelan president Isaias Medina Angarita. Between 1945 and December 1948, Venezuela adopted a series of social and political reforms, including agrarian reforms to break up concentrated land ownership and revised agreements that mandated a 50-50 split of oil profits between the government and private companies. These three years became known as El Trienio Adeco, the three years of Adeco ("Adeco" was a term for Democratic Action party members). In December 1947, Rómulo Gallegos, as the Democratic Action candidate, became the first popularly elected president in Venezuelan history.

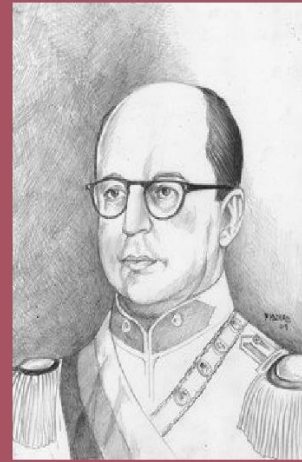


Portrait of Rómulo Betancourt
Courtesy of Enciclopedia

Rómulo Betancourt is often referred to as the "Father of Venezuelan Democracy" and was the leader of the *Acción Democrática*. After the coup d'état in 1948, Betancourt was exiled in Cuba until 1958 when he returned to Venezuela and was elected President in 1959.

The End of *El Trienio Adeco*

In December 1948, Gallegos and the Democratic Action was overthrown by right-wing coup d'état, led by military leaders like Carlos Delgado Chaulbaud and Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Chaulbaud and Jiménez were both participants in the 1945 coup. However, their hunger for power and concern that Venezuela was becoming a one-party state, led them to overthrow the Gallegos presidency. Despite the friendship between Truman and Gallegos, the United States almost immediately recognized this military junta



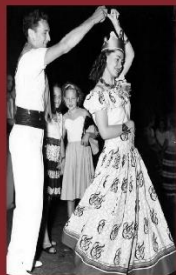
Portrait of Marcos Pérez Jiménez
Courtesy of VenezuelaTuya

After serving as leader of the Venezuelan military, and a key orchestrator of the coup d'état in 1948, Marcos Pérez Jiménez would eventually become President of Venezuela in 1952.

A Shared Independence Day Celebration

Following the election of Rómulo Gallegos, and in the midst of El Trienio Adeco, the Truman administration saw an opportunity to extend its collective memory into South America. This opportunity provided Truman a chance to complete the united memory for the Western Hemisphere.

The weekend of July 4th and 5th 1948 became a shared celebration of the United States' and Venezuela's national independence days. Harry Truman hosted President Gallegos to the small town of Bolivar, Missouri. They planned to dedicate a statue of Simón Bolívar, the South American Liberator. Arriving on July 5th (Venezuela's own Independence Day), the town welcomed the two presidents with a parade through town to the square where the statue was to be unveiled.



The night before the arrival of Truman and Gallegos, Bolivar residents celebrated shared Independence Days with festivities including picnics in the park and dances through the evening. A parade through the town square greeted the two presidents on their arrival.

Simón Bolívar and George Washington: Remembering the Founding Fathers

"Simón Bolívar's memory is part of the spirit of freedom and independence in North and South America alike... in honoring his memory, we are in a very real sense honoring those principles of liberty, unity, and friendship which guide the American nations today."

Harry S. Truman, July 5, 1948.

After the parade through Bolivar, Missouri, Harry Truman spoke to the crowd gathered in the town square. He recalled the heroics of Simón Bolívar in his fight to free South America from Spanish colonial rule. He then compared these heroics to the United States' own founding father, George Washington. This comparison was meant to draw commonality between Americans' memories of Washington and Venezuelans' memories of their own "founding father," Simón Bolívar.



Truman and Gallegos in Bolivar, Missouri, July 5, 1948.
Picnicked left to right: Dr. Don Francisco Alvarez, U.S. Army Dr. Don M.A. Pabon-Bonzo, Harry Truman, Señor Arturo Becerra



The Oval Office Décor

The portraits of Simón Bolívar and George Washington were hung next to each other in Truman's Oval Office. This is symbolic of Truman's interest in the great men of history and his belief in their historical similarities.

The "Father of Pan Americanism:" Simón Bolívar

"Pan Americanism means equality of all nations, and sympathetic and effective cooperation among them. And there isn't a single American Republic afraid of an invasion from its great neighbor on the North."
 - Harry S. Truman, July 5, 1948.



Harry Truman recalled Simón Bolívar's legacy as the "father" of the Pan American spirit. Bolívar had called the first Pan American Congress in Panama in 1826 as a way for the newly independent Latin American nations to combine their strength to resist any effort by Spain to recolonize the region and to pre-empt attempts by other conservative European monarchs to quash Latin America's revolutionary movements. Bolívar also suspected of the growing power of the newly established United States. However, Truman chose to only remember Simón Bolívar's desires for equality among the entire "American family of republics."

The temperature in Bolivar, Missouri was said to have reached 106 degrees that day. Eben A. Ayers, a press officer, recalled, "I studiously avoided getting up on that platform because it was so darn hot! I know Mrs. Truman and Margaret were sitting there and Margaret looked down at me and nothing was said, but I felt sorry for her and Mrs. Truman."

(Val History Interview, Hor. A. Ayers, 1967, 1971.)



A Permanent Reminder of Pan-American Unity



Today, the statue of Simón Bolívar remains in Bolivar, Missouri's town square as a reminder of Harry Truman's efforts to unify the Western Hemisphere around a shared historical experience. Hosting Romulo Gallegos on the weekend of both the United States' and Venezuela's national independence days was a symbolic gesture to show the rest of Latin America that Truman sought to promote commonalities between the North and South Americas. The statue of Simón Bolívar was meant to commemorate an international hero, within the United States, who represented the New World as the beacon of liberty, democracy, and freedom.



Remembering a More Unified Era



Guatemalan counter-revolutionaries, 1954
 Courtesy of the United States Foreign Policy History & Resource Guide

This is a photo of Guatemalan counter-revolutionary soldiers being trained at a covert CIA base in Honduras. In 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower ordered Operation PBSUCCESS which provided CIA support to overthrow Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz.

Harry Truman's efforts to continue the Good Neighbor Policy by remembering a selective history of shared experiences occurred during a period of increasing global polarization rising hemispheric tension. Over the next 15 years, the relations between the United States and Latin America would deteriorate. Violence between right-wing anti-communists and left-wing nationalists in many Latin American nations would prompt both direct and covert intervention by the United States into nations such as Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961-1962), the Dominican Republic (1965), and Nicaragua (1979-1990). The Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro in 1959, and the attempt to overthrow his new regime with the Bay of Pigs invasion (1961), would lead to a still greater hemispheric divide. For Latin America, the Cold War would become anything but "cold" and the Truman administration's efforts to unify the hemisphere would be left as a memory itself.



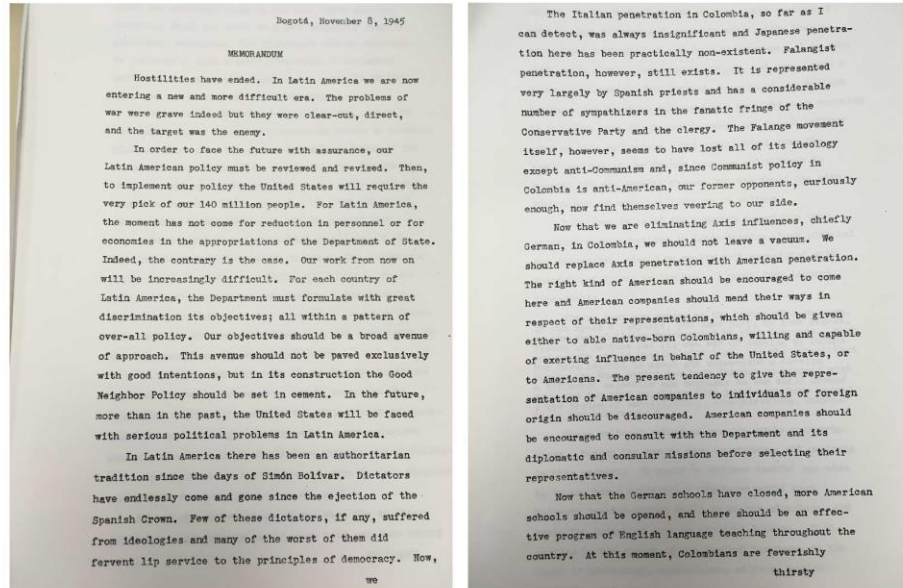
Photo by Anne Kelly, 1992
 Courtesy of the United States Foreign Policy History & Resource Guide

In 1979 the Nicaraguan Revolution successfully ousted long-standing dictator, Anastasio Somoza Debayle. This led to a civil war throughout the 1980s. On one side were the Sandinistas (FSLN), a leftist, socialist coalition, led by now-President Daniel Ortega; and on the other side was the U.S.-backed Contras, a right-wing coalition of counter-revolutionaries.

Material Culture Mock-Ups

The following images facsimiles of the material culture and their labels

Ambassador John C. Wiley's Memorandum



Wiley, John C., "Memorandum to Truman," November 8, 1945
Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library

With the defeat of the Axis powers, the Soviet Union became the main adversary of the United States. The U.S. State Department worried that communism would replace fascist sentiment in Latin America. This memorandum advises Harry Truman that the United States must fill the void of Axis influence with "American penetration" with "cultural diplomacy abound."

Letter from Harry to Bess while in Mexico City with Honorary Medal Given to Truman



Letter from Harry Truman to Bess Truman, March 4, 1947
Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library



Truman described a crowd of 10,000 Mexican citizens who greeted him upon his arrival and were present at the festivities held in the Zócalo, the main square in Mexico City. In honor of being the first U.S. president to visit the capital, Truman was presented with this gold medal depicting areas of Mexico City on one side, and an Aztec calendar on the other.

Painting of Truman and Alemán Meeting



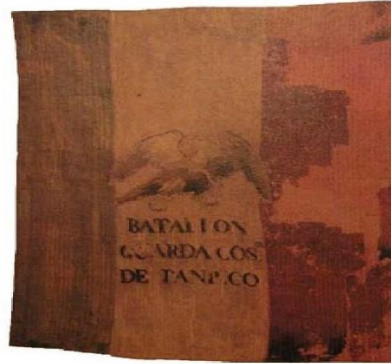
This painting was offered to the Harry S. Truman Library as a gift from the Miguel Alemán Foundation in Mexico City. The painting depicts the meeting of Presidents Harry Truman and Miguel Alemán during Truman's visit in 1947. The Statue of Liberty and Mexico's El Ángel are pictured with the allegorical men hugging in friendly embrace. This painting represents the shared values of liberty and freedom as the foundation of friendship between North and Central America.

"Painting of Presidents Truman and Alemán Shaking Hands," ca. March 1947
Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library

Mexican Battle Flags Returned by Truman



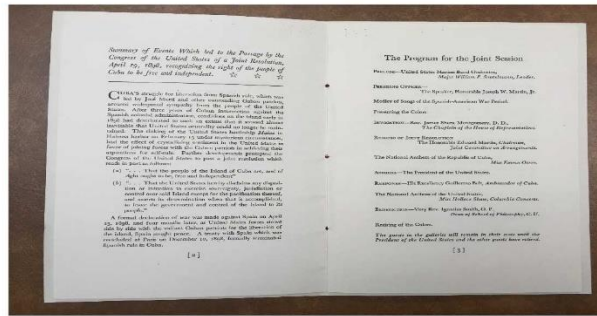
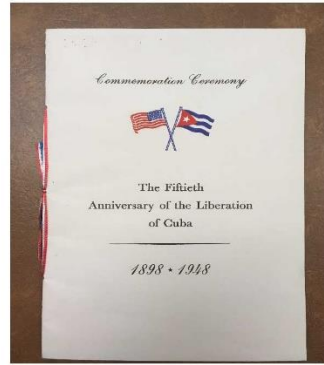
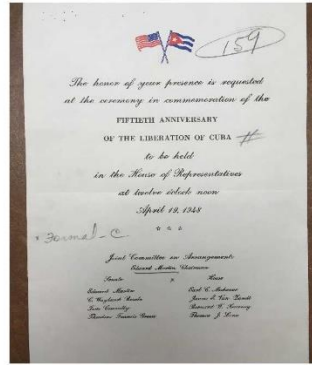
*Mexican Guerrilla Battle Flag
Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Historia*



*Tampico Battalion Battle Flag
Courtesy of Museo Nacional de Historia*

In the aftermath of his visit to Mexico City, Truman began the process of returning Mexican battle flags that were captured by the U.S. Army during the war. The first 3 flags were returned on June 27, 1947, and later the remaining 69 flags were returned to Mexico on September 13, 1950—the 103rd anniversary of the battle of Chapultepec. Truman’s return of these battle flags was the culmination of his efforts at mending the divided memories of the Mexican-American War.

Invitation to Ceremonial Joint Session of Congress



The invitation to the ceremonial joint session of Congress was sent to Truman and the Cuban Ambassador to the United States, Guillermo Belt. While the U.S. Congress held its celebration, Cuban President Raul Grau San Martín hosted its own commemoration with U.S. Ambassador, R. Henry Norweb, and representatives of both U.S. and Cuban veterans' organizations in attendance.


Clifford's drafts of Truman's Speech at the Joint Session of Congress

- 2 -

plain their desire to assist the Cuban patriots. The sinking of the United States battleship MAINE in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, crystallized the growing sentiment in this country for joining forces with the Cuban people in realizing their aspirations for self-government.

We commemorate in this ceremony a Joint Resolution passed by the Congress fifty years ago today. That Resolution expressed in ~~clear~~ ^{men and women in} unmistakable terms the conviction of the ~~people~~ ^{men and women in} of the United States ~~that~~ ^t that the people of the Island of Cuba ~~are~~ ^{should be} ~~entitled~~ ^{to} to be free and independent. It also expressed ~~the~~ ^{our} determination of the ~~American people~~ that once the Cuban people were liberated, they, and they alone, should govern and control the Island of Cuba.

This Joint Resolution, the foundation upon which our relations with the Cuban Republic are based, brought the military and naval forces of the United States into the conflict at the side of the Cuban patriots. ~~The Spanish-Cuban War became the Spanish-Cuban-American War on April 25, 1898.~~ The names of Shafter, Roosevelt, Hobson, and many others were joined with those of Gomez, Maceo and Garcia.



Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Congress, Distinguished Guests:

It is eminently fitting that we should assemble here today to pay solemn tribute to the heroic ~~champions~~ ^{visions} of human freedom who brought about the liberation of Cuba. The commemoration of half a century of Cuban independence recalls the valor of the Cuban patriots and American soldiers and sailors who gave liberally of their strength and their blood that Cuba might be free. From that chapter in man's age-old struggle for freedom, we can draw inspiration for the hard tasks that confront us in our own time.

The struggle for Cuban independence, like every other effort of its kind, was fraught with hardship and disappointment. But the unconquerable determination of the Cuban people to win freedom overcame all obstacles. From the first, the fight for liberation by Cuban patriots evoked the sympathy of the people of the United States. Those in quest of independence have always had the support of the people of this Nation.

Americans watched with admiration the beginning of the final struggle for independence led by Jose Marti and his valiant compatriots, Gomez, Maceo, and Garcia. Our people made increasingly plain their desire to assist the Cuban patriots. The sinking of the United States battleship Maine in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, crystallized the growing sentiment in this country for joining forces with the Cuban people in their fight for self-government.

The Congress passed a Joint Resolution expressing in clear terms the conviction of the men and women of the United States that the people of the Island of Cuba should be free and independent. It also expressed our determination that once the Cuban people were liberated, they, and they alone, should govern the Island of Cuba. It is the passage of this Joint Resolution, fifty years ago today, which we are commemorating in this ceremony.

This Joint Resolution, the foundation upon which our relations with the Cuban Republic are based, brought the military and naval forces of the United States into the conflict at the side of the Cuban patriots. The names of Shafter, Roosevelt, Hobson, and many others were joined with those of Gomez, Maceo, and Garcia.

For four months, as Americans fought side by side with their Cuban allies, the opposing forces were driven back. On August 12, Spain signed the Protocol of Peace and agreed to give up Cuba and withdraw her forces. The dream of Jose Marti became at last a glorious reality.

Some historians criticize the American-centric remembrance of the Spanish-American War. Cuban rebels began the war in 1895, but often the beginning of the war is only remembered with American involvement in 1898. This is reflected by its popular name, the Spanish-American War, which leaves out Cubans rebels as participants. Challenges to this popular memory were not lost on Truman's speech-writer, Clark Clifford, whose early draft of the speech referenced the war as the "Spanish-Cuban-American War." This reference was quickly removed because it conflicted with its popular remembrance as solely the Spanish-American War.

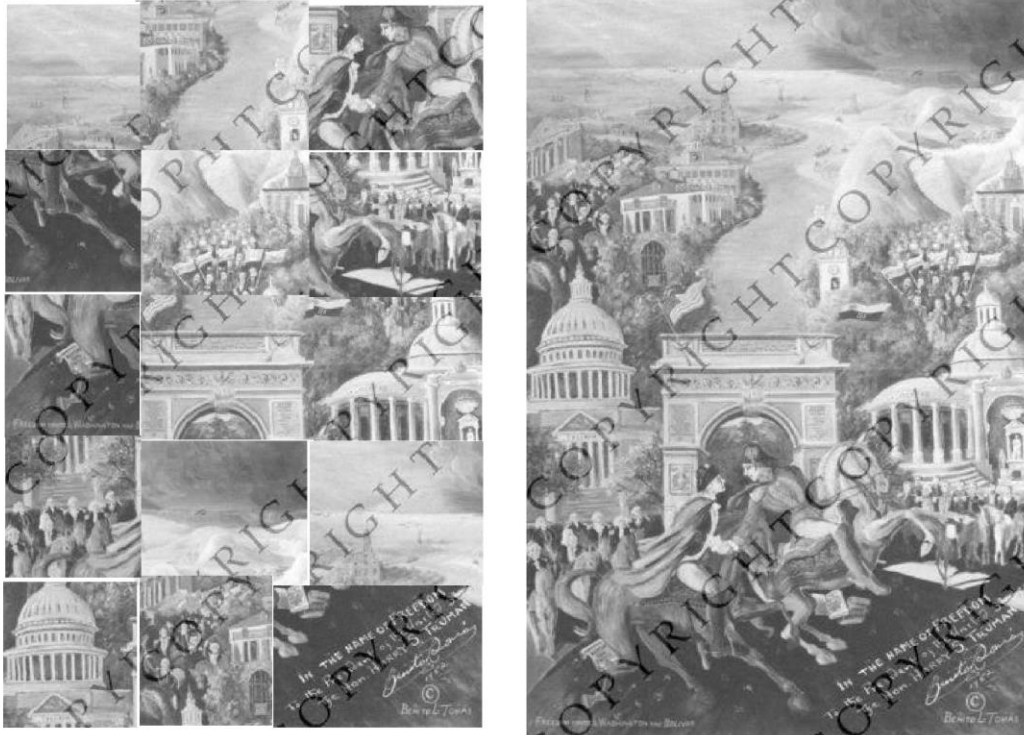
Key to the City of Bolivar, Missouri



Harry Truman and Rómulo Gallegos were given ceremonial keys to the city by Dr. Doyle C. McCraw (middle), the Mayor of Bolivar, Missouri. This is the key given to Harry Truman.



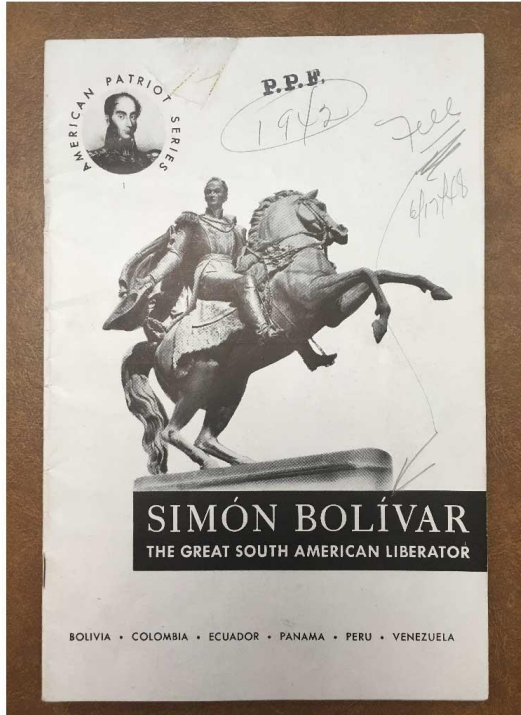
Image Puzzle: Freedom United Washington and Simón Bolívar



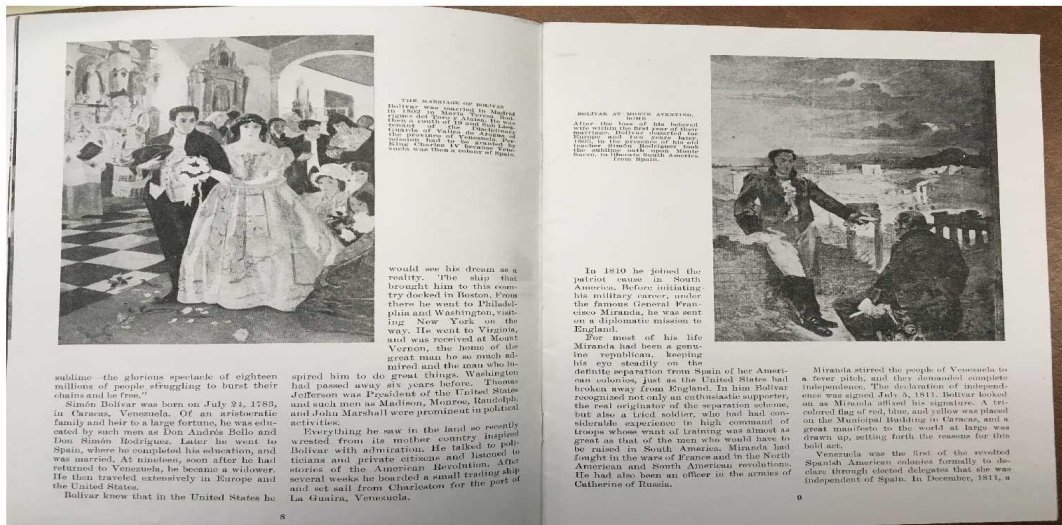
Freedom United Washington and Simón Bolívar, 1952
By: Benito L. Tomas

This allegorical painting depicts Simón Bolívar and George Washington meeting and shaking hands symbolizing Pan-American unity between Latin America and the United States. The Pan-American ideal began with the First International Conference of American States in 1889 with the encouragement of U.S. Secretary of States James G. Blaine. To the U.S., Pan-Americanism was meant to build a feeling of solidarity among the nations of the Western Hemisphere, however many Latin Americans felt it was merely a way to disguise U.S. imperial ambitions.

Simón Bolívar Memorial Foundation Pamphlet



This pamphlet was a biography of Simón Bolívar and his fight for independence in South America. Its depiction of Simón Bolívar emphasizes the influence the United States' Revolutionary War had on Bolívar himself. More than 100,000 copies of this pamphlet from the Simón Bolívar Memorial Foundation were distributed to grade schools across Missouri after the ceremonies in Bolivar.



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VITA

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